



BEST PRACTICE

Title of the Practice: “Baal Paathshala - Empowering Minds, Building Future”

Objectives of the Practice:

The aim of *Baal Paathshala* is to promote the overall development of children aged 5 to 12 years from socially disadvantaged backgrounds in nearby areas. This is achieved by offering educational support and steering them away from social evils.

The following objectives have been taken up in *Baal Paathshala*-

- To provide teaching learning environment and access to the University resources.
- To organize cultural and sports activities for children for their holistic development.
- To create awareness regarding the importance of hygiene, respectful conduct, etiquette, and social manners.
- To conduct sensitization sessions to keep children away from social evils.
- To empower the University students through community service and mentorship to become responsible citizens.

The Context:

The concept of *Baal Paathshala* has derived its inspiration from the vision of Hon'ble Chancellor **Smt. Anandiben Patel** – who observed the children of construction workers on campus, during one of her visits, prompting discussions about the University's social responsibility towards them and on several occasions stressed on the importance of educating and empowering young children. In keeping with this vision, the University formalized the practice of “*Baal Paathshala*” which was already in place since 2018, as part of the community service initiatives.

The Practice:

The *Baal Paathshala* operates both within the University premises and in the nearby villages. The survey, conducted by faculty members and students, revealed that a sizable population of children **needed sensitization towards importance of education, hygiene, respectful conduct, etc. and access to resources for cultural and sports activities**. To address this concern, volunteers, along with Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, visited the nearby areas to identify such deprived children and motivate them to join *Baal Paathshala*.

These classes are conducted six days a week (Monday to Saturday), providing educational

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opportunities to children from the nearby areas. The students voluntarily commit two hours every evening from 4-6 pm to teach children. The children attending the **Baal Paathshala** sessions (within the campus) primarily belong to village **Chakkarpurwa**, located less than 1 km from the University. To ensure maximum participation of the children, volunteers escort them to the **Baal Paathshala** sessions. The **Baal Paathshala** outside the campus, is being run in the village **Lokharia** located at distance of 1.5 km from the University.

Organization of the Activities:

- **To provide teaching learning environment and access to the University resources-** The children, studying in classes 1 to 5, are taught subjects of Mathematics, English, Social Sciences, Hindi and Science, by student volunteers. Children have access to classrooms, sports facilities, playing area etc. where they are engaged in learning and recreational activities.
The Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, along with his family members, administrative authorities, faculty members and students, take initiatives to provide essential educational resources such as stationary items, books, copies, and other study materials to the children.
- **To organize cultural and sports activities for children for their holistic development-** Various cultural and sports activities are organized for children both in the University campus and in adopted villages for their overall development.
- **To create awareness regarding the importance of hygiene, respectful conduct and social etiquettes -** The focus of Baal Paathshala is to inculcate the habits of discipline, respectful conduct and social etiquettes among the children. Regular activities are conducted to make the children understand the significance of national unity, religious tolerance, environmental sustainability, and health and hygiene.
- **To conduct sensitization sessions to keep children away from social evils-** The volunteers engage with both parents and children to raise awareness about the detrimental effects of social issues like tobacco use and drug abuse. They provide education on the risks associated with these harmful behaviours and offer guidance on making healthier choices. Through these interactions, they aim to foster a more informed and proactive approach to preventing substance abuse within the community.
- **To empower the University students through community service and mentorship to become responsible citizens-** The Baal Paathshala enables the students to

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develop a feeling of compassion and empathy towards the welfare of underprivileged children. This practice provides the students with an opportunity to develop their teaching and communication skills, which later enable them to pursue such causes as career options.

Evidence of success:

- The practice has made it possible for underprivileged children have access to infrastructural amenities, sports facilities, educational materials, etc. resulting in increase in the number of children from **12 to 148 children (50 in the University and 98 outside the campus)** and **5 to 60 volunteers in 2018-19 and 2022-23**, respectively.
- Through the cultural and sports opportunities provided to the children in **Baal Paathshala**, the children learn teamwork and develop confidence which enables them to actively participate in cultural and sports event of the University.
- There is evidence of holistic development among the children as depicted in their performance in academics and co-curricular activities. The children have imbibed discipline in their conduct and developed confidence in their personality.
- Inspired by **Baal Paathshala**, **Ajay Kumar** (Batch 2013-2015; B. Com and 2016-2018 M.Com) has started H.A.N. Public School in 2020 in Narharpur village near the University, presently employing 10 teachers. At present, almost 200 students are enrolled in the school.
- University students have started giving tuition classes and achieved financial independence through earning while they learn, thus becoming self-reliant. Peer teaching groups are also formed; with senior students helping junior classmates in studies.

Problems encountered and resources required:

- Some guardians were initially reluctant to send their children to the **Baal Paathshala** due to family responsibilities and lack of trust. However, the dedication and involvement of the volunteers has resulted in their perspective on education, leading them to enroll their children in the **Baal Paathshala**.
- The **Baal Paathshala** sometimes faces challenges due to inadequate funds, making it difficult to procure study materials and necessary teaching equipment for smooth operations. To address this, the University has begun collaborating with Non-Governmental Organizations, along with support from the University authorities,

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faculty, and employees.

- Managing Baal Paathshala classes becomes challenging for students of the University, especially during their examination periods.

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