Title of the practice: Loyola Outreach Programme also known as Loyola Empowerment and Reach out Network (LEARN)

The Context that required initiation of the practice:

Chennai one of the four metropolitan cities consists of about 1400 slums and more than 40% of the city’s population live in slums. Many such slums surround Loyola College situated in the heart of the city. Though the College serves students from different states and countries, but very few students from the College neighborhood have entered the institution. The College while restructuring its syllabus during the year 2000 felt a social responsibility to provide an opportunity to the less privileged people living in the neighborhood. In this context the college initiated the outreach project in collaboration with the Chennai Corporation and State Resource Center. This idea solely belongs to the management of the College. Rev.Fr. Joseph Xavier, the then Principal of Loyola College took special effort in initiating this project.

The project helps in building a good rapport with the neighbourhood community. The project benefits both the students and the people of the community. Through this project the students are exposed to the practical realities of their neighbourhood and thereby their social responsibility and concern for the society is awakened. Participating actively in the developmental process aimed at community empowerment in turn mutually benefits the community people. The project supports the poor students in
the neighbourhood communities to learn better and provides an opportunity
to enter into the College.

**Objectives of the practice:**

1. To reach out to the neighbourhood community
2. To enlighten the students through community exposure
3. To provide an awareness and learning for the community people and an
   opportunity for the students to learn the reality from the community.
4. To identify the areas of community intervention.
5. To motivate the students for community service.
6. To make the institution a role model for serving the neighbourhood
   communities.

**The practice:**

Loyola College, Chennai has been undertaking the Loyola Outreach Program for
last four years. The project was launched in academic year of 2001-2002 in
collaboration with Chennai Corporation’s Arivoli Iyyakam and State Resource
Centre of Tamilnadu. Three neighbourhood zones of the college namely, Zone5
(Chetpet) Zone7 (Nungambakkam) and Zone 8 (Kodambakkam) were adopted.
More than 20 slums were identified from the adopted zones for follow up and
working later. The sophomores of Day College and Self-supporting courses
carry out activities focusing on three key areas- Education, Health and Women
Empowerment.

**Collaborative bodies:**

Since the major goal of the program is educating the community, the college
works in collaboration with Arivoli Iyyakam, the adult education project of
Chennai Corporation and Tamilnadu State Resource Center. Arvoli Iyakkam
provides their resource centers such Corporation Schools, Balwadi and Continuing Education centers for the community based activities and Tamilnadu State Resource Center provides the teaching aids and training assistance. Initially the collaborative bodies provided training for the students and the staff on community work, resources that could be availed, use of teaching aids for non-formal education and urban literacy.

**Administrative structure:**

The Outreach programme is under the supervision of Rev. Fr. Albert Muthumalai, S.J, Principal and Rev. Fr. Xavier Vedam, S.J, is the Vice-Principal and Director. Prof. Gladston Xavier, the Staff-in charge monitors and co-ordinates the activities of the co-ordinators. The Co-ordinators are responsible for guiding, monitoring, facilitating, and evaluating the activities of the students. The Staffs-in charge, work in collaboration with the Co-coordinators in guiding the student activities.
Dynamics of functioning:

Twenty-two slums and Twenty-one corporation schools are involved in the project. Each Department is allotted one community, under the guidance of Social Workers and staff in charge from the respective departments. Each student is expected to complete 60 hours of Community Work. The students work 2 days in a week for two hours a day. Fieldwork timing for Aided Course is 2.00 p.m. - 4.00 p.m. and for Self-supporting course it is from 10.00 a.m. - 12.00. Each department is divided into teams of 10-12 members with a Team Leader and each team is assigned individual work.

The students are divided into five teams based on the community interventions.
- Team 1: Regular coaching classes in Corporation Schools
- Team 2: Balwadi and Non-Formal Education
- Team 3: Health and Sanitation
- Team 4: Women Empowerment and Youth welfare
- Team 5: Evening Tuition

Target groups and focus areas:

The Target groups of the project are children, Women and Youth and the focus areas of intervention are education, health and empowerment.

The Regular School Coaching team:

School team students are placed in the Community Corporation Schools. Twenty one Corporation schools around the college are covered in the adopted areas, which includes both middle schools and higher secondary schools. The students identify the academically weak children with the help of the teachers and take special remedial classes for them. The students also make home visits and motivate the parents to involve in PTA meetings.
Main activities for enhancement of education in Corporation Schools

- Enrolment campaign and rallies to attract children in school going age group.
- Identifying weak students and taking remedial classes for them particularly English, spoken English, grammar and Mathematics.
- Use of creative methods (puzzles, cross words, quiz, and skit) for teaching.
- Students try and utilize innovative methods like student parliament to motivate the students.
- The school children are trained on the aspects like, computer literacy, communication and running handwriting. The College students and resource persons help in carrying out these activities.
- Creating awareness among the students on health and hygiene.
- Programmes on leadership, sex education (10th, 11th & 12th std), personality development, and moral values are carried out.
- Inculcating the habit of keeping the class and campus clean.
- Celebrating/commemorating important days in the school (Literacy day, Teacher's Day, Republic day, Elders day, AIDS day, Human rights day, and Elders day etc.,)
- Conduct training programs on career guidance, Legal rights, human rights and consumer rights.
- Taking part in the Programmes organized by the school management.
- Make home visits and meet the student's parents and get feed back of their children's performance.
- Conducting training programs for the teachers in corporation school.
- Organizing parents teachers association meeting.
Balwadi (Day care center) :

The students also work in the Balwadi Schools, and are engaged in teaching alphabets, rhymes and stories for the children.

Main Activities:

- Teaching alphabets rhymes exercises and stories with moral values.
- Teaching and playing games with them.
- Collecting old clothes and toys.
- Taking them for a fun ride or picnic.
- Training the parents on nutritious food preparation, parental care, health & hygiene.
- Raise funds to provide uniforms, furniture, mats, reading and learning materials etc.

Non-formal education:

The Non-formal group students try to identify the learners who are interested to read and write. Students with the support of the Corporation volunteers, local leaders, community volunteers, & self help groups identify dropouts, street children, child labors and adults, and teach them basic Mathematics and English with the help of the Non-formal primers of Arivoli Iyyakam.

Main Activities:

- Finding out drop outs and streamlining them back in schools
- Identifying child laborers and street children and teaching them Non formal Education and enroll them in regular curriculum if they are really interested.
- Encouraging them to become participatory through games and competitions.
- Teaching them spoken English.
- Training programs will be conducted on Leadership, moral values, sex education and personality development.

**Health and Sanitation:**

Students in the health team identify the major health problems in the community by survey, interviews and observation. Based on the identified problem need based medical camps and awareness programmes are conducted in the community and the schools. This is carried out with the support of the service minded doctors, doctors and students of government teaching hospitals and other organizations such as Lions, Rotary Club etc.

**Main Activities:**

- Network with the Local Corporation office, community health center and health departments.
- Create awareness on diseases, cleanliness, health and hygiene.
- Awareness on keeping the community clean and free from pollution.
- Conducting medical camps (dental, eye, general health check up etc.)
- Eco friendly activities (sapling plantation, garbage free slum)

**Women Empowerment:**

There are 24 teams (240 Students) working for the empowerment of women. The students work with the Self Help Groups (SHG) members in the communities. If there are no SHG’s they motivate them to start one.

**Main Activities:**

- Educate the women on health (sex education and communicable diseases), cleanliness, nutrition & Child care
• Conducting training program on legal awareness, decision-making, self-employment etc.
• Adult education for women (making them to read and write, primary mathematics)
• Counseling guidance and referrals
• Dissemination of government policies and welfare measures available for women.
• Inculcating safe saving habit e.g. helping to open account in post office or bank.
• Initiate discussions and create awareness about drinking water problems, alcoholism, adolescent care, girls’ education and garbage disposal.

Youth Welfare:
The students of youth team identify active youth members or the youth group in the community. The students interact with the community youth and build rapport with them. They motivate the youth members to continue their higher studies. With the help of Nehru Yuva Kendra and other youth organizations training programs are conducted.

Main Activities:
• Motivating the young people in the community to continue their higher studies
• Encouraging them by organizing Non-formal education and spoken English classes.
• Dissemination of Government policies and welfare schemes
• Conducting training programs on leadership, personality development, career guidance, communication, self employment and legal awareness
• Creating awareness on sex education (STD, HIV/AIDS) and substance abuse (Alcohol, pan, drugs)
• Networking with organizations working for the youth welfare.
• Conducting competitions (Sports Games)
• Motivating the youth to involve in community activities

**Evening Tuition Program**:

More than 120 Day College hostel students are involved in the evening tuition program. In the year 2001-2002 there were only four tuition centers which were increased to 16 in the year 2005. Totally more than 500 community children are attending the tuition program. On an average all the tuition centers have 20-30 children. The timings of the tuition are from 4.00-6.00 P.M. The students take tuition in Corporation schools, community volunteer’s house and open space if available in the community.

**Main Activities**:

• Taking regular coaching classes

• Making home visit

• Conducting various talent competitions

• Taking spoken English classes

**Other Community based activities**:

Apart from the team activities the team members involve in collective activity like organizing medical camps, conducting campaigns and rallies on social issues, celebrating important festivals and days, etc. This helps the students to develop organizing skills like mobilizing and identifying resources, fund raising and maximum utilization of community resources.
Main Activities:

- Conducting need based medical Camp.
- Networking with local leaders, ward members and community volunteers.
- Identifying the available resources in the community.
- Knowing about the government welfare programs, policies and welfare measures and disseminating this information to the community.
- Collaborate with the NGOs who are working for the community welfare.
- Organize cultural programs and awareness programs for the community people.
- Celebrating important days with the community people (Independence Day, Literacy Day)

Final Assessment of student activity:

The students involve themselves actively throughout the year in all the outreach activities. Though they are evaluated during each programme a final assessment of the students are done based on the individual regular attendance, individual and group reports, consolidated report, feedback from the community, Staff-in charge and the Co-ordinator. Best student and the best department are selected based on the effort taken and activities carried out in the field.

Strategies involved in implementing the project:
Students Orientation Program

Students are given classroom orientation before they are taken to the field. They are oriented about slums, how to enter a community and interact with
people. The students are given a handbook about the project, which contains all guidelines and regulations to be followed by them.

**Staff orientation and training program:**

Two staff in charge from each department are selected and briefed about the project. The staff members are in charge for their respective departments and collaborate with the Co-ordinators in guiding the students.

**Networking with the community:**

The councilors, ward members, self help group members, youth members, local NGOs, local leaders etc are contacted and they collaborate with the students in organising various developmental activities for the community.

**Networking with the local NGOs:**

Students work along with the local NGOs like Guild of Service, DYFI, Anbalayam, Makkal Kalvi Iyyakkam, health First, Aid -India, Nehru Yuva Kendra, YWCA,etc. These agencies collaborated with the students in conducting various programmes in the community. The local NGOs play a vital role behind the scene, by mobilizing the community people and providing essential requirements like water, electricity, table, chairs etc. and served as a mediator between the students and the community people. Many of these agencies also served as a main resource center for the students who took coaching classes in the community.

**Obstacles faced and strategies adopted to overcome them:**

**In the community:**

In the initial stages of the programme, the community people had apprehensions of what college students could do for them. But as the programme went on the students were able to build rapport with the women,
children and youth of the community. They were able to come down to their level and reach out to the community people. Many people in the community were moved by this act and they themselves got involved in all the activities voluntarily.

The community people in the initial stages were more welfare oriented and always wanted to receive something from the students. But as the programme went on, the students were able to bring about a change in their attitude by organising the community to participate in the developmental activities and thereby improving their quality of life. The students along with the co-ordinators met the local leaders and self help group leaders and enlightened them on the concept of outreach and motivated them. These volunteers played a vital role in influencing the other members in the community. The people who were initially welfare oriented are now more development oriented. The people actively involve themselves in planning and executing the developmental programmes for their community.

The local NGOs initially felt the outreach programme as a threat as it could replace their activities in the community. The co-ordinators of outreach met the concerned officials of the NGOs and expressed the concept of outreach and willingness to collaborate in all the developmental activities of the NGOs in the community.

**Among the students:**

The students (II Years) come from a varied background and most of them do not have previous experience of working as a group in a community. Some of them were also biased about the community and the people. The co-ordinators played a vital role in training the students in all aspects of
community development-such as how to enter a community, build rapport, identify a community need, formulate a programme and implement the programme.

The co-ordinators organised various input sessions and training programmes for the students. Resource persons working in similar communities were invited to motivate and interact with the students and there by equipping them to face the reality in the community.

As the programme went on, it was noted that many students continued to visit the community even after completing their requirement for outreach programme. This was a good sign of improvement and impact of the programme among the students.

One other main constrain faced in the implementation of the programme was the regularity of the student visit to the community. During the continuous assessment test schedule and the end semester examinations the students were not able to visit the community and take up the regular activities such as adult literacy and evening tuition. Many of the community people also felt gap. However this is an unavoidable obstacle and to compensate this gap the co-ordinators made frequent visits and are also planning to identify suitable resource persons in the community to continue the activity even when the students are away during examinations.

**Finance:**

In the initial stages the students found it very difficult to raise funds to organize programmes in the community. Some of the students who were well off were able to support financially, whereas some of them who come from
poor background were not able to contribute financially for organising a programme in a community. The Management, looking at the success of the programme came forward to support the activities in the community financially to a certain extent.

**Resources required:**

About 1400 students of 23 departments are involved in the outreach programme. In a day about 700 students go to the nearby community. There are only four co-ordinators to monitor the activities of the students in the community. The students work simultaneously in different areas and at times the co-ordinators hardly find time to be with them and guide them. Recruiting additional staff would enable them to spend more time with the students and guide them efficiently. The co-ordinators play a vital role in guiding the students, implementing various developmental activities and act as a connecting link between the college and the neighbourhood community. They could be given better remuneration.

In some of communities there are no resource centers and the students find it difficult to carry out their activities such as organising meeting, taking tuition etc. The students use the open space in the community to conduct the programmes. At times, especially during rainy season the students are not able to carry out the activities. Identifying or building proper resource centers would help the students to continue their work without any interruption.
Evaluation of the Programme:

Evaluation of the Outreach programme is done at different levels which enhance the implementation of the programme in an effective way so as to reach the people.

Community Based Evaluation:

Evaluation of the Outreach activities with the community people, local leaders, ward councilors, women SHG members, youth members is done to analyse the activities and the impact of the programme. People come out with open feedback, often expressing their desire and interest to coordinate with the students for their community development.

Evaluation with the staffs-in charge:

Every year a staff evaluation is organised to analyse the involvement of the staff in community work. The staff express their feedback about the Outreach activities, the student involvement, the planning and execution of the programmes and their community experience. The best staff contributing towards community work is honoured during the evaluation.

Evaluation with the Director, the Staff-in charge and the Co-ordinators:

Evaluations are held with the Director of the Outreach, the Staff-in charge and the four Co-ordinators. The various aspects of the practice, hurdles faced in executing programmes, resources required, impact of the activity in the community and among the students, co-operation and involvement of the Staffs-in charge in guiding and monitoring the students, sustainability of the programme and room for further development are discussed and evaluated.
**Student Evaluation:**

The students also evaluate the Outreach activities, their involvement, guidance received from the Co-ordinators and Staffs-in charge, the support got from the community etc. The student evaluation provides an opportunity for them to express their feelings and experiences gained through community work.

**Programme based Evaluation:**

An Evaluation is conducted after the completion of every programme to analyze the efficiency in executing the task, the student involvement, community cooperation and participation, impact on the beneficiaries and outcome of the programme. This evaluation proves to be a eye opener for the students, the coordinator and the community people in identifying their priority, planning programmes and executing them.

**Conclusion:**

The success of the out reach programme stands on four main pillars - the students, the community people, the college management and the collaborative bodies, with out their support and co-operation this programme would not have been a great success. This programme as been a source of realization for many students about the living conditions and problems faced by their neighbors. Some of the students identified their desire for community work decided to pursue higher education in this field and opted for a career to work for the less privileged.

The out reach programme has created a positive impact and realization among the community people that community empowerment is only possible through participating in their developmental activities.
Obstacles faced and strategies adopted to overcome them:

Loyola Outreach program has successfully completed its four years of work in the community with the support of the students, collaborative bodies, community volunteers and local leaders. Especially the students work is worth appreciating because though they are allotted days and hours of work many a times they overwork, they don't mind working in holidays and weekends. Lot of students spare their time in the evening for the awareness camps conducted in the community, at times this may even extend over 8p.m.

Education:

As the students are been divided in to teams, three teams from each department would be working for the promotion of literacy based activities in the community. In this program 18 Corporation school around the college has been covered in the adopted areas. Which includes both middle and higher secondary schools. 18 teams (180 students) are involved in literacy based activities, the primary focus is to assist the teachers in conducting remedial classes for English and Maths, and also special coaching classes for the slow learners.

Registered Youth Clubs by Outreach Students
1. Ambedkar Youth Club, M.S Nagar, Chetpet
   Reg.No:427/NYK/Chennai-03.
2. Dr. Ambedkar Elinger Narpani Mantram, Suthentra Nagar.
   Reg.No: 460/NYK/Chennai-03.
3. Ambedkar Narpani Iyyakam, Jothiammal Nagar, Choolaimedu.
4. Makkal Nala Mantram, Kutty Street, Jayalakshmipuram.
Tuition centers in adopted areas:

1. Jothiammal Nagar  
   Ambedhkar Mandram
2. M.K Stalin Nagar  
   Community
3. East Namachivayapuram  
   Corporation Primary school
4. Appasamy Street  
   Corporation Middle school
5. Pushpa nagar  
   Community
6. Vaikundapuram  
   Community hall
7. Kamarajar nagar  
   Ambedhkar mandram
8. Kutty street  
   Corporation Middle school
9. Mangalapuram  
   Youth GYM
10. Varadharajan pettai  
    Police Boys Club
11. Kamarajar colony  
    Community volunter's house
12. Pullapuram  
    Community volunter's house
13. M.S.Nagar  
    Corporation Middle School
14. Namashivayapuram  
    Community

(Rajiv Gandhi nagar)