



Madhya Pradesh Bhoj Open University, Bhopal

Raja Bhoj Marg, Kolar Road, Bhopal-462003

मध्यप्रदेश भोज मुक्त विश्वविद्यालय, भोपाल

राजा भोज मार्ग, कोलार रोड, भोपाल (म.प्र.) - 462016

### Best Practice #3:

#### Title of the Practice: Fee Exemption and fee return facility to the Learners

**The objective of the Practice:** The objective of this practice is to have empathy with the learners who have been affected due to destiny or due to reasons beyond their control. Here the first target group is the Jail inmates who are kept behind bars due to various reasons, and one very important initiative from the Madhya Pradesh Bhoj Open University is to encourage them not only to gain knowledge and gainful employment but at the same time facilitate them into the mainstream of the society and help them to become a responsible citizen as well.

The second target group is the learners belonging to the Transgender community who are an integral part of the university from the recent session of 2022-23.

The third target group is the Orphaned learners from the covid 19 Pandemic who have lost their parents/ guardians due to the pandemic. They were co-opted into the system from 2020-21. The fourth target group is the learners from the deaf and dumb center at Indore pursuing DCA under the Department of Social Justice and the empowerment of the disabled.

**The Context:** Covid 19 was the pandemic that affected the world in numerous ways. Not only did it affect mobility and the conventional learning system per se, but it also had other devastating consequences, with people losing their dear ones or the students themselves reeling under the ill effects of post covid syndrome. This situation was not university-specific but panned out across the globe with multiple ramifications. So, it then became contingent upon the University to take stock of the situation and stand by its students who have suffered in one way or the other. The University took up a magnanimous view in this matter and decided to waive the fees of the affected students who were orphaned in the wave of the pandemic.

Whenever an unprecedented step is taken, it brings with it a horde of challenges. The main issue that we faced with regard to this initiative was the dissemination of information about fee waivers to the target group, creating a communication interface with them, and acquiring

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all the relevant certifications in order to implement the project. Being in a state of social coma, things moved at a very slow pace, and the affected parties were also finding it difficult to get the required documents.

In the same way, the noble initiative on the part of the University to encourage Jail inmates was equally challenging. Following the principles of universal inclusion, the University has made an effort to reach out to transgenders who face discrimination at every step. The state has recently brought out a policy on transgenders, and in tune with the policy, the university is also taking steps for their rehabilitation and mainstreaming them with the help of the courses provided by the University.

**The Practice:** The said practice is somewhat unique in its own sense in the Indian Higher education system. The University has widened the ambit of inclusion by including jail inmates, transgenders, and pandemic-orphaned students who are on the fringes of society. Fee waiving is implemented not only in professional courses but in traditional courses also with a nominal cut of 20%. This is returned within three months of enrolling. Due to the outreach of the University, students from remote belts and marginalized backgrounds also take admissions here, and at times it so happens that the students tend to make mistakes while choosing the courses. In such an event, the University takes a sympathetic view of the situation and returns the fees of the students without much decrease.

The constraints pertaining to this practice relate to the positioning of learners from every nook and corner of the entire state and beyond. The remotest tribal and rural belt to which the University caters is not easily accessible for disseminating information about the said provision.

**Evidence of Success:** The Evidence is there that Jail inmates have taken admission, pursued their studies, and passed the examination as well. The deaf and dumb learners from the Centre at Indore under the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment of Disabled are pursuing a DCA degree and passing the exam as well. The provision of providing fee exemption to the learners belonging to the Transgender community is implemented in the ongoing academic session of 2022-23 only, whose evidence can be collected later. The same goes for the learners orphaned due to covid 19 Pandemic case.

**Problems Encountered and Resources Required:** The problems which are encountered range from the inaccessibility of the necessary information regarding the said provisions to the target groups to the lack of appropriate willpower and encouragement on the part of the

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persons concerned. As the fee waiver scheme targets the most marginalized, it takes the cooperation of the government departments also to implement the project successfully. The resources required for successful implementation include the robust propagation of the unique provisions on the part of the University on various social media platforms as well as the print media.

**Note:**

The fee return facility is truly unique because Madhya Pradesh Bhoj Open University is the only University which has such unique provisions because in other universities, the fee is returned only for the professional courses, but here in traditional courses, also the fee is returned within three months of taking admission with a cut of 20 percent.

In the same way, if the learner has mistakenly admitted to a course because of his/ her own fault, the fee is returned with a cut of 20 percent, but if the fault of the University is there, then a cut of 10 percent is envisaged.

  
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