Mahatma Education Society's
PILLAI HOC COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE
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Best Practice I

1) **Title of the Practice: This title should capture the keywords that describe the practice**.

Student participation in National and International Competitions

2) **Objectives of the Practice**

What are the objectives / intended outcomes of this "best practice" and what are the underlying principles or concepts of this practice.

Design competitions present our students with the unique opportunity to respond to challenges far outside the remit of their personal circumstances and context, as well as the curriculum followed by the institute.

Competitions also match our students with talents across the world, and help our students to assess themselves and where they stand.

In the event a student wins a competition, or his/her work being selected as shortlisted entries, the students receive much needed exposure on a national or international platform.

This is a valuable addition to the student's CV, allows networking with industry and professionals, boosts further studies and securing employment.

3) **The context:**

What were the contextual features or challenging issues that needed to be addressed in designing and implementing this practice.

Competitions are floated by various bodies and agencies, as also by other colleges. These competitions are generally in the nature of design competitions and intended to seek out of the box solutions to architectural problems.

A competition brief is provided by the convener of the competition, usually stating the context and the requirements, as well as other criteria like eligibility, nature and limitations of the entries, the jury panel and important dates.

The following are some of the design competitions our students have participated in

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- Volume zero: Open to all International design competition comprises of various categories (Tiny House, The little big loo, tiny Library, Nano House)
- Kamu Iyer design competition: College level competitions for Navi Mumbai
- COA National Awards for Excellence in Architectural Thesis: National Level
- COA Students' Awards for Excellence in Documentation of Architectural Heritage: National Level
- Archumen Quiz competition with Transparence: Zonal quiz Competition for Architecture students.
- Archdaily: International architecture ideas competition for architecture students and young professional
- Nirmal public toilet Design Competition: Pillai College of Architecture Hosts this competition on the occasion of World toilet day

4) **The Practice:**

Describe the practice and its uniqueness in the context of India higher education. What were the constraints / limitations, if any, faced.

- Architectural Competitions are regularly floated by a number of bodies. These include government and private bodies, vendors and manufacturers, architectural and design publications, NGO's and even other colleges.
- The intention behind floating the competition is usually to acquire a variety of outlooks and solutions to specific problems, stated in the design brief.
- Entries are usually in the form of an architectural response, communicated through either drawings or models, or both.
- The best entries are shortlisted, they are examined by a panel of experts, and winning entries are declared.
- Winning entries are usually awarded cash prizes, certificates of recognition, and in specific circumstances may even have the opportunity to have their works executed, or contribute in some way to the execution of the project.
- Architectural competitions are therefore unique, in that students from across the country are given the opportunity to respond to challenges outside of their context and their curriculum.

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This is especially significant in the Indian context, because architectural competitions frequently focus on context-specific designs that celebrate local culture, heritage, and regional identity. Participating in such competitions helps students develop an understanding of the cultural significance of architecture and the importance of context in design. This fosters a sense of pride and responsibility towards preserving and promoting India's rich architectural heritage.

Furthermore, students have the opportunity to have their works seen and assessed by top professionals and educators, who usually have an outlook and exposure far broader than that of their regular faculty.

Winning entries have the further advantage of monetary awards, certificates and publication in journals and magazines.

To win design competitions, a student has to work on a variety of skill sets, such as research, team work, lateral thinking and presentation. Participants learn to articulate their design concepts effectively and present them through drawings, models, and digital media. These competencies are crucial for success in the professional realm and contribute to a well-rounded education

Challenges:
- Although the college has a policy of encouraging students to participate in competitions, some challenges are faced by students and the college are alike. These challenges are summarised as under:
- First and foremost, challenge is convincing the students regarding the importance and benefits of participation.
- The college has a rigorous syllabus and schedule, taking time out for competition works is oft challenge.
- The competitions are often not in sync with the college syllabus, often demanding skills and knowledge beyond the curriculum. This is both an advantage and disadvantage.
- In certain cases, registration fees are high.
- Communication gaps are sometimes observed in the case of some competition organisers.
- In order to work/participate in the competition the students miss out on regular classes.

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5) Evidence of Success

Provide evidence of success such as performance against targets and benchmarks, review/results. What do these results indicate?

The increasing number of students who are opting to participate in design competitions is a testament to the success of this best practice. In the year 2020-21, 144 students participated in competitions and total 85 entries were submitted. The participants were endowed with certificates of participation, and a noticeable improvement in self-confidence and abilities was observed.

Exhibiting students' competition entries in the college has resulted in a trickledown effect, inspiring more students to participate in competitions and also benefit from the knowledge and research that has gone into the competition entries.

Overall, a remarkable improvement has been observed in the morale, confidence, exposure and knowledge of the students.

In year 2019 "The Mumbai Metro Line 3 Student Competition" won the first prize

In the very year, students received a special mention and appreciation by *"COA Students' Awards for Excellence in Documentation of Architectural Heritage"*

for Documentation of 400-year-old residential typology of 'Wada' in Pen.

Rohan Joshi (student batch 2016-21) won 1st Place in *Kamu Iyer Design Competition 2019.*

In the year 2023 Rutwik Joshi and Manas (5th year students) won the final round in *"Archumen - India's Biggest Architecture Quiz for students of arch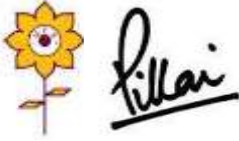itecture"* and were awarded with the prize. And Aarya Shinde (3rd year student) bagged first runner-up in Kamu Iyer Design Competition 2023

6) Problems Encountered and Resources Required

Please identify the problems encountered and resources required to implement the practice

Some minor problems were encountered in the implementation of this best practice. These are as follows:

- Students sometimes find it hard to manage time, for completion of the curricular activities as well as participating in competitions.
- Some competitions require specialised skills and guidance, these may sometimes be difficult to find within the existing resource pool.
- Some competitions may require the use of specialised software.
- Sometimes the students have stay back late in the college which is not in sync with academic term.

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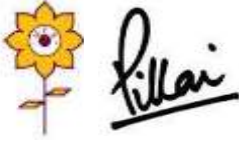
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- During the pandemic, the mode of interaction with students went online where we faced some difficulties in guiding them.

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Best Practice II

1) **Title of the Practice: This title should capture the keywords that describe the practice.**

Documentation and publication of India's built and unbuilt heritage

This best practice is especially significant for architecture students in the Indian context, since it sensitizes students to diverse forms of culture, heritage, and regional identity.

2) **The Objective:**

   What are the objectives / intended outcomes of this "best practice" and what are the underlying principles or concepts of this practice.
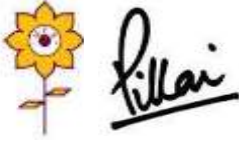
Our country is gifted with an extraordinary variety of architectural styles, as also a rich tapestry of handicrafts and other forms of folk art. These are scattered all over the country, and are sometimes disappearing under the pressures of the change that our country is going through. In this context involvement of students in documentation and publication of these art forms becomes critically important for the following reasons:

- Students are exposed to India's diverse culture and heritage, and can achieve an in-depth appreciation of our traditional building styles, as well as arts and crafts.
- Fast disappearing traditional building forms (as well as building skills) and other traditional arts are recorded and documented for posterity.

3) **Context:**

   What were the contextual features or challenging issues that needed to be addressed in designing and implementing this practice.

- This best practice assumes great significance in the context of architectural education imparted today, and the formal curriculum largely focusses on conventional built forms and arts, and traditional Indian systems are largely ignored.
- It is also observed that our traditional buildings, building skills and handicrafts are fast disappearing, and may soon become extinct.
- Far flung corners of the country are host to rich traditions, which are as yet undocumented.

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- This best practice is a win-win situation, where students are exposed to these traditions, and leads to a repository of documented works.

4) **The Practice:**

   Describe the practice and its uniqueness in the context of India higher education. What were the constraints / limitations, if any, faced.

   - As a part of this practice, faculty and students identify areas of interest typically which have a rich tradition of traditional architecture and/ or traditional skills. It is preferred that the location is hitherto undocumented and likely under some form of threat.
   - The location may be in any part of India.
   - The students and the faculty then visit the location for up to two weeks, and thoroughly document and record the architecture or the art form. It is also possible that multiple groups visit multiple areas practicing various form of the same arts, and built up a compendium of that particular art.
   - The documentation is done through various media: detailed measure drawings, free hand sketches, video recording and photographs.
   - The material gathered during the field visit is then completed and compiled when the students are back in college. The compilation is backed with the necessary research (already initiated before the visit) and narrative.
   - College assigns credits based on the quality of documentation, analysis, and the students' ability to meet the objectives of the documentation exercise.
   - In some cases, the results of the documentation have been exhibited in exhibitions organised by the college, widely attended by other colleges and the general public.
   - The documentation has also resulted in publications produced by the college and circulated.
   - Under the auspices of the best practice, the college has gradually accumulated a compendium of documented material from all over the country. This is part of our record and serves as a ready reference for students.

It may be noted that in the past, this best practice has resulted in the documentation of the little-known temple of *Lote Parshuram* at Chiplun and its adjoining settlement.

The college has also conducted and documented a thorough study of the weaving traditions of India from 8 diverse locations.

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5) Evidence of success:

Provide evidence of success such as performance against targets and benchmarks, review/results. What do these results indicate?

Documentation and publication remain one of the most popular and widely sought after best practices implemented by our college. Its success can be gauged from the following observations:

- Cultivated an eagerness in students to experience learn about different architectural styles, materials, construction techniques, and design approaches
- A noticeable increase in awareness amongst the students and faculty regarding the rich and varied built heritage and artisans of our country.
- A noticeable enhancement in in the student's ability to critically evaluate and appreciate architectural works.
- A growing compendium of documented examples of our country's built and artisan heritage.
- Widely attended exhibitions of documentation works.
- Widely circulated and acclaimed publications.
- Documentation of Pen (Maharashtra) heritage site was awarded as the winning entry for the COA Students' Award for Excellence in Documentation of Architectural Heritage.
- We have also come up with a Publication called "Hastavem" that is compilation of study of cultural heritage of the textile weavers in the city's traditional core.
- "SANSODHAN" the research and consultation cell of PHCOA has also published a architectural redevelopment proposal, " Rasayani Of Tommorow"

6) Problems Encountered and Resources Required

Provide evidence of success such as performance against targets and benchmarks, review/results. What do these results indicate?

- Logistics of organising students field visits to remote locations, keeping in mind all the required safety protocols etc.
- Accommodating local cultures and taboos.
- Different regional language is a challenge when it comes to enquiry and interviews.
- Scheduling and integration with the curricular timetable.
- Trained and motivated faculty is sometimes not free for conducting documentation exercises.

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Difficulties in implementing in other institutes:

This best practice may be adopted by all the architecture institutes all over India, thereby resulting in a thorough documentation of our valuable traditional architecture, building technology and handicrafts and artisan skills. Some minor difficulties may be faced:

- Budget constraints.
- Integrating and scheduling with existing curricular syllabus
- Lack of trained and motived staff.
- Permissions etc from the students' parents to spend extended periods of time away.