



## **RAISING FROM THE ASHES THE REBIRTH OF POLYTECHNIC**

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The polytechnic is a 69 year old Government polytechnic in coastal Karnataka which was started in the British era. The Institute is currently offering diploma in eight disciplines. Over its long years of functioning, a lethargic attitude in the faculty had set in, which is typical of many Government institutes. But being the oldest technical institute in the region, the polytechnic has good reputation and alumni base. The current state of affairs started posing in a lot of uncomfortable questions before the faculty and staff of the institute. In the increasingly competitive environment, the very survival and existence of the institute depended on the training and placement activities, but the Training and Placement unit of the institute was found to be extremely weak. In the institute, Training and Placement unit

was traditionally headed by a retired faculty who was not able to instil the dynamism demanded by the job. The job demanded the use of latest technologies of communication and information transfer and the retired person found it difficult to adapt to newer technologies. So the principal decided to appoint one of the very dynamic young faculty of the Institute to head the Training and Placement activities. Hence, Mrs Keerthi was designated as Training and Placement Officer (TPO) in the beginning of academic year 2012-13 and her regular teaching workload was considerably reduced. A committee of senior faculty of the institute was formed to assist and guide the TPO for effective planning and implementation of training and placement activities.

### **The challenges before the new Training and Placement Officer (TPO)**

1. The data about the activities of training and placement unit available in files were incomplete and data was not available in computerized formats. There was no record



of the email addresses or contact details of the HR personnel of different industries who had visited the polytechnic earlier for campus selection.

2. There was a glaring communication gap between industry, placement unit of the institute departments and students. Students were, by and large, not fully aware of the eligibility criteria of different companies and the admission process.
3. The website of the institute was outdated and did not project the latest position of the institute
4. Data collection from students was “on demand” basis and there was no system of maintaining a student data base on a continuous basis. When the institute receives a letter from a company, that information will be circulated among the students, data collected and given to the company.
5. The institute used to send a letter in July (beginning of

academic year) requesting for placement to a few industries and there was hardly any follow up.

There was no method of preparing the students and training them to succeed in getting placement in campus interviews. Though there is a subject in the syllabus “Communication & Analysis Skill development Program”, it was found inadequate in developing necessary soft skill. The students did not have much idea of “aptitude tests” or group discussion process which were widely used in the campus selection process

6. No database about companies and their details (both of the companies which had previously visited as well as the potential new companies which may visit the institute if proper effort is made) was maintained by the institute.
7. There was inadequate financial support for placement activities.
8. There was no system of registering the students in advance and communicating to them about the campus selection schedule and transparent communication of criteria fixed by different



companies.

9. There was no separate room for training and placement activities. The TPO had a desk inside the continuing education cell.
10. The companies started asking for Pool Campus selection, for which there was no preparation on the part of the institute.
11. Pool campus process demanded coordination with other polytechnics. There was hardly any data and contact details of TPOs of other polytechnics and consequently there was no effective coordination with other institutes.
12. Necessary hospitality for industry personnel during their visit and stay in the institute was not properly attended to.
13. Industries started asking facilities in the institute for conducting online tests which added a new challenge in terms of resources related to computing facilities.

**Solutions and innovations tried by the TPO.**

1. As a first step, TPO opened a separate email ID for the placement department and started routing all the placement mail from that address. This effectively separated other communication of the institute from the placement related communications.
2. Institute website was updated by a team of final year and second year students of computer science branch. Inclusion of the second year students ensured continuity of website maintenance. Website upgradation enabled the institute to establish linkages with many industries.
3. A team of student volunteers was formed. Two volunteers were selected from each of the eight disciplines of diploma courses offered by the polytechnic. Regular meeting of the volunteers was conducted for planning placement activities.



4. Using the visiting cards of the companies available in the institute and previous mails received, TPO developed a database about the companies. She started progressively adding new potential companies to this list and started sending mails to them inviting them for campus selection.
5. The principal allotted a separate spacious room for training and placement activities. TPO even decorated the walls of the room with meaningful quotations all around. The room was fully equipped with computer, UPS, internet and LCD projector.
6. Provision for extending hospitality to the personnel from industries was made.

A Student database comprising of all the final year students in the institute was developed. Whenever a company required data, the relevant data was taken from the database and shared with the company

7. A systematic process of registration of students of other institute was started.

They had to fill a form available in the institute website. For this purpose, a simple form was created in Google drive and the link was given on the website. In addition to online registration, they had to take a hard copy and submit to the polytechnic along with a nominal fee. Instead of individual students visiting the polytechnic, the TPOs of the respective polytechnics could collect all the forms and pay the fee at a time. The training and placement unit is presently financially self sufficient by making use of the revenue generated by registration fee.

8. TPO started addressing the second year and final year students regarding the role and importance of placement activities with the intention motivating them and initiate attitudinal changes.
9. TPO arranged a series of training programs on “aptitude tests” and “soft skill” like preparing resume, group discussion, for final year



- students right at the beginning of the year using the services of outside experts.
10. Guest lectures and interactive sessions with alumni were arranged for final year students.
  11. TPO opened a Facebook page targeted to passed out students. Some companies contact the institute for previous passed out students. That information was posted on the Facebook page. Interested candidates could directly approach the company. The responses are usually very quick.
  12. TPO also started a Facebook closed group only for the students and staff of the institute with strict instruction to post only placement related information. Here the TPO posts all the necessary instruction to the students and they can post their queries. In addition, students and staff share question and answers on aptitude tests and technical subjects. This aims at giving a competitive advantage to the students of this institute in pool campus selection.
  13. When a company asks for student data for campus selection, the TPO opens a form (with the necessary fields of data which the company asked) in Google drive and share it with the company. A link is posted on website for the students to directly fill the form. The data is automatically available to the company as well as TPO. Separate forms are created for each company as the eligibility criteria differs from company to company. In effect, it reduces the work of TPO.
  14. TPO created another excel file about the schedule of visit of different companies. This file is shared with TPOs of other Polytechnics. The file is updated systematically to incorporate any new activity or changes in scheduled activities. Occasionally, some companies do their campus selection in other polytechnics. The TPOs of those polytechnics would fix the schedule taking into account this shared file and then update



the file. This new data will be available to all TPOs. This avoids a lot of superfluous communication regarding the schedules.

15. TPO started collecting systematic feedback from industry personnel on conclusion of the campus selection process both about performance of the students as well as facilities provided. The feedback information was used to redesign and enrich the next campus selection process.
16. As the students are increasingly using the WhatsApp messenger now, TPO has started a WhatsApp group in which she has the administrator privilege. She posts important messages on WhatsApp now which spreads among the students in the shortest possible time TPO has initiated the work of linking of all the computer labs in the institute for the online test which many companies are demanding this year.

### **The result / Impact**

The placement statistics of the institute shows a tremendous boost in the employment opportunities for the students during 2012-13. There was a 20% increase in the registration of the candidates and the number of companies visiting the polytechnic nearly doubled compared to the previous year. There was an overall increase of 69% in the number of candidates placed in different industries. A total of 580 students got placed in 43 companies. Invariably, all the companies highly appreciated the facilities, support and coordination extended by the training and placement unit