

Title of the Practice

Alagappa University Study Circle: Facilitating Employment for Community Empowerment

Objectives of the practice

- Provide personalized **pre-placement counseling** to empower **rural youth** in making informed career choices.
- Cultivate a culture of **collaborative learning**, fostering knowledge exchange and **team spirit** among participants.
- Offer targeted training programs to equip individuals with the skills needed to excel in **competitive examinations**, group discussions, and personal interviews.
- Conduct specialized career guidance sessions tailored for **civil service aspirants**, enhancing their preparation strategies.
- Deliver exclusive **pre-placement training** sessions for Alagappa **University students**, enhancing their employability skills.
- Provide hands-on exposure to students about career opportunities through interactions with **experts and counselors**, enriching their understanding of diverse career paths.
- Identify and address the career aspirations of **marginalized groups**, designing customized training programs to support their professional growth.
- **Collaborate** with Alagappa University's **placement cell** to organize on-campus and off-campus placement drives, connecting students with prospective employers.
- Establish a dynamic **Career Information Bureau**, offering up-to-date resources and literature to support informed career decision

The Context

Alagappa University founded by the great Philanthropist **Dr. RM. Alagappa Chettiar** who was aptly described a '**Social Capitalist**, always exhibits its society friendliness through its **extension exuberance**. Being located in a backward district of Sivagangai, most of the students of the University and its affiliated colleges have lot of **constraints** in pursuing **higher education**. At the time of entry into the institution, their level of **confidence** is always at **low ebbs**, given their **rural background** and **non-affordability** to opt for **English** as the **medium** of education. But they have lot of **latent potentials** and alluring **career dreams**. Many are **first-generation** graduates/postgraduates with a strong **desire** for **government jobs**, although the prospect of clearing the **preliminary examinations** may seem **daunting**. Financial limitations often **hinder** their ability to afford **private coaching**. For highly ambitious students, a **career** in **civil services** through UPSC examinations is a **cherished dream**.

In order to support such segments of youth of this region, Alagappa University Study Circle was set up in **2016** with the mission of **empowering the youth** by equipping them with the **tools, resources, opportunities and support** needed to realize their potential and become **proactive agents** of change in the society.

The Practice

Alagappa University Study Circle functions under the guidance of a **Coordinator** Dr. P. Suresh Kumar, **Former Regional Joint Director of Employment** and Programme Adviser, National Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Youth Development. Under his stewardship, assorted activities of career guidance and progression are undertaken:

- The key focus of the Study Circle is to provide **comprehensive coaching classes** for various **competitive examinations** conducted by **TNPSC, SSC, RRB, UPSC, IBPS, TRB, UGC NET, Uniformed services**. These classes enhance the **subject knowledge** and build the **confidence** of the students to face these examinations with ease.
- Additionally, the Study Circle organizes **pre-placement workshops** for students of the University departments to prepare them for the **challenges of on-campus and off-campus placements**. These workshops cover a wide range of topics including resume building, interview skills, and corporate etiquette, ensuring that students are well-prepared for the competitive job market.
- Furthermore, the Study Circle conducts **career guidance programs** for **school students**, helping them to decide the **feasible option for further studies**.
- To **simulate** real-world recruitment processes, the Study Circle conducts **mock tests** and **interviews**, which are evaluated by **experienced bureaucrats**. The **feedback** and personalized **guidance** provided by these experts help students **improve** their **performance** and increase their **chances of success** in actual recruitment processes.
- Under the **Students Talent Bank scheme** of the Government of Tamil Nadu, the Study Circle has conducted **capacity-building programs**, benefiting aspirants of various competitive examinations from the district. This initiative has empowered the youth and also contributed to the overall development of the region.
- In collaboration with the Arockiya Welfare Trust of TVS, the Study Circle has developed a **prototype model of a Study Circle** for the benefit of rural youth in Therkutheru, Madurai. This initiative aims to provide similar support and guidance to rural youth, enabling them to realize their full potential and pursue rewarding careers.
- Moreover, the Study Circle organizes **online mentoring sessions** in collaboration with Study Circles of **Trichy Employment Office and Sivagangai Employment Office**.

These sessions provide valuable insights and guidance to students, helping them navigate the complexities of the job market with ease.

- The Study Circle also invites **eminent personalities**, including **top-ranked civil servants**, government officials, institutional trainers, and counselors, to **share their success stories** and experiences with the students. These interactions **inspire** and motivate the youth to aim higher and achieve their career aspirations.

The Study Circle offers a **learner-friendly ambience** with serene surroundings, **uninterrupted free internet access**, and proximity to the **Corporation Bank Public Library**. It also provides **hand-outs** of exam-related materials, personalized **counseling** for **students and parents**, **two weekly mock tests**, **provision for night study**, and emphasis on **group learning**. These facilities and services have made the AUSC a highly attractive destination for job seekers in the locality.

Evidence of Success

- So far, the AUSC has conducted **10 categories of career guidance activities** and **89 beneficiaries** who have realized their **career aspirations** acknowledged the utility of such programs by sharing their placement details with the Study Circle.
- The Study Circle has an **average footfall of 50 visitors** per day excluding University students
- It is able to lure **very eminent persons as resource persons** on a regular basis indicating the **impact of brand image of AUSC**.
- Few **outreach programmes** are organised **outside the district** and nearby government **employment offices** are in the process of **emulating the model**.

Problems encountered and Resources Required

- Attracting the students of the University Departments outside the working hours and on holidays is a real challenge as some of the students commute long distance daily
- The study circle is unable to keep its data base updated especially the details of all beneficiaries who reaped the real fruit in terms of employment. Only very few participants keep in touch with the University on continuous basis and the study circle is making attempts to fill this gap.