

*EDUCATING THE MASSES: A MULTISITE CASE STUDY*  
OF ACADEMIC SERVICES & POLICIES IN  
COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN INDIA

by

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## **DEDICATION**

To Bapa, my parents, Abdulsultan and Farida Amlani, my love, Akbar, my mate, Nisha, and my dear siblings, Amaan and Ishaan, my loved ones and students.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Description</b>
BC .....	Backward Class
BVoc .....	Bachelors of Vocational Degree Course
CBSE.....	Central Board for Secondary Education
CC .....	Community College
CRT.....	Critical Race Theory
CSR.....	Corporate Social Responsibility
DE .....	Developmental Education
FC.....	Forward Class
FY .....	First Year
IGNOU.....	Indira Gandhi National Open University
ICRDCE.....	Indian Center Research and Development of Community Education
IIE .....	Institute of International Education
IRB .....	Institutional Review Board
ITI .....	Industrial Training Institute
MNC .....	Multi-National Company
NADE .....	National Association of Developmental Education
NGO.....	Non-Governmental Organization
OBC .....	Other Backward Castes

PA .....	Personal Assistant
PMT .....	Pune Municipal Transportation
RBI.....	Reserve Bank of India
RQ.....	Research Question
Rs .....	Rupee
SC/ST .....	Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes
SES.....	Socio Economic Status
SEZ .....	Special Economic Zone
SHG.....	Self-Help Groups
SNDT .....	Symbiosis Nathibai Damodar Thackersey Women’s University
SSC .....	Secondary School Certificate
SY .....	Second Year
TY .....	Third Year
UGC .....	University Grant Commissioner
UNICEF .....	United Nations Children Emergency Fund
UP .....	Uttar Pradesh

## **ABSTRACT**

The concept of Community Colleges (CCs) in India is adopted from America, but the model is tailored according to the country's socio-economic needs. The purpose of this multisite case study was to understand the students' experiences of academic services and policies at CCs in India and how these experiences impacted them. I also attempted to comprehend the faculty members' perceptions of how the academic services and policies affected the students' experiences. Four CCs were selected from diverse geographical locations in India: Pondicherry, Chennai, Pune, and Gujarat. In all, 30 participants were interviewed. Of those, 19 were students and 11 were faculty and administrative members. The data sources for the study consisted of a demographic questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, memos, descriptive field notes, and artifacts. The study provided rich data about the services, policies, procedures, curriculum, faculty, and campus climate at these CCs and students' perceptions of how well these institutions addressed students' concerns. A cross-analysis of the four field sites using open coding and themes from Tinto's attrition model (1993) was conducted. Findings from the interviews and researcher's field notes showed that most of the students had positive experiences, which were leading them towards completion of the program. Themes included preliminary analysis, loving and caring environment, moral-based curriculum, approach and personality of the faculty members, innovative methodologies (hands-on experience), and services and policies like financial subsidy, grace period, mandatory life skills and spoken English, three-month internships, assured jobs, and extracurricular

activities, which aid in retention and strong integration in college. The findings also demonstrated that the college invests extensively in building the social, aspirational, linguistic, and spiritual capital for the students.

Keywords: community colleges, India, students' experiences, multisite case study, cross-analysis, academic, retention, services, policies, cultural and social capital.

## I – INTRODUCTION

I am sitting in my first course in the PhD program of Developmental Education in United States of America called Policy and Politics of Higher Education. I hear the term ‘Community College’ (CC) for the first time. I wonder what a CC is. My community of learners (colleagues) briefly explains the CC model to me. Over the next few days, I comprehend the idea of CCs and wonder why this concept does not prevail in my home country, India.

After a few weeks, my advisor handed me a copy of a white paper, called “The U.S. Community College Model: Potential for Applications in India” by The Embassy of the United States of America in India-Institute of International Education (IIE). I was amazed and excited to hear that the CC model was prevalent in India and remarkable work had been done in this field. India is a multicultural South Asian country with over 1.2 billion people spread over 29 states and 7 union territories. The country is extremely diverse in religion, race, language, policies, and socioeconomic differences by region. Due to regional diversity and decentralization of the Indian education system, people are sometimes unaware of all the initiatives, educational models, and policies that reside in different parts of the country. Having worked in the field of education for several years, my colleagues and I were surprisingly unknowledgeable about the existence of the CC model in India. Thus, I chose to investigate students’ experiences in Indian CCs and examined how this model was helping the underprivileged section of society in India. The idea of exploring CCs was exciting to me, as they open the doors of opportunities for larger section of the society. I invite you to explore the journey of CCs with me.

## **Indian Education System**

The education system in India is different from other countries. The official school system in India is up to the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. After finishing school, students who wish to study further must enroll in a college in order to earn a Bachelor's degree. There are broadly three fields of study: science, commerce, and arts. Students who pursue science can select courses in nursing, pharmacy, agriculture, engineering, or medicine. Commerce students can take courses in finance, business, costing, taxation, and administration, among others. On the other hand, students who pursue art can choose courses in law, fashion, English literature, and economics among others. Apart from these traditional courses, new additional areas of education in technical and skill industry have recently been introduced in colleges. Students attend college for a period of 5 years before they enroll in a master's program. The 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades in Indian colleges are known as junior college and 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 15<sup>th</sup> grades are called first year (FY), second year (SY), and third year (TY). If a student fails in one or two courses during the first/second/third year, they have an option to reappear for the exam in the month of October and these courses are referred to backlogs. Backlogs are not permissible in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade; hence if a student fails in one or more subjects they have to repeat the year. In the Indian context, school education is comprised of grades from kindergarten to 10<sup>th</sup> grade, while college education includes bachelors and master's degrees. Alternative routes for students who are unable to complete the conventional college are vocational courses, diploma courses, certification programs, and distance learning education. The different routes of education are windows of hope and opportunities for dropout students. As an option, the non-completers, lower income groups, and older students are enrolled



in open universities (Banga, 2004; Mishra, Vijayshri, & Garg, 2009). Open University has an open-door academic policy with no prerequisites for admission. However, the attrition rate in an open university is high and the success rate is low (Mishra, et al., 2009).

Further, there is a strong association between the school curriculum and preparing students for college completion. In India, the overarching model of the Indian curriculum is comprised of international, national, and state curriculum schools (SSC) and school curriculum providers. Every school in India has one of these curriculums from pre-primary to 10<sup>th</sup> grade and a handful of them have it until the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The international curriculum is rigorous, as it specializes in English language and prepares an individual for the International Baccalaureate. The national curriculum school is comprised of a central board of secondary education (CBSE) for public and private schools, from pre-primary till 10<sup>th</sup> grade and some schools up to the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The state curriculum schools are affiliated with individual board of states of India (SSC), for instance, Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education, and Haryana School Education Board among others. The school curriculum providers are involved in creating and providing curriculum to schools. The Apnalaya Foundation is a school curriculum provider that works for underrepresented communities through learning centers and balwadis (pre-school run in rural areas by NGOs) and offers study classes and non-formal education.

## **Problem Statement**

### **Higher Education System in India**

In India, the number of students enrolled in higher and secondary education is proliferating (UNICEF, 2011). On the other hand, institutions are struggling to address the cognitive, social, and interpersonal development of students (Chakrabarti, Bartning, & Sengupta, 2010). With limited opportunities and available resources, only the privileged section of the society makes it to the elite colleges and universities, while the remaining population is sidelined (Pazich & Teranishi, 2014). In the paper, 'Community College is an alternative system of Education in India' (2015) the Indian Center Research and Development of Community Education (ICRDCE) portrays a picture of existing higher education system in the country (2015). The cost of education is increasing and people are struggling to afford it. The traditional higher education system offers limited flexibility in courses, teaching-learning timings, places of study, and choice of courses (ICRDCE, 2015). If a student in the senior year drops out of college due to unavoidable circumstances, then the student walks away empty-handed. Moreover, the higher education system rarely works in alignment with the marketplace, and there are disconnected chords between the institutions, industry, and society. There is a need for a formal educational system to discover ways to integrate skill-based curriculum and employment in all segments of the society.

Political, economic, and social forces of a country impact its educational policies that in turn create barriers in providing education to the marginalized groups of society. India looks to the world for ideas that could cater to educate a huge population of youth, offer trainings, and create skillful workers for the society (Chakrabarti et. al., 2010).

There is no one-size-fits-all model. The CC model has attributes such as focus on workforce trainings, the notion of transfer missions, and open access and flexible educational pathways (IIE, 2013). CCs have been initiated in several developing countries to address issues of poverty, youth development, public health, unemployment, and sustain natural resources (IIE, 2013).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative multi-site case study was to understand the experiences of students, faculty, and administrative members working at CCs in India and the role of CCs in their lives. The goal was to explore student-faculty engagement at the CC. Another aim of the study was to shed light on the best practices of CCs for students' retention in India. The data sources for the research study consisted of a demographic questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, memos, descriptive field notes, and artifacts.

Currently, the open-door policies of universities like Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) and Symbiosis Nathibai Damodar Thackersey Women's University (SNDT) in India offer value-added multiple entry and exit options to learners of any age group (ICRDCE, 2015). These institutions serve both rural and urban populations in the country. Since conventional colleges have minimal integration of skilled-based education, there is a dire need to assimilate the features of skill-based education into the higher education system in India. This will help to produce skilled manpower for the future and help improve the standard of living of the marginalized population. The introduction of CCs seems to be a step in the right direction. However, there is lack of in-depth qualitative research studies about student and faculty experiences in CCs and the impact of the academic services and policies on them. The scope and the numbers of

CCs have rapidly increased and the impact is profound (Alphonse, 2010). The study and research of the impact of the CCs' services and policies can contribute to the body of scholarly literature on this topic, which might be beneficial for other educational institutions. The skill-based education of CCs is leading to vertical mobility and increasing the standard of living of the marginalized population. Thus, it is essential to investigate the experiences of students and faculty/administrative members working at the CCs in India and spread these stories to the people. The scholarly significance of the study might shed light on the best academic services and policies of the CCs and its impact on students' experiences, which could open new doors in the field of higher education.

### **Research Questions**

This study examined the following overarching questions:

Research Question (RQ) 1: What are students' perceptions of their experiences in community colleges in India? The ancillary questions for the study were as follows:

- RQ1a. What are students' perceptions of their experiences with academic policies in their community college in India?
- RQ1b. What are students' perceptions of their experiences with academic services in their community college in India?
- RQ1c. What is the perceived impact of the academic services and policies on the students?

RQ2: What are Indian community college faculty and administrative members' perceptions of how academic policies and services affect the students' experiences?

### **Limitations of the Study**

I included four field sites with a sample size of 30 students and faculty members. The four field sites were different models of CCs, so the subjects included in the sample may not be representative of the entire population. Therefore, the findings may generalize only to certain colleges with similar designs and structures. Not knowing the regional language limited my ability to dig deeper into the students' responses for few participants. Due to the differences in interpretation of the language, unknown biases in their responses may have been introduced.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following working definitions were utilized in this study:

- *Principal*: In the Indian context, the educational and administrative head of the college and school is called a principal.
- *Director*: The head of the institution is called the director of the college.
- *Auto-Rickshaw*: A motorized three-wheeler that is a common form of urban transport for private and public use, also an alternative to taxi cabs.
- *Field*: A branch of knowledge studied or taught in a school, college, or university.
- *Adivasi*: An umbrella term for a heterogeneous set of ethnic and tribal groups considered the aboriginal population of South Asia.
- *Joint Family*: A type of extended family composed of parents, their children, and the children's spouses and offspring in one household.
- *Shed*: A simple roofed structure, typically made of wood or metal, used as a storage space, a shelter for animals, or a workshop.

- *Gram panchayat*: A local self-government organization at the village or small town level and they elect a head, usually a senior member of the village that is called *sarpanch*.
- *University Grant Commission*: The agency responsible for coordination, determination, and maintenance of standards of higher education in India.

### **Summary**

This chapter discussed the educational system in India and a need for CCs as an alternative route of education in the higher education system. It also detailed the purpose of study, which was to understand the lived experiences of students studying in CCs with the academic services and policies. In addition, the research aims to understand faculty members' perceptions of how academic services and policies affect the students' experiences. Chapter Two provides a conceptual framework and review of literature and background of CCs India. Chapter Three contains information on the research design and methodology including research questions, design of the study, population and sampling procedures, data collection, and data analysis. Chapter Four describes each of the cases in the study. Chapter Five comprises of cross-analysis of the four field sites. Chapter Six discusses the data findings from the research questions along with the meaning of the participants' experiences. Chapter Seven concludes the study, providing a summary of the research, implications, and recommendations for additional research.

## **II – REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Retention of students in college draws from and extends a broad body of literature about the process of student integration in college. I have explored theories from literature which are connected to factors that affect students' retention in college, including Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital (1986), Terenzini and Wright's theory of student involvement (1987), Tinto's theory of retention (1993), and Thomas' theory of fitting in and culture (2002). These theories helped me to delve into the factors of retention and persistence of students studying in CC's in India. All the above theories can be connected to the Indian context. Before delving into the theories of retention, it is essential to comprehend the intricate relationship of education and caste in India, as it unveils the practices for marginalized population. In India, CCs play an important role in the field of education for marginalized populations; below, the history, role, and work of developmental education (DE) in the Indian context is discussed.

### **Interwoven Web: Education and Caste**

Indian society is an interwoven web of castes that reflects socio-economic, political, and educational disparities. Chauhan (2008) discusses the four major varnas or hereditary social castes that are prevalent in the Hindu society: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. In addition to these four varnas, there is another category called Dalits, known as untouchables and they fall outside the caste system (Pazich & Teranishi, 2014). The caste grouping is associated with an individual's occupation, social status, and interaction with other sections of the society. Further, social economic status (SES) is sorted according to caste: Forward Castes (FC), Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST), and Other Backward Castes (OBC). The FC falls in the top category and

minimal literature is available for this group (Pazich & Teranishi, 2014). OBC are mostly in the middle class. The SC/ST class is lowest in the hierarchy and they have been deprived economically, socially, and culturally (Pazich & Teranishi, 2014). Also, the people of SC/ST have been underprivileged because of their geographical and occupational conditions. Over the years, the Indian government has been striving to reduce the socioeconomic disparities. Education is one of the strongest tools to help reduce the inequity in the Indian society; it can improve livelihoods, and increase economic security and income opportunities for the poor. Several initiatives like free scholarships, free books, and free meals have been initiated that could empower the weaker sections of the society (Pazich & Teranishi, 2014). Correspondingly, another initiative for underprivileged citizens was the creation of what is known as the reservation system. Chauhan (2008) explains the “reservation system as reserved seats held in higher education, government employment, and state and national legislatures for those from marginalized backgrounds.” The seats were specifically assigned for the SC/ST classes to alleviate poverty and oppression. In 1950, the Indian constitution created a clause to reserve 22.5 percent of college seats for the marginalized section of the society. The college seats were further divided into 15 percent for SC and 7.5 percent for ST (Pazich & Teranishi, 2014). Chauhan (2008) argues that this clause was formed to lessen the inequities of the classes and was to be revised every ten years. Slowly and eventually, the reserved seating was to be diminished, when social justice was achieved at a larger scale.

The caste system is intricate like an interwoven web. In 1980, the Indian constitution added another clause and assigned an additional 27 percent of the college



seating to OBC increasing the reserved seating to 52 percent (Chauhan, 2008). In all, 52 percent of the college seating belongs to the social and backward class. Pazich and Teranishi (2014) cite examples from literature stating that the marginalized sector has not benefitted from the reserved seating. Each college has a cut-off score, while offering admission to students. To procure admission in a college, the students should at least have the cut-off score. Sadly, students from SC/ST/OBC are unable to meet the required scores and are unable to benefit from the reserved seating. The norm is that the students from weaker sections of the society struggle academically and have weaker study skills especially from public schools. The proportion of students who successfully complete 10<sup>th</sup> grade and are able to attend college are between 20-30 percent for backward classes (Chauhan, 2008). Over the years, the numbers of students enrolled in the SC/ST quota in colleges are declining, as they struggle to complete 10<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> grade successfully (Chauhan, 2008). As Bertand, Hanna, and Mullainathan (2008) affirmed, “caste-based targeting does result in the targeting of individuals who are more economically disadvantaged ...[but] while lower-caste members do benefit from the policy, it is the economically better-off among them who benefit the most” (p.3-4). Bertand et al. (2008) conducted a study for engineering students in India. The findings from this study indicated that economically better off students from lower castes enjoy the pre-requisite benefits of reserve seating as compare to the lower income caste peers. Thus, the clause of reserved seating has not successfully resolved the inequity for the lower income groups. With such a scenario in the country, the flexibility and curriculum of CC model is a ray of hope for disadvantaged and underprivileged sections of the society (IIE, 2013). In an effort to

untangle the knots of class inequality, the CC's in India are striving to reach out to the lower social classes through the CC model.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The framework of a research design offers the theoretical lens and explicitly delineates the philosophical assumptions of the researcher (Creswell, 2013). For my research study, I employed the framework of social constructivism and Tinto's theory of institutional departure (1993). The rationale to use social constructivism centers on understanding the students' lived experiences studying at CCs and what meanings they construct of their experiences. I also examined the faculty members' perceptions about the impact of academic services and policies on students' experiences at CCs. I built on Tinto's theory of integration (1993) in the Indian context. In a previous study (Amlani & Paulson, 2014) I employed Tinto's framework for students who were unable to complete their degree in India. From the findings of Amlani and Paulson (2014) study, I realized that some of Tinto's themes—like the pre-entry attributes, goals and commitments, and academic environment—were applicable in the Indian context. Additionally, I identified supplementary themes such as support systems and cultural and environment influences that were prevalent in the Indian context but absent in Tinto's theory. From the findings of the study, I built on the attrition model (Amlani & Paulson, 2014) and identified the factors that aided in students' retention.

Social constructivism theorizes that knowledge is constructed, as individuals interpret and construct subjective meaning from their life experiences (Charmaz, 2006). The framework proposes that people exert their individual choice and respond to social and contextual influences. Schreiber and Valle (2013) assert that human interactions take

place within social and cultural contexts that shape the individuals' understandings.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) state, "knowledge accumulates only in a relative sense through the formation of ever more informed and sophisticated constructions via the hermeneutical process, as varying constructions are brought into juxtaposition" (p.114).

In an educational setting, social constructivism is a state in which the researcher understands the students' experiences with their peers and instructors within and outside their classes, institutions, communities, and societies. In the current research, I employed the social constructivist approach with the participants through semi-structured interviews in order to accumulate knowledge about their engagement with academic services and policies with CCs and how their experiences influence their decision and strategies to complete the college.

Another framework for this research study was Tinto's (1993) theory of institutional departure. Tinto's theory is rooted in the work of Arnold Van Gennep, a social anthropologist whose work centered around being part of tribal society, and the anthropologist Emile Durkheim whose work was based on studies of suicide (Tinto, 1993). According to Tinto, departure of an individual is a process in which pre-entry attributes such as family background, skills and abilities, and prior-schooling variables influence student intentions and commitments to goals and the institutions (Tinto, 1993). The intentions and commitments are predecessors for the kind of interactions the student will have in the academic and social phase of the college environment (Tinto, 1993). These interactions are immensely significant, as they are primary causation variables that will decide whether the student is socially or academically integrated into the college or university. Tinto (1993) noted that integration in college can occur in two ways:

academic and social. During college, academic and social integration in combination with external commitments affects student intentions, goals and commitment to institutions (Tinto, 1993). Students' intentions, goals and commitment to institutions are the pivotal variables in the integration model, as prevention of integration can lead to incongruence, or lack of institutional fit (Tinto, 1993). Similarly, students who have minimal social interaction in college feel isolated and are less likely to persist. The isolation and incongruence hinder the persistence level of the students. Also, there are formal and informal systems in college that encourage integration and persistence of students (Seidman, 2005). In the present study, I examined whether the variables from the integration model are pertinent to students studying at CCs in India and build on the theory of integration for the Indian context, which I have presented in College Experience in India, Figure 5.

### **Developmental Education in India**

In order to strengthen individuals academically and prepare them for mainstream college, the CC model is an alternative to university academics (Alphonse & Valeau, 2009). In America, students in developmental education (DE) enroll in CCs before transferring their credits to a four-year university. The discussion of definition of DE and connection of DE to the Indian context is essential to comprehend the association with Indian CCs. National Association for Developmental Education (NADE, n.d.) defines developmental education (DE) as follows:

Developmental education is a field of practice and research within higher education with a theoretical foundation in developmental psychology and learning theory. It promotes the cognitive and affective growth of all postsecondary

learners, at all levels of the learning continuum. Developmental education is sensitive and responsive to individual differences and special needs among learners. Developmental education programs and services commonly address academic preparedness, diagnostic assessment, and placement, development of general and discipline-specific learning strategies, and affective barriers to learning (NADE, n.d., para 3).

The above definition emphasizes holistic learning of all postsecondary students. Casazza (1999) describes DE as an umbrella that constitutes a wide range of learning centered activities. According to NADE (n.d.) the goals of DE are:

- To preserve and make possible educational opportunity for each postsecondary learner.
- To develop in each learner the skills and attitudes necessary for the attainment of academic, career, and life goals.
- To ensure proper placement by assessing each learner's level of preparedness for college coursework.
- To maintain academic standards by enabling learners to acquire competencies needed for success in mainstream college programs.
- To enhance the retention of students and promote the continued development and application of cognitive and affective learning theory (NADE, n.d., para 5).

The overall aim of DE is to provide access to education to the postsecondary learners and equip students academically. Students from DE are able to transfer credits to four-year universities and pursue their degree. Boylan (1999) discusses the following

characteristics of students in DE. Firstly, the students are underprepared for college as identified through institutional assessment instruments. Secondly, some students have trouble in basic reading and writing skills and they attain these study skills through CCs (Boylan, 1999). Thirdly, the CCs offer opportunity to the DE students to study and attend college (Boylan, 1999). In India, the term DE is not defined explicitly, however, the students display similar characteristics as Boylan (1999) discusses in his article.

In India, open universities like Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) and Shreemati Nathibhai Damodar Thackersey Women's University (SNDT) offer diplomas, certifications, and degrees, vocational and technical programs to students. There are similarities between the DE objectives (Casazza, 1999) and IGNOU (2014) preamble. In 1985 an Act of Parliament helped in formation of IGNOU, which aims to create inclusive knowledge society via inclusive education (IGNOU, 2014). The mandate of IGNOU is as follows:

- Provide access to higher education to all segments of the society.
- Offer high quality, innovative and need-based programs at different levels, to all those who require them.
- Reach out to the disadvantaged by offering programs in all parts of the country at affordable costs.
- To achieve the twin objectives of widening access for all sections of society and providing continual professional development and training to all sectors of the economy, the University uses a variety of media and latest technology in imparting education (IGNOU, 2014, para 4).

The goals of DE and the IGNOU preamble intertwine: to offer education to all segments of the society, to provide quality training, to enhance skills of students, and to equip students' skills and knowledge for mainstream college. In addition to IGNOU, there are several institutions like SNTU, Apanya, and Azim Premji University that cater to a larger population in India, especially the marginalized sections of the society. Hence, even if the term DE isn't used frequently, the characteristics and attributes of a DE population are in existence in India.

### **Background of Community Colleges in India**

I came across several short stories of students on the websites of the CCs in India, who completed their program successfully. Like a helping hand, the CCs support the students with financial stability, enhance skills, and knowledge, and helps students to create vision and mission for their lives. Alphonse and Valeau (2009) describe CCs as "A People's Movement" (p.79). Established in 1995, the Indian CCs offer vocational and training based educational programs at the post-secondary school level. The inspiration for this new education system was derived from the CC model in the United States. In 1999, Swaminathan, the business editor of 'The Hindu' newspaper expressed the following views on CCs in India:

The Community College system should become a people's movement. It should not be considered as a parallel system. The University model of education, especially the affiliated system, emphasizes the elitist and exclusive right from the beginning of admission into colleges to the culmination of obtaining a degree. The formal system has nothing much to offer. The industrialists are not any more interested in the products of the formal system because they do not have the skills,

which the industrial and commercial houses need. The plus two system and the degree level education make the students unemployable for the rest of their lives. Hence, we have to develop pluralism in the structure. The Community College system has the flexibility. These colleges should become rural based (p.79).

The above passage is in line with the vision statement of CCs in India: it aims to reduce the disparities in education, income levels, and social status of population. CC is another system of education that intends to empower the underprivileged section of the society. The CCs work in collaboration with the industrial, commercial, and service sectors and support students with local internships and job employments (Alphonse & Valeau, 2009). The system empowers the disadvantaged and underprivileged population, especially SC/ST/OBC through combination of job-oriented, skills-based, and life-coping education. Students who were earlier denied access to basic secondary and college education now have the opportunity to study. Today, the CCs provide a means to a livelihood. The vision of CCs is to be of the community, for the community, by the community and produce responsible citizens in society (ICRDCE, 2007). Thus, the CCs are working towards providing social justice to all sections of the society through education.

### **Catalyst-Indian Center for Research and Development of Community Education**

ICRDCE acts as a catalyst-facilitating and coordinating agency for CCs in India. The agency was established in 1999 in Chennai, as an initiative of the Madurai Jesuit Province and unit of the Chennai Jesuit Society, Chennai Mission. ICRDCE is involved in coordination, planning, establishing, and monitoring the CCs in India (IIE, 2013). ICRDCE (2007) defines the objectives of the agency,



- To include the excluded;
- To provide the best to the least;
- Matching education with importance;
- Close linkages with industries;
- The participation of the community;
- The development of skills and competencies;
- Enhancing the employability.

The above objectives were formulated with a focus on the underrepresented population of India. Education is an approach to uplift the underprivileged segment of the Indian society and ICRDCE plays an imperative role in accomplishing this goal. Currently, there are 343 CCs in 17 states of India (ICRDCE, 2015). The number of ICRDCE managed CCs in India, by State are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

*Number of ICRDCE-managed Community Colleges in India, by State*

<b>State</b>	<b>Number of Community Colleges</b>
Tamil Nadu	220
Karnataka	26
Kerala	14
Jharkhand	13
Andhra Pradesh	9
Maharashtra	7
Orissa	7
Madhya Pradesh	7
West Bengal	5
Pondicherry	4
Uttar Pradesh	3
Chhattisgarh	3
Haryana	2
Gujarat	1
Himachal Pradesh	1
Assam	3
Bihar	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>343</b>

*Note.* Number of ICRDCE-managed Community Colleges in India, by State. Adapted from the *Indian Center for Research and Development of Community Education*, (ICRDCE, 2015). Retrieved from <http://icrdce.com/nationalscenario.html>

In addition to the above colleges that are affiliated with ICRDCE, IGNOU, a distance learning institution, independently launched the CC scheme in 2009 all over India. Similar to the CCs under ICRDCE, IGNOU attempted to partner with colleges and institutes all over the country and offer academic programs at affordable costs to all segments of the society (Anand, 2012). The IGNOU colleges are not affiliated with ICRDCE and therefore not included in Table 1. Under the IGNOU scheme, students were offered certificate, diploma, and associate degree programs. Three years into its establishment, the IGNOU scheme hit a roadblock and was subjected to a thorough time bound review (Anand, 2012). Until then all the actions of the IGNOU CCs were kept in abeyance. Currently, there are only a few of these CCs that are in operation and limited information is available on them. This research study contains information only about CCs that are associated with ICRDCE. ICRDCE has outlined the difference between their CCs and the vocational colleges in India. ICRDCE's (2015) include:

- Aiming at the employability of the individual trained;
- A system to declare competency level and duly certify the same;
- Promoting strong industrial linkage in terms of articulation of skills, requirements of the industries;
- Teaching of life skills, communication skills and English;
- Evaluation and assessment of skills;
- Personal, social, language, communication, work and creative skills;
- Lessens the burden of higher education.

### **Attributes of Community College**

Since 1995 institutions like IGNOU and SNDT have been offering vocational courses in India (IGNOU, 2014). There are similarities between these institutions and CCs in India, along with significant differences. In the IIE (2014) paper, Adam clarifies the differences between the two:

The difference lies in the fact that collegiate level vocational education offers only apprenticeship training and vocationalization of the first-degree level, whereas community colleges offer a range of multi-focused programs in occupational, technical and continuing education designed to meet the workforce needs of the regions where the colleges are located (IIE, 2013, pp. 14-15).

Thus along with occupational training, the CCs also invest in personal, social, language, communication, and creative skills. CCs aim to prepare an individual for the workforce and develop them holistically. Furthermore, while structuring the curriculum, CCs focus on three main components: information (30 percent), attitude (40 percent), and skills (30 percent) (IIE, 2013). The coursework encompasses theory, practical, projects, fieldwork, and internship. The programs provide flexible entry and exit options, which consist of certificate, diploma, and associate degree programs that offer employment and are transferable to a regular college. CCs conduct mid-term and end-of term assessments to achieve their goals effectively (IIE, 2013). The primary attributes that distinguish CCs from conventional colleges are the diversity and flexibility in their academic programs. Technical and skill-based courses in automobiles, electronics, healthcare, home appliances and courses in repair and service industries that include culinary, four wheeler mechanisms, mobile phone, fashion design, computer hardware and baking and confectionary among others are offered. Traditional colleges rarely offer an extensive variety of technical and service based courses. CCs thus have an advantage over conventional colleges in this regard.

## **Curriculum of CCs in India**

The curriculum of CCs in India consists of life-coping skills (to develop personality, personal skills, and techniques for future employment), interpersonal relations (to enhance students' self-confidence and self-esteem in public speaking), developmental English, work skills (60 percent practical and 40 percent theoretical), internship (on-job training in practical setting), and preparing for employment (create vita, prepare interviews, and how to keep a job) (IIE, 2013). Along with theoretical knowledge, the CCs strongly advocate for and provide hands-on experience training to students.

The evaluation and assessment methods in CCs are different from conventional colleges. The technical and field experts in a particular discipline conduct the assessments for the discipline. The assessment team is comprised of the life skills instructor, the work skills instructor, and the industrial supervisor (IIE, 2013). Evaluation and feedback from different people provide an opportunity to enhance students' skills and knowledge at regular intervals, as opposed to one or two comprehensive exams that are conducted in a traditional college. The knowledge and skills component is given equal importance in the evaluation process.

## **Impact of the Community College System**

CCs are making an effort to bring the education to the local and rural communities in the small towns and villages of India. Statistics presented in 2013 in an IIE white paper indicates that several students benefit from the college model. Currently, around 85,759 students have availed themselves of CC services, with the following distribution (IIE, 2013):

- 70 percent women
- 88 percent from socially disadvantaged groups
- 88 percent economically poor (monthly family income is below 3,000 rupees/\$54)
- 95 percent from educationally weaker sections, dropouts etc. (IIE, 2013)

Furthermore, CCs have also reached out to students with disabilities. Statistics indicate that 466 students with disabilities have completed basic education through the alternative route of CCs (IIE, 2013). In an effort to help secure future job opportunities for the students, 152 CCs have linked with around 2680 industries (IIE, 2013). With CCs support, students have better access to employment opportunities and have a chance to improve the standard of living (ICRDCE, 2007). In essence, CCs are helping people to break out the cycle of poverty and oppression.

### **Challenges faced by Community Colleges**

In the process of creating change, CCs face several hurdles. One of the challenges is to reach out to the disadvantaged and underprivileged sections of the society. Currently, a majority of youths are dropouts and unemployed (IIE, 2013). The reserved seats in colleges go vacant, as students from marginalized sections struggle to achieve the basic cut-off scores. These students receive minimal academic preparation in the elementary and secondary schools (IIE, 2013). Inadequate resources, old curriculum, lack of good teachers, and powerless management are a barrier in students' development and preparation for mainstream college (IIE, 2013). It is extremely important to deal with the grass root problems before the students enter college. In order to address the issues, adequate government support is essential to create and implement CC programs and to recognize and integrate CCs in the educational system (IIE, 2013). Without

support from government, it will be difficult for CCs to accomplish their goals and create responsible citizens for the society.

### **Theories of Retention and College Integration**

In the forthcoming section, I have discussed various theories of retention and college integration. The management formulates various academic services and policies to support the students, so they can successfully complete the course at the CC. The theories of retention in distance education in India, Tinto's theory of institutional departure (1993), cultural capital (Yosso, 2005), Terenzini and Wright's theory of student involvement (1987), fitting in and culture, and investment theory (Rusbult, 1980) provided a framework for the research questions and helped me to understand the process of integration in college.

### **Retention in Distance Education in India**

Attrition is a global issue and leads to a severe loss of resources for societies. The attrition rate of students in post-secondary education in India is increasing (Baruah, 2011). There is minimal infrastructure to provide individualized support for students, which results in lack of motivation and lower retention in India (Chakrabarti et al., 2010).

The literature on attrition of conventional Indian colleges is abundant, but the literature is stored in Indian colleges and only available on site, so electronic research is limited. The CCs' websites have short stories about the students' success, but I did not come across specific research studies on CCs. On contrary, there are numerous studies available on attrition of students in India for distance education and vocational courses (Banga, 2004; Mishra et al., 2009; Nair, 2012; Shanmugham & Kishore, 2012). In this

section, I have included the literature on distance education and vocational courses, as the CCs and open universities both cater to the marginalized population.

Students in India leave college due to several reasons: financial, social, demographic, and family environment, among others (Amlani & Paulson, 2014; Banga, 2004; Nair, 2012; Shanmugham & Kishore, 2012). One of the alternatives for non-completers is open and distance education (Banga, 2004). In the distance education environment, the opportunities for institutional experiences are minimal. Sadly, in India the attrition rate in Open University is high (defined in the earlier section) and the success rate is low (Mishra et al., 2009).

One of the largest institutions in open and distance learning education in India is Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU). Baruah (2011) delineated the reasons for students who were unable to complete their college degree, which included financial problems, lack of family support, lack of need-based courses, ambiguous and vague concepts of learning materials, peer group pressure, and de-motivation, among others. Further, Baruah (2011) elaborated that failure in any course diminishes students' self-esteem and self-confidence. In distance education the student interacts minimally with peers and professors, which affects a student's attitude and aptitude adversely (Baruah, 2011).

Alternatively, distance-learning education has been a valuable resource for disadvantaged groups in the Indian society. Banga (2004) performed a study to analyze the effectiveness of distance learning programs to disadvantaged groups in Himachal Pradesh in India. The findings demonstrated that the programs provide opportunities of advancement, helped in social and cultural development, met educational needs in tribal

and geographically remote areas, enriched knowledge, and generated awareness of policies of government, among others (Banga, 2004). Thus, distance education plays a pivotal role in extending education to the masses.

A substantial body of literature has illustrated the relationship between individual learner's characteristics and dropout behavior (Park & Choi, 2009; Spady, 1970; Tinto, 1993). Park and Choi (2009) highlight the characteristics of the students and several variables of attrition, which alters as the course progress. Factors like satisfaction, relevance of the course, family, and organizational support influence a student's decision to drop out. Yasmin (2013) conducted a study to examine the pre-entry admission variables of learners in rural areas of West Bengal in India. The findings illustrated that attrition patterns were biased toward certain learners, such as students who were married, employed, remotely located or elderly. The students dropped out of college due to personal commitments and individual characteristics (Yasmin, 2013). Older students struggled to adapt and adjust to their studies due to a long absence from education. Unanticipated changes in students' circumstances, such as pregnancy, migration, job transfer, children's exams, and unforeseen family obligations, contributed to attrition (Yasmin, 2013).

Nair (2012) performed research to gain a comprehensive understanding of successful learners at IGNOU in India. It was discovered that 36% of the sample population had an unpleasant experience at IGNOU and expressed dissatisfaction. A favorable experience for learners was extremely critical, as the students came from rural and lower social-economic status (SES) with lower motivation and self-esteem (Nair, 2012). Further, the learners had grievances with the institutions in terms of delay in



getting results, declaring results, responding and resolving to students 'queries among others (Nair, 2012). The students felt frustrated and overwhelmed due to unsupportive experiences. Nair's study (2012) provided valuable insight into the institutions' role in students' retention. Minimal academic services and policies for retention along with the students' struggles could lead to departure from college. Certain themes in the Indian retention literature that are equivalent to Tinto's integration model (1993) include financial reasons, external commitments, interactions with faculty members, and social and academic integration among others (Amlani & Paulson, 2014). Through this research, I investigated whether Tinto's model was relevant to CCs in India.

### **Tinto's Theory of Institutional Departure**

Vincent Tinto has researched and studied student departure and retention since 1970. According to Tinto's longitudinal model of institutional departure (1993), the process of departure occurs voluntarily within the institution of higher education. The focus of Tinto's departure model is on the process through which a student becomes academically and socially integrated in the educational community (Tinto, 1993). The integration process is influenced by students' pre-entry attributes such as skills and abilities, family background, and prior schooling, along with financial resources, prior commitments, intentions, goals and institutional commitments and external commitments (Tinto, 1993). Intentions can be explained as the desire to earn a degree in a specific field of study, while commitment implies the level of work and willingness to spend the time and energy necessary to obtain the degree (Pascarella, 1981; Seidman, 2005). Besides the students' formal and informal experiences in college, intellectual (academic) and social (personal) integration continually amend students' intentions, goals and

institutional commitments, and external commitments (Tinto, 1993). The formal and informal experiences in college are comprised of academic performance, peer/faculty interactions, and extracurricular activities among others (Tinto, 1993). The college experiences influence students' persistence level and the decision of graduating from college. Positive experiences of integration in college advance students with perseverance to attain the goal of completing the college (Tinto, 1993). Alternatively, adverse experiences of integration in college debilitates students' intentions and goals leading to isolation, withdrawal, incongruence or lack of institutional fit, which augments the probability of departure from college (Karp, Hughes, & Gara, 2008; Tinto, 1993).

In addition, Tinto's theory gives emphasis to academic and social integration. Academic integration is associated with academic grades or performance, and social integration develops through inside and outside connections and interactions with people (Tinto, 1993). This framework has primarily been applied to a traditional four-year model of higher education, so there is some ambiguity as to whether the theory is applicable in 2-year community college. Karp et al. (2011) conducted an exploratory study in CCs to examine students' persistence and association between institutional experiences and progress toward a degree. The results of Karp et al. (2011) negated the belief that student integration does not apply to CCs. The findings validated that CCs offers opportunities to create social and academic integration through information networks, which enabled students to navigate the campus environment, access knowledge about college and develop a sense of belonging (Karp et al., 2011). Integration along with the use of student centered pedagogies and interaction with peers and faculties, resulted in optimistic persistence levels in students (Karp et al., 2011).

Tinto's framework is widely applied in higher education in developed and developing countries (Breier, 2010; Karp et al., 2011; Lee, Donlan & Brown, 2011; Seidman, 2005; Sittichai, 2012). Applying Tinto's framework, Breier (2010) investigated students' retention and dropout rates in South Africa and asserted that finance was one of the primary reasons for attrition. Besides finance, additional reasons for students' departure were choice of institution, external commitments, lack of institutional support, and low academic performance (Breier, 2010). However, Breier (2010) critiqued Tinto's framework, stating that the theory fails to reflect the socio-economic deprivation among the countries where people live below the poverty line. Furthermore, Tinto overlooked external factors such as social, political, and economic forces, and the role of institutions to support the students (Breier, 2010). However sometimes dissemination or lack of information can have financial implications for students (Breier, 2010). I used Tinto's theory in my research study and identified reasons for students' retention. Another theory that aided me to respond to my research questions was Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital.

### **Cultural Capital**

Yosso (2005) in the context of social inequality discusses Bourdieu's (1977) theory of cultural capital, "cultural capital refers to an accumulation of cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities possessed and inherited by privileged groups in society" (Yosso, 2005, p.76). Cultural assets and wealth is accumulated in hands of privileged and the marginalized group of society is isolated. The definition of cultural capital is applicable in the Indian society, where upper class of Hindu's have been privileged economically, financially and socially, as compared to the lower class-SC, ST, and OBC

(Chauhan, 2008). Cultural capital is comprised of six forms of capital, which the communities of color possess and acquire to survive and fight the micro and macro forms of oppression (Yosso, 2005). The six forms of capital are aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capital (Yosso, 2005). At the four field sites, I examined the forms of cultural capital that were used for implementation of academic services and policies.

Cultural capital is a vital element in students' retention in CCs (Straubhaar, 2013; Sandoval-Lucero, Maes, & Klingsmith, 2014). Aspirational capital refers to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers (Yosso, 2005, p. 78). Linguistic capital is defined as the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style (Yosso, 2005, p. 78). In the educational context of CCs, the life skills course equips the students with the skills that will aid them to navigate their way in college and outside world. The CC curriculum has a mandatory spoken English course and the faculty members teach this course through innovative activities (Alphonse, 2010). Straubhaar (2013) conducted a qualitative research study with Mexican youths in an urban two-year English high school and investigated whether the school offers cultural capital to the immigrant students. The findings of the study pointed out that the school offered linguistic, aspirational, and social capital to the immigrants in the school environment and coursework, which contributed to their academic success (Straubhaar, 2013). The study further indicated that for few students, social network played an important role in becoming proficient English speakers (Straubhaar, 2013).

Yosso (2005) defines social capital as network of people and community resources that guide an individual to survive in the society. In the educational context, students require peers and social support to navigate their way in the educational institution. Social capital is beneficial in making social and academic decisions while enrolled in college. Research indicates that low-income and first-generation students have minimal social capital, and this adversely affects the academic and intellectual development in the classroom (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Pascarella et al., 2004). In addition, students are ignorant about the benefits and impact of social capital on the development of success. Soriaa and Stebleton (2012) carried out a study on first-generation students' academic engagement and retention. The author noted that first-generation students had lower social capital that resulted in lower academic performance as compared to non-first-generation peers (Soriaa & Stebleton, 2012). Lastly, the author highlighted that instructors can be a precious resource to build social capital for students, which could enhance academic engagement (Soriaa & Stebleton, 2012).

Sandoval-Lucero et al. (2014) examined the students' enrollment experiences of full time and part time students of African American and Latino students to learn about the pattern of success. The findings of the study revealed that students gained social and cultural capital from faculty relationships, supportive family, and interactions with friends, family, faculty members, student affair staff, and college support services. The institutional experiences were favorable and students' personal determination helped them to succeed, which displayed aspirational capital. Thus, I employed cultural capital theory while analyzing the experiences of students studying at CCs with their academic services and policies.

## **Terenzini and Wright's Theory of Student Involvement**

One of the factors that influences retention is student involvement in college. Student participation in the college environment can influence their social and academic integration in college. Researchers Terenzini and Wright (1987) and Astin (1975) defined the concept of early integration in college. Student involvement is expressed as the extent of physical and psychological energy that students contribute to their academic experiences. Commitment is the student's desire to complete the degree and willingness to spend the time and energy necessary to accomplish the academic goals (Seidman, 2005). Higher the commitment to the institution results in a higher likelihood of success for students (Seidman, 2005). Thus, institutions should take initiatives to enhance the academic and social integration process for students to encourage retention. Terenzini and Wright (1987) affirm that a combination of early, strong integration along with vigorous students' participation and commitment can be helpful to address the concern of attrition. One of the research questions of my study was to understand the students' experiences with academic services and policies. The literature of student involvement assisted me to recognize how CCs academic services and policies affect the experiences of students and their integration in college.

## **Fitting In and Culture**

Another variable that can influence students' integration in college is its culture. Literature confirms the significance of experiences in the academic system; the idea of fitting in and culture have been used instead of integration theory (Thomas, 2002; Yorke, 1999). Students who sense that their cultural and social practices are not accepted in the college environment and feel that their knowledge is undervalued are inclined to

withdraw from college (Thomas, 2002). Further, Meeuwisse, Severiens, and Born (2010) stated that ethnic minority groups tend to leave college due to a negative cultural environment recognized as a poor fit. Meeuwisse et al. (2010) conducted a study to examine the reasons for attrition of ethnic minority students in vocational education in Netherlands. The findings of the study delineated six reasons for dropping out of the program: problems in the home or personal situation, disappointing future job prospects, poor quality of education, a lack of ability, negative college culture, and unsatisfied program content (Meeuwisse et al., 2010). Therefore, a good fit between a student and his/her environment played a significant role in retention of the students.

Besides the environment, a student's aspiration plays a pivotal role in completion of college. Alkandari (2008) examined the factors that affect students' retention at Kuwait University through a 22-retention factor survey for 570 participants. The substantial factor was students' aspiration; students strongly felt that education played a significant role in the accomplishment of goals. Interestingly, other factors for retention were acquiring social class, gaining free-of-charge education, developing skills, availability of student services, encouraging university leadership, and higher standards of university, among others (Alkandari, 2008). The concepts of college culture and students' aspiration are discussed in Bourdieu's cultural capital (Yosso, 2005). These concepts are useful in identifying how college culture and students' aspiration influence their actions in CCs in India.

### **Investment Theory**

Another theory that was applied to examine the factors of retention in an educational setting was investment theory. Investment theory was created to examine the

maintenance and dissolution of interpersonal relationships but later was applied to educational settings (Rusbult, 1980). Barry and Okun (2012) employed the investment theory of Rusbult (1980) to study college graduation intention and institutional commitment of first-semester freshman students at the beginning and end of the semester in fall 2007. The three determinants of the investment theory were satisfaction level, investment size, and quality of alternatives. Satisfaction level refers to the subjective evaluation of a person's experience, whether it is positive or negative in a relationship (Barry & Okun, 2012). Investment size applies to resources lost or diminished when the relationship dissolves (Barry & Okun, 2012). Quality of alternatives relates to comparison of actual outcomes derived from the current partner with potential outcomes from the best alternatives (Barry & Okun, 2012). The results of the study revealed that among the three variables, investment size was not a significant predictor of college graduation intention at the end of the semester (Barry & Okun, 2012). Further, satisfaction level was positively related with the intent to stay; it was one of the strongest forces for students to continue at the university (Barry & Okun, 2012). Lastly, quality of alternatives was inversely related to the intent to stay; it is one of the forces that pulled students away from the university. The three determinants of the investment theory—satisfaction level, investment size, and quality of alternatives—guided me to find out about students' retention decisions and their experiences at CCs.

### **Summary of Review of Literature**

The theoretical frameworks provided the context for the analysis of the research study. Within the paradigm of Tinto's theoretical framework, I identified and described the major variables that led to social integration in the CCs. The framework was used to



comprehend the factors and their relationships with other factors that were associated with students' retention. The framework provided a structure to understand the research questions. Additionally, I examined several elements from the literature such as social and academic integration, investment theory, fitting in culture, and social capital that were associated with the participants' experiences at the CCs. The literature was used to better understand how academic policies and services impacted students' experiences in CCs.

### **III – METHODS**

Community colleges (CCs) in India offer several academic services to the young adult population. In addition, the CCs formulate several policies to help the students complete the program successfully. The CC is an alternative route of education that leads to vertical mobility, employment, and integration of skills and knowledge. This research study was a multi-site case study, which focused on the participants' perceptions of their experiences with academic policies and services at four CCs in India. The data collection methods included semi-structured interviews with students responding to open-ended questions along with a demographic questionnaire, and memos, artifacts, and field notes. I used Tinto's framework and social constructivism to understand the meaning that the participants derive from their experiences. I recognized that my positionality played a significant role in interpreting the data, which is discussed in the subsequent section. This chapter describes the methods and research design of this study. In this chapter, I examine the research questions, provide a rationale for a multi-site case study, describe the qualitative research design and the methodology of the study, discuss the population and sample selection, and describe data collection, data analysis, and the validity and reliability of the research study.

#### **Research Questions**

The research study examined the following research questions:

RQ1: What are students' perceptions of their experiences in community colleges in India?

The three ancillary questions for this question are as below:

- RQ1a. What are students' perceptions of their experiences with academic policies in their community college in India?
- RQ1b. What are students' perceptions of their experiences with academic services in their community college in India?
- RQ1c. What was the perceived impact of the academic services and policies on the students?

RQ2: What are Indian community college faculty and administrative members' perceptions of how academic policies and services affect the students' experiences?

### **Research Design**

Merriam (2009) defines case study as in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system. This research study was bounded by time (3 months to 2 years program), location (CCs in India), and participants (students and faculty members currently studying and working in Indian CCs). The case study research design aided me in creating an accurate and complete description of the case. Bromley (1990) describes case study research as a “systematic inquiry into an event or set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest” (p.304). Here, the phenomena under investigation were the participants' everyday real-life experiences with the academic services and policies of the CCs. The unit of analysis can vary from an individual to a group (Yin, 2009). In this study, the unit of analysis was the students and the faculty members studying and working at CCs in India. A case study focuses on a specific situation, providing a description of individual or multiple cases (Merriam, 2009). The qualitative research design was a multi-site case study (Merriam, 2009; Yin 2009). Multi-site case study research design helped me to investigate specific

phenomena of the institution at each field site. In using case study, I examined how the CCs engage with the participants and identify the best practices for retention. In addition, this research design helped to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meanings that the participants derived studying at the CCs. I have attempted to understand the perceptions of living realities of students' experiences at CCs in India through this design. Multiple cases are frequently used to increase the generalizability of findings (Merriam, 1998). A multiple site case study design was a good fit for the research questions and design of my study, as it aided me to share the perspectives and lived experiences of the participants at the CCs. I used four CCs to increase the confidence in results and consistencies in findings, which can be generalized to the Indian CCs like the ones in this study.

Each field site was treated as a comprehensive case in itself. The four field sites led to a multi-site case study. Having more and varied cases in this study offered a compelling interpretation of the findings. I accumulated rich descriptions of the context of the CCs in India through observations, interviews, and field notes. The Indian CC model has been influenced by the cultural needs of the demographic area (Alphonse, 2010). The CCs are set up where the marginalized population resides and this was the case with all the field sites I visited. I choose a qualitative approach, as the descriptive data helped me to comprehend how a CC looks, feels, and works in the remote rural villages, towns, and cities of India. These data were concrete, clear, sensory, and contextual in nature (Merriam, 2009). Yin (1994) explains that a case study is appropriate when the researcher is studying change and process and when the questions

“how” and “why” are being asked. Likewise, the research questions of this study are focused on how the college policies and services impact the participants’ experiences.

I gathered data at four field sites: Pondicherry Chennai, Gujarat, and Pune. Each field site was treated as a comprehensive case in itself. The analysis section describes the similarities and differences among the four sites and how it impacted the participants’ experiences. I gathered data through a demographic questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, memos, descriptive field notes, and artifacts. The method for analysis was open coding (Saldaña, 2009) that helped me to classify the data into various categories. Along with open coding, I employed axial coding (Saldaña, 2009) which helped me to narrow the data into five or six categories. I used these narrowed categories to write the narrative section. In the process of coding, I also investigated how Tinto’s themes (1993) were pertinent to the Indian context. I observed that the CCs contributed in building cultural capital, which played a vital role in creating positive experiences for the participants. I interviewed varied numbers of students and faculty members at each site depending upon the context (see Tables 3 and 4). The total number of participants for the research study was 30, among which 19 were students and 11 were faculty/administrative members.

### **Field Sites**

The Indian CC primarily caters to the lower social economic status (SES) population (Alphonse & Valeau, 2009). There are currently 318 CCs in India and several more are in the pipeline (ICRDCE, 2013). I collected data from four CCs in various states. The colleges were diverse in terms of culture, values, traditions, and social, political, and economic factors. A cross analysis of four sites strengthened the validity

and reliability of the findings (Merriam, 1998). There is a distinction among short-term programs, diplomas, and degree programs. The short-term programs are offered by vocational, public, or private institutes to meet the specific skills and needs of people. These are usually offered for three months, and examples are spoken English or computer training courses. An educational institution such as college/university/vocational or public/private institute offers diploma programs. The institute testifies that the individual has successfully completed a particular program and issues a certificate. The duration of the diploma course is generally for one year. Next is the degree course, which is earned for an undergraduate study that usually requires three to seven years of study (depending on the institution or field of study). The degree program is affiliated with a four-year university/college. The primary information about the field sites is below:

**Kostka community college.** Chennai is one of the biggest industrial centers in South India, the capital of Tamil Nadu. As per the Poverty Rank of States and Union Territories of India, the state has 11.28 percent of population below the poverty line (RBI, 2013). Chennai, a metropolitan city, is the second financial hub after Mumbai. The city's poverty index was approximately 29 percent in 2011 and it is currently 8.7 percent (Sewidan, 2015). Even though there has been a huge drop in the poverty index in recent years, there is still a substantial amount of poverty that is prevalent in the city. The poverty has declined considerably due to the strong policies put in place by the state that empower the people. Some areas consist mainly of single room houses, with poor sanitation and drinking water. There are still several people who live in these neighborhoods on less than \$1 a day (Sewidan, 2015). The city is urbanizing and creating unemployment for a large number of youth. Several people migrate to the city

for a better living but end up in the slums. Kostka CC caters to the student population who belong to this lower socio-economic status (SES).

Kostka CC is established under the banner of a prestigious four-year university. X. Alphonse, the founder of CCs commented that after ten years, the University Grants Commission (UGC) finally granted recognition to the CC model and invested in Kostka CC (personal communication, March 1, 2014). Kostka College is affiliated with the government and received a huge grant for its inception. Kostka College was among the few colleges who have received the approval from the University Grants Commission (UGC), while other colleges are affiliated with Open University (distance learning). Since the UGC recognizes Kostka College, it grants them with funds while other colleges run on donations and funds from multinational companies (MNCs) in India. The college campus is located in a building of a renowned university. The founder and the people who helped build the CC model in India were involved in establishing Kostka CC. The college was established in 2014 and the first cohort comprised of 25 students. The college offers a one-year diploma program in visual designing and intends to offer a two-year advanced diploma program, which would lead to a bachelor's degree in the third year.

**Britto community college.** The second CC is located in the union territory of Pondicherry. The poverty index has fluctuated over a period of time, which was 0.2 percent in 2009-2010 and 9.69 percent in 2013 (RBI, 2013). The primary occupation of the city is farming and making accessories from hay. Recently, the city has attracted several industries like air-conditioning, power, and manufacturing. Britto CC is located in a rural area within the vicinity of remote villages. The college was established seven

years back with limited means. The director of the college then decided to approach the MNCs for industrial collaboration. The director of Britto CC searched for companies with a social conscience and expertise in their industry. The college offers one-year diploma programs in refrigeration and air-conditioning mechanism, nursing and health assistance, fashion design and garment making, desktop publishing, computer hardware servicing & networking, and computerized accounting (Tally) package. The college caters to 40 villages in its neighborhood. There are approximately 250 students in the current cohort of this co-ed college. I was fortunate to meet the director and several faculty members of the institute.

**Bosco community college.** The college is located in one of the largest cities in Gujarat in the western part of India. The Poverty Rank of the States and Union Territories of India reported the poverty index at 16.63 percent of the population (RBI, 2013). This city has recently experienced rapid commercial growth and it has become one of the biggest industrial hubs of India. It is largely an agriculture-based economy and has invested in solar energy. Bosco College is one of the oldest all female residential CCs in India, as it completed its 16<sup>th</sup> year recently. The college caters to the *Adivasi*, a tribal community, and aims to empower and create young women leaders in the society. The college is located in one of the residential areas surrounded by nature. The college follows a strict schedule and attempts to instill the seeds of discipline and responsibility. The institute offers one and two year diploma programs in tailoring, office administration, and spoken English, among others. There are 280 students in the current cohort and the enrollment numbers increase each year.



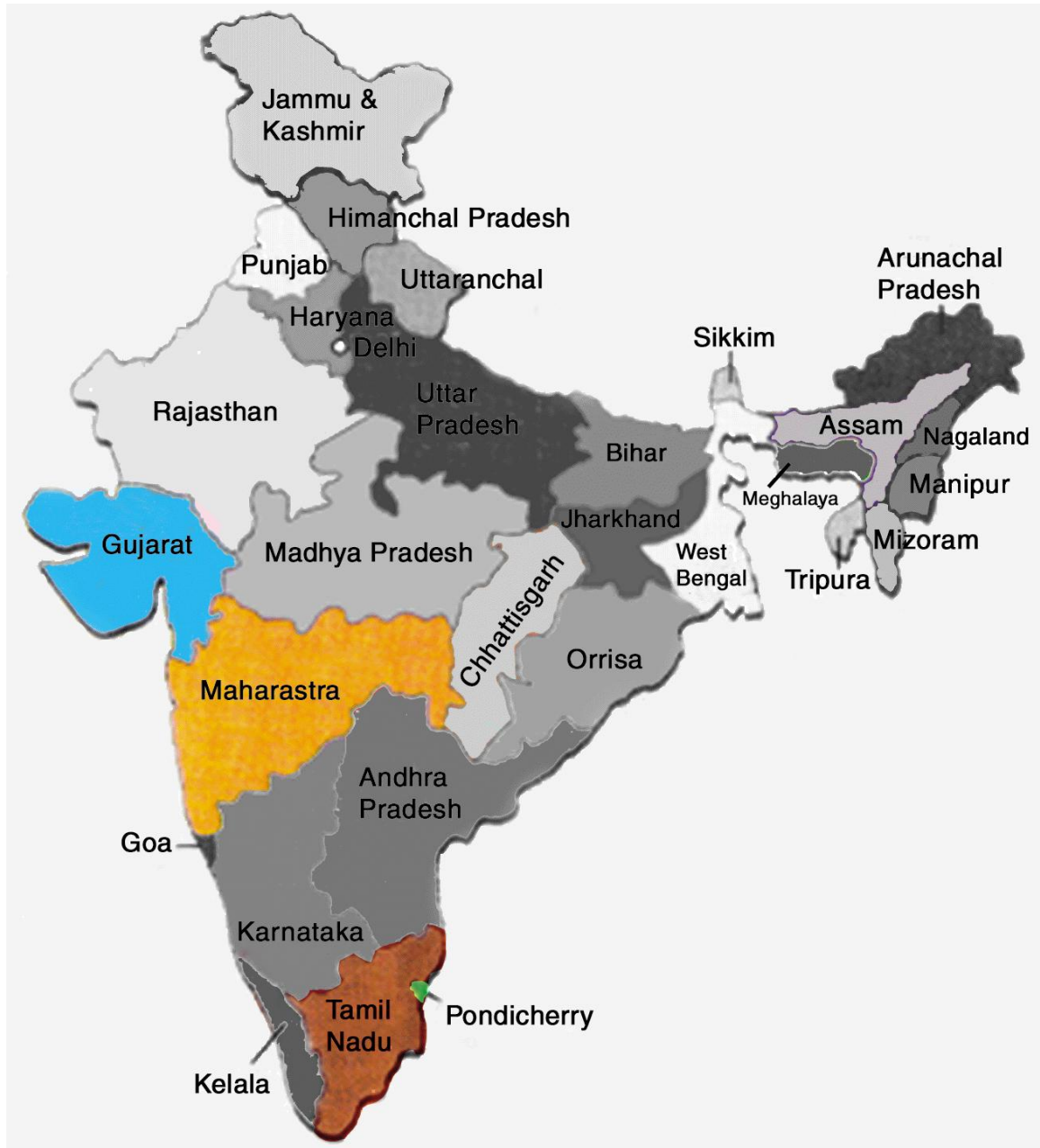
**Victoria community college.** This CC is located in the western region of India in the state of Maharashtra. The poverty index of Maharashtra is 17.35 percent (RBI, 2013). The location of the college is a census town (a town that lacks notified municipal entity, but nevertheless has a significant rural population) in a district in Maharashtra and has been a trading center for wholesale agricultural produce. For the past few years, several automobile industries have been set up near the town and it has evolved into an automobile hub. The founder of the Victoria College worked at Tiscon, a renowned automobile company, at a managerial position. He established the college in 2003, which offers vocational and short-term programs such as diploma in business, cosmetology, automobile repairing, and short-term programs in English, tailoring, among others. The duration of the program varies from three months to one year. As part of the association between Tiscon and Victoria College, depending on the contextual factors, internships are provided to the students at Tiscon. The CC has two campuses in Pune city, one at Tulsibaug and the other at Ranchi. The Ranchi center is in one of the residential areas in the middle of Pune city. This center is situated in a bungalow and is smaller in size than the Tulsibaug campus.

Table 2

*Characteristics of the Field Sites*

	<b>Kostka</b>	<b>Britto</b>	<b>Bosco</b>	<b>Victoria</b>
Year Established	2014	2008	1996	2011
Location	City	Town	City	Town/City
Poverty Index Percentage	11.28	9.69	16.63	17.35
Programs offered	Diploma and Degree	Diploma	Diploma and certificate programs	Diploma and Short term programs

The following figure is the map of India, which shows the geographical locations of the four field sites. The sites are located in Maharashtra and Gujarat, which are situated in the western region of India. The other field sites are Pondicherry and Tamil Nadu, which are located in the southern region of India.



**Figure 1. Map of India.** The field sites are located in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Pondicherry and Tamil Nadu.

## Participants

The study had two types of participants: students enrolled at a CC and faculty/administrative members working at a CC in India. The participants had to be minimum of 18 years in age, were enrolled in the CC at the time of the research study, and spoke English, Hindi, Marathi, or Gujarati. Overall, there were a total of 30 participants, 19 students and 11 administrative and faculty members. A majority of the students, precisely 15, belonged to a marginalized group that holds minimal power in the India. There were 11 members who were director, faculty, or coordinator at these CCs. Most of the faculty/administrative members were experienced and had been working in the CCs for a long period of time. I have used pseudonyms for all the participants. Table 3 delineates the details of the students and faculty members, the colleges, and their role.

Table 3

### *Information of the Colleges and Participants*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Name of the CC</b>	<b>Role</b>
Bhumi	Kostka CC	Student
Aarushi	Kostka CC	Student
Ishwar	Kostka CC	Student
Jai	Kostka CC	Student
Adam	Kostka CC	Director
Rahul	Kostka CC	Coordinator, Faculty
Shweta	Kostka CC	Faculty
Bhavika	Britto CC	Student
Abhay	Britto CC	Student
Dhiraj	Britto CC	Student
Nitya	Britto CC	Principal
Mitesh	Britto CC	Faculty
Puja	Britto CC	Faculty
Amreen	Bosco CC	Student
Nisha	Bosco CC	Student
Sabiha	Bosco CC	Student
Salima	Bosco CC	Student
Seema	Bosco CC	Student

Table 3, Continued

*Information of the Colleges and Participants*

Farida	Bosco CC	Faculty
Tina	Bosco CC	Faculty
Tanvi	Victoria CC	Student
Ruth	Victoria CC	Student
Meera	Victoria CC	Student
Siddarth	Victoria CC	Student
Akbar	Victoria CC	Student
Dishta	Victoria CC	Student
Kajol	Victoria CC	Student
Krishna	Victoria CC	Director
Amaan	Victoria CC	Coordinator, Faculty
Edha	Victoria CC	Faculty

*Note.* The above table provides names of the participants, their colleges and their role. Locations: Chennai, Pondicherry, Gujarat, and Pune.

Table 4 displays demographic information about the students who belong to Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Open Backward Class (OBC), where the income of the families was less than \$200 per month. These groups are lowest in the hierarchy of the Hindu religion and are poor. The SC, ST, and OBC groups have minimal power and limited opportunities to access cultural wealth within the society. The students' families were from a minority group and were deprived economically, financially, and socially (Pazich & Teranishi, 2014).

Table 4

*Demographic Information of the Students*

<b>Student Name</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Father/Mother Occupation</b>	<b>Family Income per month (Rupees/Dollars)</b>	<b>No of dependents in the family</b>
Aarushi	F	Not Working	0	3
Bhumi	F	Not working	0	5
Ishwar	M	Electronic Technician	1000-10,000 (\$17-170)	3
Jai	M	Tailor	1000-10,000 (\$17-170)	2

Table 4, Continued

*Demographic Information of the Students*

Bhavika	F	Tailor	1000-10,000 (\$17-170)	2
Abhay	M	Army	1000-10,000 (\$17-170)	2
Dhiraj	M	Farmer	1000-10,000 (\$17-170)	2
Amreen	F	Farmer	1000-10,000 (\$17-170)	3
Nisha	F	Farmer	1000-10,000 (\$17-170)	5
Sabiha	F	Job	20000-30,000 (\$333-500)	5
Salima	F	Farmer	20000-30,000 (\$333-500)	5
Seema	F	Farmer	1000-10,000 (\$17-170)	4
Tanvi	F	Construction Worker	1000-10,000 (\$17-170)	4
Ruth	F	Farmer	1000-10,000 (\$17-170)	3
Meera	F	Supervisor	10000-20,000 (\$170-333)	4
Siddarth	M	Farmer	10000-20,000 (\$170-333)	4
Akbar	M	Not working	1000-10,000 (\$17-170)	5
Dishta	F	Diver	1000-10,000 (\$17-170)	4
Kajal	F	Farmer	1000-10,000 (\$17-170)	2

*Note.* The above table provides demographic information of the participants in Chennai (4), Pondicherry (3), Gujarat (5) and Pune (7).

Table 4 provides information about students' family occupation, family's income, and number of dependents in the family. Additionally, Table 5 provides information about the students' age, their GPA (of the respective grades), number of hours worked per week, and last grade attended.

Table 5

*Background Information of the Students*

Student Name	Age	GPA	No of hours worked (weekly)	Last Grade Attended
Aarushi	18	3.00	0	12th grade
Bhumi	21	2.70	0	12th grade
Ishwar	22	2.70	0	BCA
Jai	26	3.00	16	MFA
Bhavika	19	3.00	0	5th grade
Abhay	18	1.00	0	10th grade
Dhiraj	18	4.00	0	10th grade
Amreen	20	2.00	0	5th grade
Nisha	20	2.70	0	12th grade
Sabiha	22	2.70	0	12th grade
Salima	21	1.30	0	12th grade
Seema	20	1.00	0	12th grade
Tanvi	18	2.70	0	12th grade
Ruth	22	3.00	0	12th grade
Meera	35	2.30	30	12th grade
Siddarth	19	2.00	42	12th grade
Akbar	24	3.00	48	12th grade
Dishta	18	1.70	0	10th grade
Kajal	18	3.70	0	11th grade

*Note.* The above table provides demographic information of the participants in Chennai (4), Pondicherry (3), Gujarat (5) and Pune (7).

**Sampling Method.** The sampling method consisted of two stages. The first stage was associated with selection of the field sites and the sampling method was maximum variation that documents diverse variations of individuals or sites (Creswell, 2013). The field sites were CCs from diverse geographical locations in India. The four CCs are from the following regions of India: Chennai, Pondicherry, Gujarat, and Pune, which resulted in variation of individuals and sites. The field sites in Pune and Gujarat are in the western region and the sites in Chennai and Pondicherry are in the southern part of India. Even though two sites are from the same region, the places are immensely diverse in social, cultural, and economic context. I selected the states that had at least

two CCs, so there was a backup option if the first CC did not give consent. The CCs chosen were located in remote towns, rural, and urban areas.

The second stage was related to selection of the participants. Since each site was located in a different region, the sampling method was modified based on the field site conditions. Due to the contextual difference, the sampling method was a combination of convenience and criterion sampling (Creswell, 2013). I employed convenience sampling, as it was suitable geographically and getting access to the participants was easier. The criterion sampling was contextual, as only those students were selected who spoke English, Hindi, or Gujarati and were enrolled in classroom courses at the time of the interview. The language criterion was based on the languages I spoke and understood, so it was easier to communicate with the participants and receive first-hand information from them. My cousin travelled with me to Kostka and Britto CC and she helped me to understand the students' responses during the interviews, as some of them had a heavy regional accent. After the interview, I shared the transcripts of these students with my cousin to validate the transcription and translation. This process strengthened the validity and reliability of the data. Most of the participants were from diverse courses, ethnicities, age, and sex, however, since I was dependent on the management in the selection process, there may have been biases in the selection within this criterion. The detailed explanation of selection of the participants is below:

***Kostka community college participants' selection.*** Since Kostka College was a new establishment, there were only 25 students in the first cohort. All the students were from the southern part of India and spoke the regional language (Tamil) fluently and only a handful of them spoke English. The college had mandatory spoken English classes and



the students were in the process of learning the language, so they did not yet speak it fluently. I do not understand Tamil and so first preference was given to the students who spoke Basic English. This was contextual and hence the selection of the participants was criterion sampling. The coordinator of the Kostka College, Rahul, helped me with the selection of the participants, as he knew the students who spoke English. All the four participants were pursuing their diploma in the visual designing program. The founders, administrative members, and the faculty members knew English, so I had a wider pool of faculty members to choose from. In all, I interviewed the director, the coordinator, one faculty member, and four students at Kostka CC.

***Britto community college participants' selection.*** The principal of Britto College, Nitya, opened her doors to me and was willing to help with the resources for the research study. In spite of not having a prior appointment on the first day of our meeting, she provided co-operation and assistance for the study. Most of the students at Britto CC spoke Tamil, which was their regional language. I did not speak the regional language and the common language between the students and me was English. So preference was given to the students who were comfortable in speaking in English. I realized that this narrowed the choice of my participants, but I believe that the data from the students and faculty members was rich and increased the reliability and validity of the sample. There were 250 students studying at this college and Nitya helped me with the selection of the participants. She confirmed with me if I spoke Hindi, as there was one student who knew this language as well. Thus, the sampling method was criterion sampling. I interviewed three students; two were enrolled in the refrigeration and air conditioning program and one in office administration. One of the students spoke Hindi and other two also spoke

basic English. Nitya participated in the interviews, to support the students with translation. I acknowledge and realize the power dynamics of Nitya as a principal and her presence during the interview might have affected the participants' responses. The faculty members spoke English fluently. In all, I interviewed the principal, two faculty members, and three students at Britto CC.

***Bosco community college participants' selection.*** In Gujarat, the participants were enrolled in a two-year diploma program in Office Administration and were in the last phase of the program, pursuing an internship at a MNC. I had a chance to interact with the principal and the nuns who started Bosco CC. Aalya, the principal, supported me in the selection process. The total numbers of students at Bosco College was 280. There were students from diverse parts of Gujarat and few from Maharashtra. The students from Gujarat spoke Gujarati and English fluently and students from Maharashtra spoke Hindi and English. Fortunately, since the local language, Gujarati, is a part of my culture, I was able to communicate with the students in this language. I knew both the languages, so the pool of the participants to choose from was wider. In this case, the sampling method was maximum variation. Although the students had been enrolled in the spoken English program since two years, a couple of them struggled to communicate and took ample time to respond to the questions. The faculty members spoke English fluently. In all, I interviewed five students and two faculty members.

***Victoria community college participants' selection.*** I visited two campuses of Victoria CC, one at Tulsibaug, a remote area, and the other was located in an urban town, Ranchi. Victoria CC was located in Pune and since I knew the local language, it was easier to communicate with the faculty members and participants. The director, Krishna,

helped me with selection of the participants. The students at Tulsibaug campus were enrolled in varied diploma programs like tailoring, cosmetology, and computer designing. I interviewed the director and the coordinator of the Tulsibaug center, who were also the faculty members, and four students. At Ranchi, I interviewed three students and one faculty member. Among the participants at this site, two students were enrolled in spoken English program and one in computer designing. The faculty taught spoken English and provided valuable insights about the college.

There were times when I could not lucidly comprehend what the students meant because of the language issues or heavy regional accent. There were times when students did not understand the questions. In these cases, I slowed down my pace, simplified, and paraphrased the questions. During the interview process, I inquired and clarified with the students from time to time of their viewpoints to ensure that I interpreted them accurately. A few students at Chennai and Pondicherry CC had a heavy south Indian accent, so I struggled to understand certain words and phrases. At these times, my cousin supported me, as she clarified the language and ensured that the participants' responses were interpreted accurately. After the transcription, I did researcher debriefing with my cousin to ensure that I had understood the responses accurately. I shared the transcripts of the non-English speaking students with my cousin for validation of the translation, which helped increase the reliability and validity of the data.

## **Procedure**

Each CC was a different model with a unique style of working. The management at these CCs were the gatekeepers and meeting with them was the first step to gain access to the CCs. If the management disagreed or was hesitant to grant permission, the doors to

that CC were closed. Once the gatekeepers granted the consent to conduct research at the CCs, access to other resources became easier. At all sites, I spoke about my experiences as a doctoral student and my interest in CC. The management at each site was surprised about my interest in CCs. In Pondicherry, Nitya, the principal of Britto College, was open and willing to support me with the research study, so it was easier to get access to the director of the college as compared to other field sites. Nitya's reference played a vital role in connecting me with the director of Kostka CC. The management supported me in selecting and finding the participants.

As I met the participants, I introduced myself and briefed them about the overview of the study and my interest in CCs. I went through the invitation letter with them, so they knew the purpose of the study. Most of the participants spoke English, while some of them were still learning the language. We read the consent form together to ensure that the participants interpreted and comprehended the meaning of the consent form accurately. This helped to establish a rapport in the opening moments and to communicate that there were no right answers to the interview questions. The participants had a choice not to answer any questions that they were uncomfortable with or had an option to withdraw from the study at any point of time. I explained the participants that they could freely express their ideas and opinions, as this information would be confidential and wouldn't be shared with the management. All these factors aided in creating the credibility, which is a vital factor in establishing trust. At the end of the interview, I presented a college bag to all the participants as a token of appreciation except at the Gujarat field site. The principal of Bosco College, at the Gujarat field site, suggested giving an appreciation token to all the 280 students of the CC rather than the

participants only. So, I distributed chocolates to all the students of Bosco College, as a token of appreciation. In all, I interviewed 30 participants at the four field sites and have used a pseudonym for every participant (see Tables 4 and 5).

### **Data Sources**

Data sources consisted of demographic questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, memos, descriptive field notes, and artifacts (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). In order to increase rigor and validity in the study, I employed copious narrative field notes in conjunction with interview data. Additionally, I was conscious about potential personal biases, which may have influenced the findings. I included rich and thick descriptions of the participants, which support the findings. I acknowledged biases in sampling and ongoing critical reflection of methods to ensure sufficient depth and relevance of data collection and analysis.

**Semi-structured interviews.** I used semi-structured interviews for my study. The interview questions were open-ended, which led to an in-depth inquiry and exploration of the meaning of people's experiences in the context of their lives. The rationale of using open-ended questions was to build on and explore the participants' responses. I followed Seidman's (2013) pattern of three series within a single interview. I started with the participants' life history and then we spoke about the institutional experiences. I inquired about the different academic services and policies that were offered at the institute and how these resources affected their experiences at the college. I then asked them what a CC meant to them and about the role it played in their life. This was in alignment with the social-constructivism framework of how the participants

construct meaning and knowledge from their experiences at CCs. Lastly, I asked them to fill in the questionnaire, which aided me to gather their demographic information.

The semi-structured interviews were comprised of a set of questions; however, neither the words nor the order of questions were pre-determined. As the key to meaningful data were good questions, I used Merriam's (1998) four types of questions, (a) hypothetical, (b) devil's advocate, (c) ideal position, and (d) interpretive questions. An example of a hypothetical question was what would happen if you drop out of college? An illustration of devil's advocate was if you were in place of your friend, what would you do/need? An exemplar of ideal position question was what could have been done to prevent a student from dropping out of college? Lastly, an example of interpretative questions was would you say that returning to education is different from what you expected? In my interview, I used a combination of these three kinds of questions. However, sometimes participants struggled to answer the questions, so I paraphrased the questions and simplified them. I gave them adequate time to answer the questions, especially the ones who struggled to communicate in English. I used Hindi, English, and Gujarati language to converse with the participants at the varied field sites.

**Demographic questionnaire.** After the interview, I asked the participants to fill in the demographic questionnaire. The questionnaire was effective in capturing the students' demographics information and served as a useful tool to comprehend the students' profile and background information. The questionnaire provided me with basic information about the participants, for instance: their sex, age, number of people in the family, last grade attended, and grade point average in school (see Table 3). Additionally, the questionnaire provided data such as numbers of work hours per week,

family's income per month, parents' highest level of education, parents' occupation, and siblings' employment, among others (see Table 4). I supported the students who struggled to fill in the questionnaire. I used pseudonyms for all the participants.

**Field notes.** Following Bogdan and Biklen's (2007) method of field notes, my field notes were comprised of ideas, strategies, events, activities, and conversations with people. The field notes were a rich source of data, as they included descriptions of the physical setting, participants' body language, verbal communication, along with hunches and reflections, and the researcher's behavior (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I used descriptive field notes, which included the participants' physical appearance, dress, mannerism, and style of talking and behavior. The description extended to the physical setting as well, for instance, the feel of the location or building where the interview was conducted. During the interview, I made notes of the participants' dress, physical appearance, body language, facial expressions, and method of communication. Along with the description, I accounted for the students' behavior, and inferences. I wrote reflective field notes, which included my personal experiences and subjective interpretation of the experiences throughout the research journey. In the process of describing the college setting and the students, I also added my thoughts and observations about them. I discussed the positive aspects and challenges experienced during the interview.

I was fortunate to have an opportunity to spend an entire day at each of the field sites. At every college, I had to wait to meet the interview participants. So I capitalized on the time to explore the physical setting of the college. I made sketches of the college setting and the place where the interview was held. I took notes on how the college space

was constructed and the resources that were offered to the students. At all the field sites, the management gave me a tour of the college. I felt that the tour was a good platform to observe the place meticulously and learn about the institute's history. At the end of the day, I elaborated on the physical description of the college in my field notes. During the commute to and back from the field sites, I had discussions about my college experiences with my parents, cousins, friends and passengers, as they travelled with me. I have included these interactions and dialogues in my field notes. My field notes were a combination of reflections of my experiences, methods, ethical dilemmas, conflicts, frame of mind, and points of clarification. The field notes provided supplementary source of information about the culture, setting, and social situation of the CCs. The field notes had self-reflection, which aided me to produce meaning and interpret the culture and participants' experiences at the CCs. The field notes were in alignment with the emergent themes that were developed in the coding process.

**Memoing.** I used memoing where in I wrote about the ideas and thoughts that emerged during the analysis process. For instance, I pondered over the role of the CC and its impact on the Indian culture. I also wrote memos on the relationships of the CC with marginalized communities and its impact on the students' experiences. I enjoyed the process of memoing, as there was freedom and creative space to write about the think pieces. During the long commute hours from home to the field sites, several thoughts and ideas struck me and I mapped them into memos. I have provided an example of a memo, which I have employed in my narrative section:

As students spoke about their privileges they enjoyed at Kostka CC, it reminded me of the privilege I received because of Miss Nitya. I had been trying to get in touch with the director of ICRDCE institute for some time without much luck. I had almost given up, until I bumped into Miss Nitya, the principal of Britto CC.



In one of the conversations, I told her about my struggles to connect with the director of ICRDCE. She called his PA and stated that I was her friend. Within a span of five minutes, an interview was scheduled. At Kostka CC, I received a royal treatment, as the coordinator spent an entire day with me and provided adequate support for the interviews. The director's PA welcomed us at the college entrance and escorted us everywhere. As a research student, I struggled to schedule an appointment with the director, but as Miss Nitya's friend we had access to the college. I genuinely understand that individuals at leadership positions are always tied up, but I wonder what would have been the outcome if I were not her friend. In the absence of this network, maybe Kostka CC would have not been one of the field sites. Did we receive the hospitality because I was Miss Nitya's friend or would the CC welcome anyone with open arms? I am not sure; maybe it's a blend of both.

I wrote memos during the coding process, as I moved back and forth with the themes that emerged. I wrote about my experiences at the field sites and the challenges I faced. I kept memos on the similarities and the differences among the field sites. One particular thing that I made note of was the applicability of cultural capital to each site. I elaborated on the concept of social capital and discussed it in the reflection section at the end of each chapter. The additional data helped me to increase the credibility of the research and the trustworthiness of the meanings derived from the data.

**Artifacts.** Tangible artifacts such as pamphlets, emails, books, and photographs (Merriam, 2009) were a part of data collection. At Victoria CC, the management at the field sites shared the pamphlet of the college, which they used for marketing. The letter-sized pamphlet was used constructively, as it displayed information about six programs along with colorful images. The same information was printed on either sides of the paper, one in Marathi and the other in English. The name of the college along with the contact information was displayed in bold letters, so it was easier for people to locate the crucial information. At Britto CC, the director gave me a book as a souvenir. The book had vital information about the foundation, vision, mission, accomplishments, features,

and pictures. Furthermore, the book contained around 40 short moral stories. All the stories were used in the life skills course and these values formulated the foundation of the college. As I read the book, I recognized that these moral values were indeed a part of the college system, as they were evident in the academic services and policies.

Another artifact that I incorporated in the result section was the picture of Britto CC, as it provided the context and setting of the college. A picture of the shed gave the readers a glimpse of the environment in which the initial classes and course work was conducted and the challenges experienced by the faculty and students. I also added a picture of ICRDCE archives where the books, manuscripts, and original documents of the CC plan and policies were saved. Additionally, at Ranchi Campus of Victoria CC, the spoken English faculty member and I discussed the students' performances via email. At the time of the interview, Edha and I connected very well, as we had a similar teaching approach. After the interview, we had informal conversations about the students' profiles, performances, and their proficiency levels. We continued our discussions through email, which was an important source of information. I have incorporated the pieces from our discussions in the narrative section.

### **Data Analysis**

I employed a process of consolidating, reducing, and interpreting the participants' responses. The outcome of the study was presented in descriptive forms, themes, and categories. My analysis focused on the experiences of students and faculty members at CCs in India. Data analysis included open and axial coding (Saldaña, 2009) to analyze the participants' interviews. Open coding has the advantage of starting with a clean slate without defined themes or categories. In addition, the open and axial coding was

selected, as it helped to systematically arrange, classify, and categorize the enormous data (Saldaña 2009). The memos, archival data, survey information and demographics information aided me to comprehend the participants' perspectives and was used to supplement the context and observations that I made at the field sites.

**Coding.** Since the data were vast, I started the analysis with open coding. I read and re-read the interview transcripts and made notes of the codes in the margins of the transcripts. I created codes, which were a blend of the words of the participants, my thoughts, and Tinto's themes (Tinto, 1993). I inserted the responses and codes that emerged from open coding in a Microsoft Word document. I used a separate open coding for each site. The open coding cycle helped me to analyze, prioritize, integrate, synthesize, and conceptualize the data (Saldaña, 2009). The process of open coding was like initial coding, as I aggregated the data, inspected it, and compared the differences and similarities. Open coding helped me to explore all possible theoretical directions. Some of the initial codes that emerged during the open coding were:

- Needs analysis
- Profile of the students
- Enrollment process
- Marketing strategy
- Socio-economic conditions of the students' family
- Faculty's personality
- Teaching methodology
- Faculty approach towards students
- Peer learning
- Step-by-step teaching
- Skills and knowledge acquired
- Role model
- College environment
- Positive aptitude of students
- Extracurricular activities
- Field trips
- Students' attitude and behavior

- Challenges in the classroom

The next step was to consolidate the numerous codes into few narrowed themes and axial coding helped me to accomplish that goal. Axial coding helped me to determine the prominent and less prominent codes. In the analysis process, open and axial coding helped me to develop the themes, while memos, artifacts, and field notes provided additional information that supported the participants' interviews. During the process, I consolidated the data and discarded the duplicate codes. I coded and recoded the data, as I moved back and forth between the data until the themes emerged. On a large sheet of paper, I merged all the codes that were derived from open coding. Using color-coding, I narrowed the list to 15 codes. I repeated the process several times until I had five themes, which were the best representative codes. They were:

- Preliminary Analysis
- Services of the college
- Policies of the college
- Implementation of services and policies
- Outcome-impact on the individual and society

In a pilot project that I completed, I used open coding and domain analysis to analyze the interviews of students who dropped out of college in India (Amlani & Paulson, 2014). I created an attrition model in which I illustrated the probable reasons for student attrition. An analysis of the CCs indicated that they had integrated several academic services and policies for stronger retention of students. So I built on the attrition model and have attempted to show the other side of the coin, which could lead to strong retention of the students (see Figure 5). In addition, I applied Tinto's (1993) framework to compare and contrast Tinto's themes of integration model (Tinto, 1993) with the findings from the research study. I examined Tinto's framework and analyzed if

themes like pre-entry attributes, goals and commitments, formal and informal environment affect the social and academic integration in college and whether these factors impact the students' retention in CCs.

Then, I used two stages of analysis for the case study, within-case and cross-case analysis. I conducted an investigation of each field site, as I accumulated data of the contextual variables of one site. Once the analysis of each site was done, I started the cross-case analysis. Since the field sites varied from each other in terms of model, culture, practices and implementation of the process, I analyzed each field site separately. Thereafter, I conducted a cross analysis of the different sites, which helped me to examine the similarities and differences between the themes at each site. The multisite case study offered diversity that was applicable to other fields.

**Validity.** Green (2015) explains that postpositivist research calls for a validity that does not generalize data because the researcher is studying a particular context and because of the interest in constructing the meaning of the study. In this context, my study is not generalized, as I focused on how the services and policies of the CCs impacted the students' experiences. In this multi-site case study, I employed triangulation and peer examination while being cognizant of my positionality. Through data source triangulation, I examined the consistency of the data from different sources. The different sources that I used for triangulation were cross analysis between the four field sites, artifacts, interviews, observations, memos, and field notes. The methods of triangulation aided me to increase the confidence in the results and validate the data from varied sources. It led to a deeper understanding of how the students' experiences at CCs

impacted their completion. The additional source of information from various sources gave me more insight on understanding the students' experiences at the CC.

Another form of triangulation involves a wide range of informants via data sources (Shenton, 2004), which I have employed in the research study. The four field sites were situated in diverse geographical regions of India: Pune, Pondicherry, Chennai, and Gujarat, which influenced the participants' experiences at the CCs. A cross analysis between the four CCs provided insightful information about their context, culture, need analysis, different academic services and policies, and their implementation. This contextual information was beneficial in understanding how each CC diversely affected the participants' experiences. Also, rich data about the participants' needs, attitudes, and behaviors was constructed based on the contrasting contribution of the participants. This diversity in the regions and cross-analysis between the four field sites strengthened the validity and reliability of the findings.

I also employed peer debriefing to validate the findings of the study. My peers played the role of devil's advocate, as they questioned, analyzed, critiqued, and evaluated the approach, methodology, and the findings of the research study (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). I shared my findings with a few colleagues and asked them to comment on the methodology and findings of the study. The colleagues were from India and United States and this gave me a better understanding of an individual's interpretation in different contexts. Lastly, I was aware of my positionality as a researcher and how it might shape the interpretations of my findings. I have attempted to show the students' stories and ensured that their voices were heard.

## **Positionality**

My own positionality helped me to connect and relate to the students' experiences at the CCs. I was born and raised in a middle class family in India, which helped me to comprehend the socio-economic conditions of Indian society. Additionally, having worked for an NGO has allowed me to meet, interact, and train numerous students from the remote and urban areas of India. In the past, I had the opportunity to visit and work with families of students from lower SES. This previous experience assisted me in comprehending the participants' backgrounds and the context they came from. I realized that working as a faculty member, trainer, and personal tutor have provided me with ample experience of communicating with the students. When I introduced myself to the management at each CC, especially the principal and the director and told them about my study, they were curious to know how my research and findings could help the CCs. My positionality as a doctoral student helped me to associate myself with the management, as most of the directors and principals at the field sites had a Ph.D. degree. The principals of the four field sites had completed their doctorate degree and were familiar with the journey of a doctoral student. I observed that studying at Texas State University and pursuing a doctorate program did not alter how the students perceived me. I looked and dressed like them and did not have a foreign accent, therefore I was treated like an insider and had an emic perspective (Merriam, 2009). Having lived in a joint family with nephews and nieces of various ages gave me a stronger understanding of the students' concerns of Indian educational institutions. According to Indian languages (2015), more than 150 indigenous languages are spoken in India. Each state has a different language; fortunately I speak three local languages—Hindi, Marathi, and Gujarati. Knowing these

local languages was beneficial, as majority of the participants used Hindi and English during the interview process. At Chennai and Pondicherry, language was a barrier with a few participants, as they were not fluent in English and I did not know the regional languages of these places. I am conscious that my personal biases and experiences, my interpretation, coding, and analysis of student interviews could obscure the participants' voices and stories. So, I avoided a more directive and researcher-centered tone and employed lower-inference coding.

### **Summary of Methods**

The process of collecting data through pre-interview questionnaires and semi-structured interviews and analysis of the data through open coding aided me in answering the research questions. The categories with open coding and axial coding helped me to understand the meanings created by the participants through their experiences. I have integrated and used the rich thick descriptions and concrete and contextual knowledge to derive the discussion, implications and conclusion of the study.



## IV – WITHIN-CASE RESULTS

The results section is divided into two chapters: Within-Case Results and Cross-Case Results. The first chapter, Within-Case Results, is organized according to the geographic locations of the field sites. The four field sites were located in Chennai, Pondicherry, Gujarat, and Pune. I have collected data through interviews from 30 participants and have highlighted the major themes that emerged from the analysis of these sites. In the next chapter, Cross-Case Results, I have synthesized the themes from all the field sites and conducted a cross-case analysis between them.

The Within-Case Results chapter presents the findings for the four field sites of Chennai, Pondicherry, Gujarat, and Pune. This chapter is divided into four parts, one for each community college (CC). The first part of the chapter, termed “Serendipity,” delineates the results of Kostka CC; the second part of the chapter is called “The Voyage of Mind, Soul and Body” and describes the findings of Britto CC; “The Peanut Butter Factory,” the third installment of the chapter, illustrates the results of Bosco CC and the final episode, “A Ship in the Ocean,” presents Victoria CC. I used the above metaphors for the different field sites, which emerged from either the coding process, observations, or my experiences at each CC. In each part, I have described the findings, physical descriptions of the setting, background information about the participants and their culture, academic services and policies and their implementation, and the outcomes of the participants’ experiences. I used the themes that emerged from the open and axial coding process and have narrated my experiences at each CC. This chapter attempts to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What are students' perceptions of their experiences in community colleges in India? The ancillary questions for the study were as follows:

- RQ1a. What are students' perceptions of their experiences with academic policies in their community college in India?
- RQ1b. What are students' perceptions of their experiences with academic services in their community college in India?
- RQ1c. What is the perceived impact of the academic services and policies on the students?

RQ2: What are Indian community college faculty and administrative members' perceptions of how academic policies and services affect the students' experiences?

Data analysis that informs each the above questions is reflected throughout this chapter for each field site. The academic services and policies are discussed separately for each field site. In addition, the perceived impact of the academic services and policies is examined in the outcome segment for each field site and is further discussed in the discussion chapter. Additionally, the faculty members' perceptions of how these services and policies have affected the students' experiences are discussed in the implementation section.

### **Serendipity: Kostka Community College**

In this first section of the chapter, the journey and the results of Kostka Community College (CC) are explained. While writing about the experiences, I employed descriptive field notes, memos, participants' quotes, artifacts, and themes that emerged during the analysis process. At the end of this subchapter is a reflection section that summarizes the services and policies of Kostka CC and answered the research questions. Lastly, the results of Kostka CC are connected to the forms of cultural capital and elements of Tinto's model of departure.

Rain on a scorching sunny day, is the metaphor that comes to my mind when I think of the Chennai field site, an act of serendipity where you encounter something that was not expected. When I started my journey to collect data in Pondicherry, I had not imagined that I would be fortunate enough to experience Kostka CC. While planning for my research proposal, I wanted to meet Adam—the director of Indian Center for Research and Development of Community Education (ICRDCE), however, luck was not in my favor and I struggled to get an appointment with him. Little did I know what lay ahead of me, as I started my expedition of data collection.

In Pondicherry, I met passionate individuals who worked solely for the development of society. Among all the people I met, I was greatly touched by the warmth and kindness of Nitya, the principal of Britto CC. To me, she resembles a caring and affectionate mother who works selflessly for the students' welfare. I was in awe of her passion and modesty. With Nitya's help, I was able to schedule an appointment with Adam, the director and Charles, the assistant director of ICRDCE. Since we (my cousin and I) did not have time to make the train reservations, we decided to commute by local

bus. It was a sizzling afternoon, as we headed towards the Public Municipal Transportation (PMT) bus assuming that the commute from Pondicherry to Chennai would be 3 to 3.5 hrs. The color of the interior and the seats appeared to be of the lightest shade of its original color. The bus journey provided plenty of sizzling sunlight, sooty dusty air, and passengers who were a source of entertainment. The bus was a hot oven. The PMT buses in India are the cheapest mode of transport and take forever to get to your destination. The bus rattled through the local narrow roads for 5.5 hours before we reached Chennai.

The bus was crammed with local people from rural villages. The passengers boarded and pushed each other to get a firm foot on the bus floor. The air inside the bus was a blend of passengers' perspiration and dust, with only the hot breeze on our faces providing temporary relief. I observed my surroundings and realized that in India, the skin tone of a person varies by region. I knew this from growing up, but I had not fully realized it until this moment. My skin color and language distinguished me from the local people. I noticed that the passengers seemed unperturbed by the long and tiresome bus journey. Unlike the youth, the other passengers were not hooked onto technology devices. They were either lost in thought or slept. I always thought that since Hindi is our national language, most of the people would know this language. I was wrong, as numerous people in the remote areas and cities still converse in their state language. Before coming to Chennai, our peers had told us that it would be easy to navigate the city as English was spoken by many people. However, we felt this was not completely true especially in the local areas. I realized that because of the variation in the skin tone we

were considered tourists in my own country. At times I felt like a stranger, since I never thought that diversity could create limitations in my own country.

After 5 hours, we arrived in the huge beautiful city of Chennai, the capital of Tamil Nadu. The city was radiant with various vibrant posters and banners of red, yellow, and orange colors. Finally, at 8 p.m. we reached our destination. As strangers in the city, we had no clue about the directions and nor did we have a hotel reservation. We headed towards the main city, as Kostka College was located in this area. Likely because of our skin color and attire, the auto rickshaw driver immediately asked for double transportation fare. It was clear to the driver that we were folks from another state. We choose the bus commute to the railway station. Upon reaching the railway station at 9.00 p.m., we stood on the footpath wondering which direction to go. From the corner of my eye, I saw two police officers; they were tall, dark tone and hefty with big eyes. The stories of police corruption and assaults have frequently been portrayed in the Indian media. Upon seeing this in the news and hearing the stories from people around me, I thought most of the police officers were selfish and corrupt who prioritize their benefits, rather than helping the common person. Due to this stained image of our protectors, I was scared and hesitant to approach them. However, my courageous and bold cousin approached the police officers and inquired about a decent hotel. Our budget was tight, but we wanted a safe place to stay. The police officer signaled us to wait. Within ten minutes they arranged for an auto rickshaw driver who knew Basic English. My perception about the police officers has changed since. We thanked them and proceeded to the auto. The auto driver suggested a non-air conditioned hotel that was a few blocks

away on a busy street. We checked in and tipped Rs.50 (\$1) to the auto driver for helping us find a place to rest.

We decided to retire to our hotel room early that evening, as we had to reach the campus at 8 a.m. the next day. Chennai is known as the ‘hottest city’ in India, but we were fortunate to experience a beautiful pleasant morning. In the early hours, the city was buzzing with traffic and people. The auto driver dropped us at the main gate of Kostka University. The college campus was enormous with security on both sides of the gate. At the end of the entrance lane, there was an information counter. We waited at the information counter for Adam’s personal assistant (PA). The campus was gorgeous and green with several buildings. The main building was a wide two-floor structure with a fountain surrounded by skyscraping coconut trees. Later, while researching online, I discovered that Kostka College is one of the oldest and most highly ranked colleges in India. The architecture of the university is influenced by classical Gothic design. While walking with the PA to the founder’s office, he briefed us about the history of the college. The 100 year old campus is situated on 99-acres of land with tree lined pathways, academic buildings, a library, an internet facility, recreation rooms, a hobby center, canteens, a gothic church, and sports fields. The more recent buildings have a Greek architecture and are painted in yellow, white, and brown. We would have been lost on the campus, if we weren’t accompanied by Adam’s P.A.

The staff at Kostka University was warm and affectionate. We had the privilege to meet Charles, the assistant director of ICRDCE, a priest in his mid-forties. We introduced ourselves and briefed him about my research study. He was impressed that my cousin was pursuing her Masters in counseling and expressed that there was a need

for a counselor at each CC. Charles had recently completed his dissertation on CCs in India. He shared information about his study and revealed that he used mixed methods to accumulate data from 33 CCs in India. He created a questionnaire based on the quality of the experience at CC and was generous enough to give me a copy of his dissertation. Charles summoned Rahul, the coordinator of Kostka CC, and assigned him the responsibility to support us with the resources that were needed for my research study. Rahul was kind enough to spend the entire day with us. He gave us a tour of the college and helped to find participants for the research study.

### **Rendezvous with the Founder of CC in India**

I first heard the term rendezvous from an Indian television show called “Rendezvous with Simi Garewal,” where she interviews eminent individuals from the Indian film industry. Upon my rendezvous with Adam, the director and founder of ICRDCE and CCs in India, I felt as if I had met an important personality who has dedicated his life towards the upliftment of the marginalized community. The meeting with the founder of the CC in India was enriching, as he shared stories of the commencement of CCs. This section responds to RQ2, which deals with the management and administrative members’ perceptions of the impact of the CCs on students’ experiences.

The prestigious Kostka College is known as the “College with Potential for Excellence.” The innovative methods of teaching and evaluation have created name and fame in the hearts of numerous individuals who aspire to study at Kostka College. The founder’s office was located on other side of the campus away from the CC. I was stunned to see that Adam’s PA had come to pick us up in a car. In an everyday scenario,

we would have taken a public bus or auto-rickshaw to commute to the office. Most of the middle-class and lower income families do not have the luxury of a car. In India, a private vehicle with a driver is a privilege and is associated with higher status. We felt like celebrities and immediately hopped in. The commute was almost ten minutes. The office was located on the ground floor of an old building and we were asked to wait outside the office. Adam looked extremely busy. He was on constantly on the phone, and from his conversations, I gauged that he was talking to a faculty member about professional development workshop for teachers of CCs. The spacious office was painted in white and was apportioned in two sections, a meeting room and a personal desk. In the first section, Adam sat on his desk opposite the main door and on the other side; a long wooden table occupied the space with several chairs. On the wall, a calendar and a white board hung with highlighted dates of important events for the year along with public holidays. After a brief introduction, Adam started describing the vision and mission of a CC. The strong tone of his voice and fast pace of his speech made me feel more like his disciple and less like the interviewer. The director spoke about the Indian educational system and the rationale for establishment of CCs. He used the metaphor of a banyan tree to describe CCs. He shared with me how its seed was planted in the ground,

I will say five important points. Number one, we were getting 30,000 applications and I could admit only 1000. Number two, we have parents waiting, 700 to 800 parents waiting outside my room just to meet me for a minute asking for a seat for their son or daughter. Number three; I started asking the question—higher education for whom and for what? Number four, in that crowd, there were



lot of poor people who were children of housemaids, landless laborers, villagers, rural folk, you know, women, all these people wanted to enter into Kostka College because it would give them a good future. So number five, the question that came to me was that are these people not talented or gifted? So I came to the conclusion, they are not able to get into Kostka College because of lack of opportunity and they do not have the economic means.

In this short discourse, Adam painted a picture of the scarcities in the Indian education system: limited seats in four-year universities, minimal education opportunities, and limited resources for students from lower social economic status (SES). In the year 1992 during his time as the principal of Kostka College, Adam was disturbed to see hundreds of people queued up outside his office. Most of these people were parents of students who were unable to secure an admission in the college due to low grades. These parents had been waiting for long hours to request the principal to grant admission to their children. One day, he invited these parents to a conference hall and requested them to note down the reasons for applying to Kostka College. Securing a good job, acquiring education to increase the standard of living, and eliminating poverty were some of the reasons put forward by them. Adam was distressed after reading the responses and went through a phase of what he termed as “holy disturbance” and started the search for autonomous colleges in India. In his research, he came across an article on CCs in the U.S.A and discovered a new model. He shared,

In a community college, there is no age bar, no minimum qualification, and all these colleges are serving as feeder colleges to universities. So the whole system is accepted. So there is a possibility of a school dropout, possibility of an Afro-

American or a Mexican or a refugee from any part of the country who comes there has a chance to become a full-fledged graduate because of community colleges. So it is a people's college, it is a democratic college, which insists on equal opportunity. And the five important aspects that touched me were access, equity, equal opportunity, cost-effectiveness, and quality training. A chairman of the Indian Bank from a corporate social responsibility section told me that community college is a great idea, nobody knows about it in India.

Adam was keen to understand the workings of the CC model in USA and thus he decided to take a trip. With the help of a scholarship and family in USA, he explored various CCs for seven months in what he termed as the incubation phase. He narrates,

Very important thing in Bunker Community College, Boston, I sat at the gate and watched, who are the people who are coming? They are coming from different nationalities and different cultures. So I was sitting in the security cabin close by and watching. So all age group people are coming, everybody is there and college goes on from morning six o'clock till evening ten o'clock, or eleven o'clock, library is open. I was amazed, you know. I said my God, if such a system can work in India, how many poor people will benefit.

I was fascinated to hear his experience. He had the drive, patience, and sincere commitment to fulfill a dream. Adam studied about the vision and mission statement, the academic services and policies of CC and how the model was implemented. He spends extensive time on understanding the CC model.

India has an emerging economy; it is to be seen whether the fruits of development are benefitting all classes of the society. I was dazed when Adam stated that there are 42

million unemployed graduates in Chennai (Alphonse, 2010). Like peeling the layers of an onion, he stated the troubling statistics of the youth in India,

In India, the most important thing is we have to take care of lower castes, backward classes, scheduled castes, and scheduled tribes. And they are economically poor; the statistical data shows that 400 million people in India who don't even earn one dollar a day. And another thing they are educationally backward, which means by fifth grade you have a dropout of at least 30 percent, by eighth grade another 30 percent. The biggest dropout takes place after 12<sup>th</sup> grade. People don't go for higher education; they simply remain in schools because government schools are free. People study in schools but they don't want to go to college.

India's economy is evolving in one sector and on the other hand it is entangled in poverty. In 1996, Adam invited the parents of students who were waiting for admission in the community hall of the college and presented the Indian CC model to them (Alphonse & Valeau, 2009). The parents were hesitant about how students would obtain a job with barely a certificate program. The director addressed the parents' concerns and described the CC model, which consists of life skills, work skills, internship, and evaluation with a guaranteed job. There was a mixed response from the crowd. The founder with a small team started working on the design, structure, funds, and curriculum of the model. The first CC in India was established in the year 1996 and in dialogue with the principal of two catholic colleges, admitted 100 dropouts (Alphonse & Valeau, 2009). At the end of the first year, all 100 students were employed.

The journey of CC has been mountainous, as it took around ten years to articulate the concept, convince people, and recognize CC in the Indian educational system. There are cultural, social, and economic factors that were associated with the recognition process. In general, the people in India have a mindset that if the government does not recognize a college or program, then the quality of the program is not good. As there are several vocational institutes in India, there was a perception that the CC is another form of vocational institute. It took a while for the people in India to understand the objectives and model of a CC. Only after a few years in the system, people recognized that the CC varied from a vocational institute in terms of its objectives, policies and services and offered assured employment and internships. Since the concept of CC was completely new and adopted from USA, it took a while for the founders to articulate the concept in a language that was understood and accepted by society. Change is not easily accepted; it has to be experimented, proved, and approved. The stakeholders who approve the change process in the Indian educational setting are the society, industrial partners, and government. It took around ten years for the society, industry, and the government to accept and embrace the CC model. Adam shared,

We had a very well defined system, life skills for four months, work skills for six months, and internship for two months. But mind you for ten years, we had no recognition from anybody. We were issuing our own certificates from the time we began from 1996 to 2000. After this period, we got societal recognition, employers' recognition, and industrial recognition. They said this is exactly the system we want; you are giving us the skills which people need.

The recognition and acceptance of CC in the Indian educational system was a big achievement for ICRDCE. The CC aims to groom the individuals with life skills and work skills, which in turn is contributing towards creating good citizens for society. The Association of Community Colleges is a nodal agency for all CCs in U.S.A; similarly, ICRDCE, the Indian agency was established in Chennai (ICRDCE, 2007). The agency has contributed to the development of CCs in India. Currently, in India there are three types of CCs. Adam explained the models,

So we have now three types of community colleges in the country, it is where you have to really understand. Many people from USA don't understand this. The first kind is NGO community college, which are 340, as I told you, we are 214. The second type is UGC community college; the only limitation is that they can admit only students who have passed 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Kostka Community College falls under the UGC category. The third model is called BVoc degree. BVoc degree means Bachelor of Vocational Studies, pursuing the program for three years, the first year leads to a diploma, second year to advanced diploma, and the third year mobilizes to a bachelor degree. The government is supporting the colleges with financial funding and recognition...so I would summarize saying that, now as a pioneer, as a founder what gives me satisfaction, what makes me happy is that somehow I have been able to articulate the concept and it has spread throughout India.

This was a new piece of information for me. The model of CC is uniform throughout America; however, the Indian CC looks, feels, and works differently from the American

colleges. Even though the idea of CC was adopted from U.S.A, the model has evolved to better suit the cultural, social, and economic needs of India.

During the rendezvous, Adam was calm and comfortable; I inferred that he must have shared his profound story on several occasions. He spoke about the induction, policies, future plan, challenges, and outcomes of the CCs, and the leadership role he played in the establishment of the CC. He had a clear vision of the CC in India and came across as a strong leader.



**Figure 2. Documentation room of ICRDCE.** An office where the books, manuscripts, and original documents of the CC plan and policies are saved.

Adam recommended that we should visit the ICRDCE center and purchase books that would benefit us in effectively understanding the concept of CC. ICRDCE institute has two offices in the same building. The first floor was used for administrative purpose and second floor was a treasure chest that is comprised of books, papers, manuscripts,

and original documents related to CCs since 1992. The second floor was a one-bedroom apartment. A picture of the documentation room of ICRDCE is shown above. This room consisted of old documents, manuscripts, grant application, and conference papers.

Adam has published several books. We had a chance to examine the books, manuscripts and original documents. My meeting with the founder was a fruitful and experiential learning for me.

### **Digging the Ground: Preliminary Analysis**

I have presented the results of Kostka CC through five themes. The five themes are preliminary analysis, policies and curriculum, services, faculty, and outcome. I have used a metaphor steps involved in planting a tree to discuss these themes, which are as follows; digging the ground: preliminary analysis, sowing the seed: policies and curriculum, nourishing the soil: services provided by the CC, watering the tree: the faculty, and a banyan tree: the outcome. Throughout this section, I have shared the faculty members' perceptions about how academic services and policies affect students' experiences, which is in reference to RQ2.

Adam used the metaphor of a banyan tree to describe the CC. A seed that he sowed almost 20 years ago has matured and many people are relishing the fruits. A great deal of planning and preparation goes into sowing the seed of a CC. Each CC conducts a preliminary analysis that is generally done by the coordinator before enrolling the students. At Kostka CC, this preliminary investigation comprises of need analysis, accumulation of students' background information, formal and informal assessment, and marketing of the program.

**The gardener.** Gardeners are usually responsible for cultivating and growing all types of plants, flowers, and trees in green spaces. Similarly, a coordinator of a CC is a person who plays a vital role in establishing the college. Hence, I use the analogy of a gardener to describe the coordinator of Kostka CC, Rahul. He had extensive knowledge of CCs and was an excellent communicator. Rahul walked us through the Kostka campus and educated us about the history of the college. The university was 100 years old, one of the most prestigious campuses in the state of Tamil Nadu. We got a chance to peep inside the massive library, where 109,000 books surrounded me. At that moment, I felt I was at a prominent international library. The library had the latest technology and provided 24 hours access to the students.

Tea, also known as *chai* in the local language, is an essential part of the Indian culture. Tea stalls are ubiquitously found on almost every street in India, near industrial areas, markets, offices, colleges, and schools, almost everywhere. In India, tea is usually offered to welcome any guest in the house. Friends meet up for tea, business deals are made over tea, and colleagues have a cup of tea during breaks. Teatime, also referred to as “*chai* time,” is a platform to participate in conversations and socializing. The campus at Kostka CC had several *chai* stalls. Rahul was extremely cordial and offered us a cup of tea. Over the *chai*, we shared our stories, which created a strong rapport between us. This relationship assisted me to become an insider and have an emic perspective that contributed in building trust with the participants. After completing his masters in sociology, he worked as a social mobilizer in a non-profit organization. Later in his career path, Rahul worked for a multinational company (MNC) and assisted the organization to establish a CC for lower SES groups. From there on, he has worked as a



coordinator and head of department for numerous CCs for seven years and played a vital role in laying the foundation of the colleges. Rahul had rich experience working with local people, enrolling students, meeting stakeholders, meeting families, building the staff, and creating awareness among people.

After the cup of coffee, we followed Rahul to the CC. Located in an adjacent building; the college had an advanced computer lab with 20 sparkling computers. Rahul informed us that the CC had recently obtained UGC affiliation and was funded with 80,000 dollars (Rs.50 lakhs). The UGC criteria limit the enrollment to 50 students per cohort. With limited students in each cohort, the UGC encourages the college to focus on quality skill-based education. Since it was a new construction, the building had an elevator, as compared to most traditional four-year universities, which have staircases. The four-story building was painted in bright colors and the CC was located in a corner of the top floor. The space consisted of three rooms—two classrooms and an administrative office with a multi-purpose hall. The administrative office was a small room with one-desk and three to four chairs. The multi-purpose hall was a modern room with an air conditioner and a projector. Behind the administrative office, there was a narrow space with piles of papers and books that sat on a long table and a water filter with a sign—only for staff and faculty members. I presumed that this narrow space belonged to the coordinator, faculty members, and staff. After the office tour, we headed towards the classroom where a spoken English class was in session. Rahul introduced us and briefed the students about my research study and inquired if there were any volunteers for the interview. The students whispered to each other with nervous smiles on their faces. The current cohort of students were in the process of learning spoken

English, hence I had a limited pool of English speakers to choose from. Apart from the students, I intended to interview administrators, faculty members, or staff members. At Kostka CC, I had the chance to interview the coordinator, the director of ICRDCE, and a faculty member. Their stories helped me understand the formulation and implementation of academic policies and services at the newly established center of Kostka College.

**Enrollment process.** Each CC assesses the needs of the students, based on which it formulates a marketing plan. Kostka CC has a unique strategy of door-to-door marketing.

*Bringing the college to your doorstep.* As a student in India, I attended a traditional four-year university. The admission process entailed visiting the campus, obtaining an admission form, filling the form, and standing in a long queue for submission of the required documents. This has been the experience for thousands of students in India. When Rahul spoke about the enrollment process at their CC, the method was upside down. The CC has a fascinating marketing strategy where the coordinator along with the staff goes door to door in several villages to enroll students into the college. Rahul emphasized that the only mode of communication that works at Kostka CC is going directly to the people. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the popular forms of communication are technology and media. Then one would wonder what could be the benefits of door-to-door marketing. Responding to this question, Rahul stated,

We have discussions, dialogues, and conversations with parents and family members. Through this system, I have enrolled the students in CC. If we market the CC through pamphlets, they look at the pamphlets; they glance at it and throw it away. This is the mentality of the people. Therefore, we don't believe in

distribution of pamphlets. Father Adam has been insisting that we make spot admissions. He suggests talking to them in their houses and enrolling the students in college there and then. Giving the pamphlets won't work and putting an advertisement in the newspapers will not work too. People in the slums cannot afford a cup of tea, how will they have enough money to buy a newspaper? Buying and reading newspaper is for higher level, so advertisement in newspaper would be a waste of time and money.

Rahul further stressed that enrolling family members in open and honest discussions work in their favor. Concurrently, breaking the ice with families is arduous and one of the biggest challenges of CC. Most of the families in the remote areas belong to SC and BC and day-to-day survival is a brutal reality of their lives. Rahul shared,

When we go their houses, we observe the economic conditions of the families, the number of household members, and financial condition. We also observe whether parents are living separately or together and the relationship with their children. So when we are in the field, we learn about the students' background. This is the only way to bring the students to college.

Thus, visiting the families serves a two-fold purpose: marketing the CC and informal assessment of the families' social and economic conditions. Rahul revealed that due to longer exposure in this field, he is strongly acquainted with the parents' grass root concerns and perceptions towards education. While conversing about the parents' concerns, he disclosed,

The first and foremost question the parents ask us is about job placement. They are ready to send their child to the college, but what about the placement. The

second question they inquire is whether the program is free. Even when we are talking with different NGOs, the directors ask us the same questions, whether the students have to make a part payment, full payment or negligible amount. Of course, advertisement is one of the methods of communication, but the most effective way is meeting the people directly. As I mentioned previously, there are several advantages of meeting people such as doing spot admissions, inquiring and assessing the students' needs. Based on this assessment, we decide the future course of action. In case they need time to make a decision, we give them adequate time and visit the house after two or three days.

The structure of Kostka CC addresses the parents' fears; first it offers guaranteed jobs. Second, the cost of the program for one year is moderate Rs.6000 (\$100). The students can pay in installments and are occasionally given grace period for making the payments. Rahul spoke about two vital features of their CC: spot admission and need analysis. The management invests adequate amount of time in discussions and dialogues with the family members, so the meeting could lead to spot admissions. Additionally, the members analyze the needs of the students in terms of transportation cost, mid-day meals, and support them with flexible services and policies. Another strong mode of communication is word of mouth; alumni spread the good word about the college. This positive feedback augments the goodwill of the college, which results in greater enrollment of students in the vicinity and a higher component of trust among the family members.

*Need for a needs analysis.* In the process of planting a tree one of the steps is to select a suitable region, climate, and space. Similarly, a need analysis is conducted

during the establishment of the college that assists in locating employment opportunities for their prospective students based on emerging economic and industrial patterns. The analysis also helps to respond to the needs of the local community, discover trends in population growth, and preserve local talents. Adam reiterates the significance of need analysis,

So the colleges have to do the need analysis before starting this program. And the most important thing I tell them is not to create any new infrastructure, not waste your money on infrastructure. Use the existing infrastructure because according to me 50% of infrastructure in Indian education institutions is wasted. They are not put to optimum usage. All evening, college remains empty, nothing happens. So we decided to utilize the existing infrastructure.

Each college offers programs based on the emerging industrial patterns. Over the last couple of years, Chennai's economy has undergone a drastic change from being an automobile manufacturing economy to social media and information technology (Mitra, 2013). Chennai's media industry is booming and the city has a high literacy rate. Skilled technical individuals are available at reasonable wages. Following this industrial pattern, Kostka CC currently offers a one-year diploma program in visual designing. Kostka CC was inaugurated recently in 2014. In the near future, the college intends to offer a two-year diploma program in visual designing leading to a bachelor's degree in the third year. It also plans to offer new programs depending on industrial trends and social needs of the society.

## **Sowing the Seed: Policies and Curriculum**

Just like the seed of a tree develops into strong roots and forms its base, the core policies provide a strong foundation to the CC. Kostka CC has incorporated policies like student orientation, a three-month internship, guaranteed jobs, parent-teacher meetings, empathetic approach towards attendance, and grace period to pay the fees. The curriculum comprises of spoken English and life skills courses, and comprehensive student assessment.

**Orientation.** Orientation of the students and the faculty members before the beginning of the semester is a vital policy at Kostka CC that is intended to create a strong rapport with the students. I met Ishwar, an interviewee, during the class tour. I remember him distinctly among the class of 20 students, as he wore a bright blue T-shirt. He was soft spoken and sat upright, looking directly in my eyes while conversing. Ishwar was one of the few students in the classroom with English medium schooling and was pursuing his engineering. He did not boast about the fact that he was one of the fluent English speakers in his cohort. Ishwar spoke rapidly with a heavy south-Indian accent and it took me a while to get accustomed to his speech. He was excited about the program and was keen to share his experience at the CC. Before joining CC, Ishwar was pursuing a Bachelor's in Engineering. At the end of the first year, he failed in two courses and dropped out of the program. As a dropout, he felt disheartened and guilty about his performance at college. As an alternative, he started looking for short-term certification programs. One-day coincidentally, Ishwar's brother visited PACE, a vocational branch of Kostka College that offers certification programs. The PACE Institute directed Ishwar's brother to Kostka CC and he led Ishwar to Kostka CC. Ishwar

is passionate about visual communication and thoroughly appreciates the course. When I inquired about the concept of CC, he answered,

The college had organized an orientation program for all the students. They explained us the program content, program information, and the number of hours required to complete the course. They introduced us to the faculty members and explained how the program would be taught.

At the beginning of the semester, the college organizes an orientation program for all the students. The orientation program is a platform to explain the CC philosophy, structure of the program, policies and procedures, and address students' concerns. Among the four students, only Ishwar and Jai knew and understood the concept of a CC. Other students had limited understanding of the CC and were apprehensive about the acceptance of the program in the job market. The students had varied perceptions about the concept of a CC.

**Three-month internship.** Another essential policy of the CC is a three-month internship that is integrated into the coursework. The CC believes in providing work skills to students and in most cases, the students are hired at the companies where they pursue their internship. Each CC strives to find an internship placement for the students in collaboration with the industrial partners (Alphonse, 2010). Assessment of the internship is part of the overall evaluation process. In the interview, Rahul placed a great emphasis on the internship phase. Throughout the coursework students are equipped with the skills that the employer is looking for.

**Assured jobs.** Another distinguishing policy of Kostka CC is supporting the students with assured jobs in the field of visual designing. While interviewing Jai, I was

surprised with his educational qualifications. Jai had pursued his bachelor's and master's in sculpturing from a four-year university. He had applied for a PhD program in sculpturing in India and did not secure an admission. With limited seats, the admission process was competitive. Jai learned about the programs at Kostka CC when the college visited his neighborhood. Instead of wasting one year, Jai decided to capitalize on the opportunity and enrolled at Kostka CC. Jai believed that his aptitude and interest in sculpture are in alignment with the visual designing program. While a guaranteed job placement is the feature that appeals to most of the students, there are exceptions. Jai states, "I am aware that this course offers a job. But I am not doing this course for job purpose and I won't accept it. My purpose to come to CC is to learn new skills." Jai's sole intention of joining the CC was to acquire new skills and knowledge. In his neighborhood, Jai teaches sculpturing to young children and earns his income. After the completion of the program, he intends to pursue a PhD. He is confident that he would implement and integrate the skills of CC in his higher studies. Alternatively, the other participants, Bhumi, Aarushi, and Ishwar intend to accept the job opportunity; the guaranteed job gives them a sense of security and ability to focus on the program.

**Parent-teacher meetings.** Parent-teacher meetings are held at Kostka CC regularly. In India, people usually associate parent-teacher meetings with primary school. When I was a student and a faculty in a four-year university, I do not recall having a parent teacher meeting. The CC philosophy and policies however are different, as they believe in building relationships. At the end of the mid-term exams, the college will conduct a parent-teacher meeting. Rahul, the coordinator of the college said,



In the future, we are planning to have a parent meeting; we want to discuss the students' performance and we want to inquire how students' behave at home. We are thinking of having parent meeting once in a month. We have the parents' contact details and we can communicate with the parents through text message. Communication with the parents is really important. There are several things on the platter, but everything is in the planning stage.

The college is still in the phase of implementing the services and policies, as this is the first cohort of students. The meeting is an opportunity to connect with the parents and update them with the students' academic and non-academic performance.

Communication plays a significant role in creating strong relationships and this assists the college in monitoring the attendance of the students. While conversing about the attendance policy, Rahul remarked,

If a student misses a class for two to three consecutive days, then I immediately contact the parent. I inquire the reason for not attending the college. If a parent responds saying that their child is attending college, then I identify that there is some kind of deviation between the student and parent's statement. If the same student comes to college the next day, we don't inquire in front of the entire class.

We prefer not to ask him on the same day and we would inquire after a day or two. If we pressurize the student and force him, then the student will think we have boycotted him from the area. We should not give the room for that.

Rahul highlights the importance of attendance policy; if a student is absent, the faculty member contacts the coordinator immediately. During my years in school in India, I remember the teachers' harsh reactions when we missed a single day of school. The CCs

are more considerate with the attendance issues. Rahul believes in a one to one conversation with the student. He thinks dialogues are better than judgments.

**Grace period.** Kostka CC offers grace period for payment of fees to its students, which is a vital part of the college policy. All the interview participants belonged to the SC/ST class with family income below \$200 per month (see Table 4). As per the CC policies, students are allowed to pay the fees in installments. As Bhumi states, “The cost of education is reasonable. It’s Rs.6000 and we can pay in six to seven installments. There are times when I cannot pay; we have been given extra grace period to pay the amount later.” The flexibility in the policy helps the students from losing an academic year and gives adequate time to make the payments. In most of the regular colleges, a student’s admission is cancelled and he/she loses an entire year, if they fail to make the payment on time.

**English language skills.** Spoken English is an integral part of the college curriculum and all students have mandatory Spoken English course. The students revealed that one of their academic challenges was speaking fluent English. The CC places a great significance on communication skills. Although spoken English is taught in school, the students’ proficiency depends on their school, family environment, and interaction with their peers. Faculty members employ various instructional strategies to teach the students according to their pace and competence. Ishwar shared,

I know how to read Basic English and I can manage to talk in this language. I have studied about the past, present, and future tense in school and college. But I never understood it properly. After coming to CC, in the spoken English class, the faculty member explained the concept of tenses and made us practice the

concepts. Finally, now I understand the differences between the tenses. For each topic, the faculty gives an example and then asks us to create an example. Thus, we are learning and implementing at the same time. Also, while we are creating examples, the faculty analyzes whether we have understood the concept and if not, he teaches us again.

The college offers several opportunities to practice and learn the concepts. Faculty members spend extensive amount of time in creating new strategies for the spoken English program. At times, the faculty members have to spend additional time on novice students. Jai a student from Chennai remarked,

Yes, I haven't worked on my communication skills. This course is helping me to work on my communication skills. First of all I don't know grammar at all, I don't know English words and I don't know how to translate Tamil in English. Since the time I have joined the program, I have to study 200 to 300 English words and translate Tamil in English.

All the participants spoke in English throughout the interview. I inferred from the students' conversations that they all were at different proficiency levels. Occasionally during the interview the students needed support with questions/words and responses. I gave them adequate time so they could think, translate, and respond in English.

**Comprehensive curriculum.** The curriculum of the Indian CC was designed with the aim of making students self-reliant and achieving the motto of "Fit for Life and Fit for a Job" (Alphonse, 2010). It is a comprehensive curriculum consisting of life skills, work skills, internship, and employment preparedness. Life skills are a critical component of the course, as these skills equip the students to become strong and positive

and are vital for survival in a challenging world. The participants' thoughts about the comprehensive curriculum provided insights on how the curriculum impacted their experiences at CC.

The coordinator of Kostka College has taught life skills for several years and he believes that these skills are essential to complete the program. He states, "We place great emphasis on the life skills course, as the skills of this course will help the students to survive the program for the entire year." Further, the program grooms an individual's personality, soft skills, and hard skills. When I questioned Ishwar about the importance of life skills, he replied,

In daily life, we face many problems. As youths we don't know how to manage and deal with our emotions and problems. It teaches us how to deal with a problem without getting angry and without getting into fights. After the completion of the course, I can use the skills while working in the office too. I will be able to deal with work pressure; hence I find the course relevant.

All the participants shared that they learned to deal with their anger in the life skills course. Additionally, Ishwar said, "no one teaches an individual to cope with criticism, anger, stress, shame, and loneliness." He faced stress, shame, guilt, and criticism when he dropped out of the engineering program. During this phase he struggled to deal with his emotions. This course helped him emotionally and increased his self-confidence and self-esteem. Jai used the term experiential knowledge for life skills. He clarified that the life skills course is helping him discover his strengths and areas of improvement and deal with his darkest fears.

The second and third components of the curriculum are work skills and internship. Collaborating with various industries to train students and providing employment was a huge success for CCs. Adam, the director of ICRDCE, explained,

The community college is not a college; it is a system. We collaborate with the industries and they perform for us and help us in developing the curriculum and defining the skills they need. They came as part-time lecturers, they were members of the boards of studies, they were also members of the boards of management and finally they took our students for internship and placement.

Then we had a very well defined system...

Adam added that students who have performed well in the internship have frequently found placement in the same institution. Thus, industrial collaboration with the CCs is a key to employability. The fourth component of the curriculum is evaluation, which is done by four people: the life skill instructor, the work skill instructor, the industrial supervisor, and self-assessment of the individual student. He further elaborated that the ICRDCE has devised a self-assessment chart (rubrics) and each person is required to complete the rubrics as part of the assessment process. The students obtain feedback from diverse sources and improvise their skills and knowledge. In this section, I address RQ1a and RQ1b, which deal with students' perceptions of their experiences in CCs in India. In this section, I specifically presented findings that informed an understanding of the students' perceptions with academic policies. The participants' experiences with policies relating to orientation, grace periods, English skills, parent-teacher meetings, assured jobs, three-month internships, and comprehensive curriculum as discussed above, indicate that these academic policies are designed by the CCs to cater to the students'

needs and seek to enable an environment conducive to helping students to complete their program successfully. The various academic policies are helping the students to develop skills that would assist them for life.

### **Nourishing the Soil: Services Provided by the CC**

The services of CCs are similar to an organic fertilizer that improve the soil texture and protect the plants against pests and diseases. Students at each campus have different needs and the CC address these needs in the form of academic services and policies. Kostka CC provides the following services: affordable fees, payment in installments, transportation pass, mid-day meals, part-time jobs, counseling and mentoring, computer labs, field visits, and training workshops. In the forthcoming section, I address the RQ1a and RQ1b—specifically, students’ perceptions of academic services at their CC—through presenting analyses of students’ lived experiences at their CC as they related them to me. In general, these services appear to aid the students in overcoming their financial, emotional, linguistic, and academic challenges in a way that can lead to social and academic integration in college.

At Kostka College, I interviewed four students and three staff members. Rahul introduced me to Aarushi, the first participant at this college, who was wearing Indian attire, a red and blue *salwar kameez*. She was fiddling with her dupatta (scarf), as she sat down on a chair across from me. I smiled and asked her about her well-being; she greeted me with a big grin. While my cousin was helping me to set up the resources for the interview, we communicated in Hindi, our regional language. Hearing us speak in Hindi, Aarushi also began to converse with me in Hindi. I was surprised to hear her speak in Hindi, our native language; she revealed her affinity for Bollywood movies.

With similar interest the ice between us melted. Aarushi belongs to a SC tribe and at the time of the interview her father was unemployed. With no source of income, the family survives on minimal monetary support from relatives. Before enrolling at Kostka CC, Aarushi attempted to secure an admission seat in the Visual communication program at another college. She explained,

Then I got a call from Don Bosco University for Visual communication. They asked for Rs.35000 (\$600) and I did not have the money. My family background is very poor and I could not afford the fees, so I did not join the college. In fact, I applied at Kostka University (regular college) they took my interview for the program, hmmm... but I was not selected. And hmmm...the first pence is only for Christians. Hence, I was not selected.

Kostka University is a catholic minority institution, which was founded by the Society of Jesus and Kostka CC is part of this university. The college aims to provide education in a Christian atmosphere for deserving students irrespective of caste and creed. The Visual communication program is offered at Kostka University and Kostka CC. Since Kostka CC is a new institution, the students were selected from the pool that had applied to Kostka University. Most of the students belonged to lower SES. In order to secure admission, the students had to appear for a written exam and an interview. Aarushi enjoys the course immensely and feels privileged to be a part of the CC.

**Affordable cost.** The CC policy ensures that the course fees are nominal, so students from lower-income groups can take advantage of the program. Aarushi spoke about the fees being reasonable, “the cost of the program for one year is Rs.6000 (\$100) and we can pay in installments. So I am paying in installments.” Aarushi lives in a

remote village where the commute from home to college is an hour and half each way. She used public transport for the commute since it was cheaper. With limited financial ability, Aarushi struggled to pay the bus fare and wondered if the college could support her with the expense;

When I inquired about the transportation cost, Rahul sir (the coordinator) said that they would provide me with a bus pass. It's very difficult to commute each day to college and it's expensive. Each day I pay Rs.60 (\$1). I shared my concern with them; Rahul sir said he would talk to the Head of Department and get back to me. He said he is in discussion with the authority.

For Aarushi, paying the transportation cost from her pocket was beyond her financial ability. The monthly travel cost would amount to Rs.1500 (\$25), which would definitely pinch a common man's pocket in India. Rahul affirmed that the management was working on the transportation vouchers and they would hopefully be available soon. In remote areas, the schedule of public buses is uncertain, and Aarushi has to wait for a long time for the bus. She stated,

Bus is my challenge, as it doesn't come on time at all. Due to this I reach late to college. Today morning I was late. The faculty member does not shout or scold me. In fact, sir asked me to perform an act or sing a song or speak in English for few minutes.

The college starts at 9.30 a.m. and due to unpredictable bus timings, Aarushi arrives late on several occasions. In a regular college, if a student arrives late for the class, they either miss the lecture or may not be permitted in the classroom. Since the faculty members of the CC are aware of students' circumstances, they approach the situation



with empathy and affection. When I asked Aarushi about what she learnt at the CC, she made an interesting comment,

Initially, I was always in a hurry to do things, haste is waste...Now I feel I am much more patient and working on my patience skills. I have to wait for long hours for the bus. In my other college, I would not wait for so long. If the bus were late, then I would miss the day at school. But now because of my family situation and my desire to attend college, I am not impatient. Even if the bus is late, I patiently wait and do not miss my class at the community college.

Apart from providing financial subsidy, the college provides transportation vouchers and the faculty members are empathetic towards the students in unavoidable circumstances. All the services are intertwined with each other to ensure retention in college.

**Mid-day meals.** Kostka CC was the only one among the four field sites that intends to offer mid-day meal service to the students. Along with technical skills and knowledge, the CC experience is teaching the students to deal with their emotions and changing their perception towards life. Transportation struggle is a tiny fraction of their hardships. Many students undergo emotional, mental, and physical adversities because of unstable home environments. Rahul spoke about a stirring reality of the students' challenges. He explained,

Every day when I see their faces, I can gauge what is happening. If the students are upset or sad, this expression is visible on their faces. We do groundwork on the background of the families; so to a great extent, we know what kind of challenges the students are struggling with. For example, I ask them if they have had their breakfast or not; the students say nothing and I understand that the

students haven't had their breakfast. By seeing the faces, I can find out what is happening with them.

In India, a huge percentage of the population is living at or below the poverty line and their entire lives are spent on fulfilling the basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing. Many families struggle to earn two meals a day. I wondered how students in the classroom could be attentive and focused on an empty stomach. Reading my facial expressions, Rahul responded,

Some of the students stay near the college and some students stay away. I don't know in the morning if they have their breakfast or not, so we are planning to provide them meals in the college. Also, this is a community college and the focus has to be on these people. We are planning to give them mid-day meal coupons, which would be acceptable at the canteen. This is still under process, and hopefully it will get approved this week or next week.

A mid-day meal service would be beneficial for the students' wellbeing, as they wouldn't have to incur food expenses. The CC is seeking to make students financially independent and is planning to provide part-time jobs. The service of part-time jobs is a new concept in this CC and is a work in progress. Rahul stated,

Another element we were looking at was offering part time-jobs to students. We are looking for part time-jobs in the companies where the students can work in the evening. The students can work from six o' clock in the evening to ten o' clock in the night. These jobs will give them experience and source of income which will support the students and their families. We are still working and planning on this

service and finding out whether this option is viable. We are finding the companies for placing the students.

A part-time job would help the students financially and provide an opportunity to have hands-on experience in the field of visual communication while studying the program. Thus, the CC is in the process of formulating and implementing services that could accommodate the students' needs.

**Counseling and mentoring.** Another service that Kostka CC offers to support the students is counseling and mentoring. The faculty members acknowledged that there were a few students in the classroom that had adolescent behavioral problems. In many cases, the students' home environments were detrimental. All the faculty members and coordinators counsel and mentor the students. The CC has recently engaged the services of a full-time counselor as well. Rahul revealed,

First of all, we always tell the students that each individual has some or the other problem in life. Each problem has a solution. While problems are everywhere, we have to find a solution. Whether at home or at school, there will be challenges. The important thing is to deal with the problem. In the beginning of the semester, I tell the students that if you have personal problems, please come and meet me. In the case of girls, I tell them if you have personal problems, please go and meet the counselor. Since I have the experience in this field, I can identify the problems. And especially since most of the students are adolescent, I am aware of the problems that the students might face.

Rahul has a B.A. in sociology and with tremendous experience in the field, he counsels the students regularly. Shweta, a faculty member at the CC, acknowledged the fact that

few students were mischievous. Counseling and mentoring strategies are helpful in dealing with these students. Shweta shared her classroom experience,

Yes, I counsel the students and have a one to one conversation with them.

Among the 20 to 25 students, three to four students are mischievous. If I point to the mischievous student in front of everyone, then they would feel very bad.

They might feel guilty, so I silently observe the entire class. After the class is over, I ask the student to stay back and then I have a one-to one conversation with them. I have a discussion with the students, and through the discussion they reflect on their actions and relate to what I am saying.

All the members at the CC have been trained in counseling and mentoring and they work as one team to support the students. Mentoring and having discussions and dialogues aid the students to reflect on their actions. Rahul asserts that mentoring and counseling are critical services, as these ensure student retention in the college for a year, which helps to deal with attrition.

I greeted Bhumi, another student at Kostka College, as she entered the room. She wore a navy blue *salwar kameez*. She was cheerful and her eyes sparkled as she came and sat opposite me. Bhumi disclosed that she was not apprehensive about the interview but about her ability to speak fluently in English. She did not struggle while responding to the basic questions, but took time to answer the reflective and descriptive ones.

Bhumi's story was disturbing, as her father expired at a young age. With four siblings, her mother and the family went through financial hardships. A charitable trust and a non-government organization (NGO) supported the family. Bhumi's family currently resides in a remote village, while she lives in the NGO dormitory in Chennai. The CC

collaborates with the NGO and encourages the students to enroll at the college. In Bhumi's case, the head of the NGO decided to enroll her at Kostka CC. Bhumi is now discovering her strengths, interests, and aptitude at the CC. For her, visual communication and the methodology of learning through hands-on experience are new discoveries. She enjoys the process of learning by practice and the CC supports her with all the resources. She stated,

I am very keen to learn new things, so I try doing on my own. We have practical and I learn several things from hands-on experience. Since most of the program requires a laptop and I don't have one, I make sure that I complete most of the work in college. If I cannot complete, I sit in the computer lab for extra hours and try to complete the work.

The CC supports the students with a computer lab. The program consists of assignments, which require the use of technical device. Most of the students complete their assignments at college, since they don't have access to computers at home.

**Field trips.** Another service that the CC intends to offer in the future is field trips. Rahul and Shweta spoke of the significance of the field visits. When I inquired about the places for field trips, Rahul answered, "We are planning to have field trips and we are going to take them to the companies where they will be offered placements. When they visit the industries, they have an idea where they will be working." The management aims to expose the students to their prospective work environment. When students meet, interact, and listen to stories of people in the visual communication field, they get inspired and motivated to work harder to accomplish their goals. Shweta, the faculty member, who was of a similar viewpoint said, "In order that students understand

deeply and explore the visual communication field, we should organize field visits for them. We can take them on shooting spots, animation firms, movie sets, and editing firms, among others.” Exploring field sites works as a stimulus for students. Along with the visits, the CC frequently has speakers from the field. These are the experts from the visual communication industry who come and conduct training workshops for the students. Rahul explained,

The animation program is related to media and has scope in future. We have an industrial partner whose name is J. Watson. He has animated several movies and has been successful. The experts from his company conduct training program for the animation program for our students. He is an inspiring speaker.

Thus, students have the opportunities to learn from experts in the industry. The workshops also serve the purpose of inspiring the students, and help them to keep going. Hence, the services of Kostka CC strengthen student retention and support them to complete their program successfully.

### **Watering the Tree: The Faculty**

A critical theme that emerged during the analysis process that contributed in students’ success was the faculty of the CC. For a plant to grow into a tree, it requires sunlight and water. The person who waters the plant regularly plays a vital role in helping the tree grow. Similarly, in a CC, the people who nurture the students are the faculty members and the staff. The implementation of the services is dependent on the faculty members, without whom the model of CC would be incomplete. In this section, I addressed RQ2, which deals with the faculty and administrative members’ perspectives on how the academic services and policies of CC impact the students’ experiences. The

faculty members' narratives, which are discussed below, revealed that the services and policies lead to strong academic and social integration of students in the CC. The faculty members believed that this could be achieved by using varied strategies to engage students in the classroom. The essential elements of engagement were a conducive environment, teaching methodology, faculties' personality, instructional strategies, immediate feedback, and freedom of choice, which supported the students to enhance their skills at their individual pace.

In Chennai, I interviewed Shweta - a faculty member of the CC. She was draped in a traditional Indian silk *saree*. Her hair was neatly braided and she wore a big *bindi* on her forehead. She stared at me with her big eyes. I introduced myself and briefed her about my research study and in return, Shweta spoke extensively about her qualification and work experience. Shweta's educational qualification is comprised of three degrees and several certification programs. I thought this was a good example of the fact that South Indians are among the most literate communities in India. Though this was her first year working as a faculty member, Shweta had heard about the concept of CC and enjoyed working at the institute. During the interview, she spoke about significant elements of teaching such as a safe learning environment and methodology used in the classroom. Rahul had earlier mentioned that the selection of faculty members was vital as only those who had the drive to serve the humanity were selected.

**Conducive environment.** The administrator, director, and the faculty, all of them spoke about the importance of a conducive environment in a classroom. As a young child, I was shy and timid. Once when I was in the fifth grade, I remember putting my head down on the desk. My class teacher asked me what was wrong and I responded

by saying that I was feeling uneasy and my chest hurt. The teacher made a mockery of my answer and the entire class started laughing. Incidents similar to these and a strict environment held me back from participating in larger groups. I wondered if the teacher could have dealt with the situation differently. I wondered if things would have been different for students like me in an open and safe environment. The CC strongly accredits the students' success to an amiable learning environment. At Kostka CC, the first month of the program is devoted to creating a safe community and building trust. Rahul explained,

During the first month of teaching, I focus on the environment; I want them to interact and mingle with each other. Once they have a strong rapport with the students and faculty members, they start getting out of their comfort zone. They feel safe and confident to open their mouth in the classroom. They come in the classroom with fears, and it is essential as faculty members that we deal with their fears and increase their confidence level. Once their fears are dealt with, whatever inputs we give them, they will be open to receive it. So the formation of an individual starts after they have dealt with their fears, lower self-confidence, and lower self-esteem. I have been doing this with all the students I have ever taught and building a conducive environment creates a strong foundation.

Each faculty member works on the students' fears; so one person is not burdened with the responsibility of teaching them to deal with their fears. The framework of social capital is applicable in this environment, as all members work to create an environment where the students are happy, comfortable and enjoy the learning process. Shweta added that all faculty members were equally responsible in creating a safe environment. The members



had to be friendly to students and only then they would be willing to share their thoughts freely. In a strict and fearful environment, the students' learning is adversely impacted.

Shweta affirmed that a safe environment is critical for students' retention. A weak and an insensitive environment can be destructive and could result in student attrition. The component of a safe environment is intertwined with the faculty's personality. During the interview, all participants revealed that the faculty members were extremely cordial and affectionate. Ishwar remarked,

The faculty members are our friends, so I feel my peer is teaching me. In a conventional college, the teacher lectures and goes away. No one has the time to ask and guide us with our problems. However, in the CC the faculty members will have a conversation with us, ask us, be patient with us, and help us to resolve our problems...

"Faculty members are like peers" was a common response among students. Like a guide the faculty members gave directions to them from time to time. Similarly, Aarushi asserted that faculty members frequently interacted with the students on individual basis, motivated and encouraged them to study ahead. Ishwar mentioned that the members were available at all the time.

**Teaching methodology.** Another central element of teaching was methodology in the classroom. As an educator and a student in the Indian context, I acknowledge that more importance is given on academics rather than personality development and enhancement of soft skills and abilities. This is a systematic issue and Rahul recognized that, as a result, the students struggle with communication, public speaking, and English

language. The faculty members teach in English and the local language (Tamil). Rahul commented,

Whenever management decides on new ideas or academic services or policies, how do you think these ideas are implemented? The delivery is dependent on the faculty members, so that the students are able to understand it. Language is not important, the approach of teaching is important. When the members are explaining the concept to the students, they should do it effectively in both the languages, first in Tamil and then in English.

There is often a communication gap between instruction and learning, as most of the students had limited opportunities to learn and practice English language in the past. So the faculty members teach the content in English and the local language. The faculty members give adequate time to comprehend the content and are not hesitant to explain the concepts numerous times. Along with instructing in two languages, the faculty members use creative pedagogies to teach the content in the classroom. Ishwar shared,

They use different innovative methodologies to teach the course, as the activities are hands-on experience and there is no theory involved. The class is interesting and lively. The learning is insightful and impactful. If they teach through theory form then it will become boring and we may not concentrate and forget immediately. The activities make the course interesting and we are attentive and we gain most out of it.

The comprehension and retention of information among the students is strong when the members use a variety of activities. Shweta affirmed that she uses multiple-intelligence in the classroom. While planning for a class, she creates activities that are a combination

of audio, visual, linguistics, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences. She gives the following example:

I show corporate presentations to the students, as the images help them to learn effectively. Through these images, I explain and teach the students different elements of the designs. I can't explain about the patterns and parts without an image. Thus, the students are seeing, listening and understanding at the same time. When I display the designs, the students immediately show more interest in learning. They are alert and they start thinking and connecting with what they have learnt. So I teach them visually. The videos have designs and text and they can easily understand what I am teaching them.

Thus, the teaching method comprises of various intelligences, which cater to the diverse students in the classroom.

**Instructional strategies.** The members invest in planning and they attempt to bring new components in the classroom each day. The participants spoke about different strategies that are used in the classroom, which include speaking on impromptu topics in the English class, crafting a power point presentation for technical class, writing an assignment for visual communication, creating a speech for spoken English, and researching new words for English class. Along with these strategies, group discussions and dialogues were an integral part of the classroom. Students have discussions on basic to complex topics. Aarushi shares examples of a few topics, “first of all, we talk about what is a community college, how to deal with challenges, how to start group discussion, how to start a conversation, and how to contribute in a group discussion. They teach you

how to have a conversation.” Along with discussions, the faculty members provide the students with valuable learning websites and resources. Ishwar commented,

We also talk about how to start a conversation. For instance, when we are meeting an individual for the first time, how do we begin the conversation? Sir asks us to think about how certain television reality programs commence their show. Ahmed sir encourages us to watch the show on You-tube and think about different ways a conversation can be started. If we don't understand the language on You-tube, then Ahmed sir encourages us to use the sub-titles. Thus, we are learning through diverse sources.

The faculty members encourage the students to connect and associate the learning with their lives. In creation of the instructional strategies, Shweta affirmed that she has to be thoughtful and considerate about the students' comprehension and understanding levels. Hence, the instructional strategies should cater to everyone's needs. The faculty members use the step-by-step method, which Bhumi described ahead.

Whenever a new concept or idea is taught to us, I don't understand the ideas easily. After one or two sittings in the lab, I comprehend the concepts clearly. The faculty follows the methodology of teaching where he follows step-by-step method. He knows the background of the students so he teaches slowly and reinforces the concepts frequently. He teaches theories and then practical, and the entire course is taught in this manner. The practical are taught immediately, the faculty members don't wait for the last moment to teach hands-on experience. Learning and understanding happens simultaneously.

All the faculty members follow this method of teaching, as the step-by-step technique provides an opportunity to learn according to the students' competence. The members use storytelling, as it is a good technique to teach the essential lessons of life. The students apply the stories to their lives and reflect on them. This technique works on the students' attitude and their perspective towards life. Rahul gives an example about instilling the seed of living like one community in college. He remarked,

I tell my students that we have to go beyond the individual, beyond I, the 'I' gets dissolved and we use the term 'We'. Irrespective whether we are male or female, or what background we come from, in the CC we all are equal. I also tell them that we should not have ego among each other. I keep on insisting that all the students should use the term 'We' and not 'I'.

The CC works towards building the moral values of students. Letting go of arrogance and ego are essential, so students can be open to new ideas and thoughts. The faculty members spoke about students' behavior in the classroom. The members observed that many students were aggressive, arrogant, and undisciplined. So along with academics, the college works on the students' personalities and holistic development.

Encouragement and motivation are daily doses of the faculty's teachings. I recall reading a book called "Even an Eagle Needs a Push." As an eaglet requires a push for its first flight, similarly the dosages of positive reinforcement and thinking help the students to move forward.

**Freedom of choice.** The faculty members give choices to students, so they can be responsible for their learning. Additionally, members provide immediate feedback to students. Although there is no pressure of performance on students, the members

regularly challenge them to improve their work. So the students are competing with themselves and not with one another. Furthermore, Bhumi spoke about the faculty's approach in the classroom. She shared that at times when the lecture is overwhelming, then the faculty member switches off the projector and have discussions on general topics. Faculty members give adequate time and space to the students to retain the technical material. Taking a break from intense course content and having a discussion on general topics lightens the environment and allows the students to retain the information effectively.

**Faculty's personalities.** The students' responses strongly indicated that the faculty played a critical role in implementation of the services and policies. Most of the students come from a troubled environment that affects their attitude and behavior in the classroom. They often have peers that indulge in bad habits like drugs and alcohol at an early age. The faculty members shared that the students' behavior in the classroom is dependent on the students' relationships with their family members. Aarushi mentioned that she did not have a strong relationship with her father. She expressed, "I don't want to talk about my father (discomfort, silence). He doesn't know what I am studying. My dad does not care about us... he is not bothered about my mother and me." At times, the sour relationships between the family members can disturb the students mentally. The administrative and faculty members stated that the strategies of storytelling, discussion, counseling, mentoring, and analogies assist the students to deal with the difficult environment. At times, the management is flexible, as students sometimes require space and time to deal with their emotions and stress levels. Rahul said,

I communicate to the students frankly that if they are dealing with a personal problem, they can leave early for the day. They have an option to leave early but the student needs to inform me. We believe that health is important and then studies. Once their problems are sorted then they can resume the studies. Our approach is to communicate with the students in a friendly manner and create a safe and healthy environment.

The CC practices and implements an open door policy. Open communication helps the management to have a strong rapport and build trust with the students. The role of faculty members is a challenging one. For the members to keep going, the CC provides professional development programs on a consistent basis. Rahul elaborates,

The teacher-training program is focused on the teaching methodology. This is the essential element for the teachers. We have conducted one training program and we are planning to have another one soon. We select only those faculties that are interested in serving the public. Teachers who are interested in monetary value are not our choice for CC. We believe that service is much more important and charity is essential. Our faculty members are interested in serving the CC. We believe that all students should get an opportunity to learn and prove themselves.

The faculty members are equipped with ongoing professional developments.

Strengthening their skills results in strengthening the students' skills. Thus, the efficient engagement and implementation of services builds a strong foundation for student success.

## **A Banyan Tree: The Outcome**

Like a seed transforms into a tree, at the end of the program, the students evolve in their skills, aptitudes, and attitudes, as a result of the impact of the academic services and policies. This section addresses the RQ1c, which deals with the students' perceived impact of the academic services and policies on their experiences at the CC. The findings demonstrate that the participants have observed positive difference in themselves. The students believed that the course structure, life skills course, mandatory community service, and classroom experiences have enhanced their skills and attributes in communication, time management, life skills, discipline, commitment, punctuality, and personal skills such as goal setting, self-esteem, and self-confidence. In terms of attitude, the students learned to deal with their fear, criticism, failure, and shyness. The positive environment changed the students' perspective and perception towards life.

**Learning from life skills.** In the interview, the students spoke about the development of life skills, which are essential in creating the foundation values of the students. As mentioned earlier, the CC curriculum entails of life skills, which aim to prepare an individual for life. Bhumi said that life skills are all about what occurs in their day-to-day life. She added that no one has ever taught them these essential skills of life. Talking on this topic, Jai pronounced, "I see changes in myself, changes in dressing style, hairstyle, my activities, my habits, my lifestyle, and my attitude. My confidence level has increased. I have learnt several things, and I feel I have changed everything in my life." The students spoke about learning basic skills to complex skills, Ishwar narrated,

In this course, I have acquired new knowledge about the industry. Further, I never knew how to communicate with people and I did not know the difference



between right and wrong. The faculty members help us to enhance these skills by pointing out what is right or what is wrong and teach us the correct method.

Today, I listen to other people's perspective and think about their views before coming to any conclusion.

The students felt that they had learned vital lessons of life and had acquired the tools to think critically and make wise decisions. Often these lessons are learned through experiences and the students feel blessed to obtain them at an early age. On similar lines, Jai commented that every problem has a solution. If we have problems then we should express it and seek help from others. I was fascinated with the students' responses. Ishwar had previously stated that he was learning to deal with anger and stress. In today's time, these skills are essential in a personal and professional world. When I asked Aarushi to describe her college experience, she said that it opened new horizons for her. She elaborated, "I did not enroll the program only for job, I wanted to know what I aspire in life, whether this program is of my best interest and wanted to discover my skill." The college experience is assisting the students to discover their interests and aptitude. A handful of participants were surprised at their performance and results. Aarushi dealt with her stage fear and shyness. She stated,

I am not shy anymore. I attempt to speak in English even if my language is right or wrong. During my school time, I would not take the initiative even if I wanted to participate in any activity. Now I have started to take the initiative and I participate in the activities. Also, I have dealt with my stage fear and I have learnt how to speak in front of the public. I am working on my language and it's a big achievement for me.

Learning English was a big accomplishment for the students, while their ability to speak the language boosted their self-confidence and self-esteem. Aarushi described her first experience of speaking in public,

First time when I went on the stage to talk, I got really scared. I think I am the best student in the class. I close my eyes before I start talking. Sir tells me not to close my eyes and states that I should make an eye contact with everyone. That's an important thing to remember. We are preparing and working on our communication skill. We know our mistakes and we learn from them.

Aarushi is happy that she is learning a new language and dealing with her stage fear. She receives immediate feedback from her peers and faculty members. She is open to feedback and realizes that there is a scope of improvement. All participants are conscious that the skills acquired at college would be valuable for them in future. Jai asserted,

They don't teach life skills in conventional college, ideally they should... how to deal with challenges in life, how to deal with life, how to learn lessons from life, and how to develop your life? Yes, I will use these skills when I develop my career and during my work life. These changes have been positive for me. All these changes will help me to get a better job and are helping me to groom myself. These skills are important for life.

The college is grooming the students' communication skills for employment. The students adore the faculty members and the program. Ishwar stated that the curiousness to learn new things motivates him to come to college every day. He adds that he does not want to leave out any information that is given to them and hence he does not miss

college. The students are excited and joyful coming to college every day. Ishwar said that the consistency in college attendance has led to inculcation of discipline, commitment, and sincerity among the students.

We have to follow rules and regulations of the college, we have a protocol to follow. I think we are learning and integrating the skill of discipline in our lives.

We have to create a schedule and follow it. I am learning how to manage time effectively. I can complete my work on time and in fact we have to finish our work before time and not wait till the last moment.

The students are learning the art of time management, something that most people struggle with. The students spend adequate time in creating short and long-term goals. Accomplishments of short-term goals enhance the students' time management skills. Ishwar is grateful to God for the experience in CC. Speaking about the role of CC, Ishwar added, "My parents are very happy, they feel I am learning new things and I am growing in life. Community college gave my parents hope that I can be successful in life." Thus, Kostka CC has given hope and tools to several students to succeed in life.

Overall, the trip to Chennai was magnificent. We experienced warm hospitality from students and management. During the interviews, all the participants stated that they were privileged to be a part of Kostka CC. I failed to understand their emotions, until I stumbled upon a south Indian couple in USA who shared their thoughts about studying in Kostka College. The couple shared that each student aspires to be in Kostka, as the college offers extensive activities and quality education and is one of the best colleges in Chennai. Kostka College has produced many success stories and these students consider it an honor to be a part of this institution.

While memoing, I realized that a CC under the banner of Kostka University was a big achievement for the education system in India. Since the University Grant Commission (UGC) has recognized and accepted the model of Kostka CC, it has grown in stature in the Indian educational system and the society. As a student, I visited Pune University (my university) several times, where we rarely received a warm welcome or response from the staff. On the other hand, as visitors we had a fabulous experience at Kostka College. I wonder if it was Nitya's reference or whether they were warm to all visitors. I feel it was a blend of the two. However, this was one of the most memorable journeys of my life and it left an imprint on my heart.

### **Reflection**

At the end of the first sub-section of this chapter, termed Serendipity, in the reflection section, I have attempted to briefly summarize the results of Kostka CC and responded to the research questions. In addition, I discuss below the association of the findings to Tinto's framework and the various forms of cultural capital. Looking back on the interviews of the faculty members and students, I realized that Kostka College is a result of past endeavors and experiences of several committed individuals, who laid the foundation of CCs in India. The founders of Kostka College have learnt lessons from the past and have a thorough understanding of the underrepresented population of India. In alignment with the RQ2, which deals with the faculty and administrative members' perceptions about the effect of academic services and policies on students' experiences, the management consistently assesses, monitors, and modifies them to assure students' success. Kostka College is a new model of CCs that is affiliated to the government and leads to a bachelor's degree. This was a big accomplishment for ICRDCE, who have

been striving hard for the recognition of CCs in India. Since this model is relatively new, it was difficult to state whether the students were experiencing any difficulties because of the CC structure. The students of Kostka College came from a lower socio-economic background with weaker academic skills due to inadequate schooling and limited resources. In reference to RQ1c, which pertains to the impact of the academic services and policies on students' experiences, the college is equipping the students with life skills, technical skills, and spoken English, which would help them for life. The participants compared their CC experiences with their prior schooling and acknowledged that the quality of education at Kostka in terms of teaching, curriculum, instruction, and environment was much better at the CC. Due to limited resources and exposure at public schools, the students from low-income families have limited opportunities to strengthen their academic skills. At average, these students score between 40-50%, which is perceived as below average performance. The students believed that the academic services and policies of the CC aided them to build on their areas of improvement, supported them emotionally, and helped them to deal with their fears. In reference to RQ2, which deals with management's perspectives of how academic services and policies affect the students' experiences, they stated that the academic services and policies are formulated to cater to all students and they ensure that every student receives quality education. At the CC, the students received multiple opportunities to learn, to make mistakes, and amend them. The students observed an improvement in reading, comprehension, and communication skills. The students expressed their gratitude and appreciated the quality teaching and abundant resources. Listening to the administrative members' perspectives, it seemed that compared to the struggles of other CCs in India,

Kostka College enjoys several privileges. Since the Kostka CC is formulated under the banner of a renowned university, the society perceives that the CC programs are recognized in the work industry. The huge government grant allows Kostka CC to provide students with effective services and resources like mid-day meals, transportation pass, professional counseling, and part time-jobs that the other CCs don't yet offer due to limited funds. These additional services help students to integrate into the college and develop them holistically.

The theories about retention and integration in the literature section provided a framework for the research questions. The theories of cultural capital and Tinto's theory of retention give me background information to thoroughly understand RQ1a and RQ1b, which deal with the effect of the academic services and policies on the students' experiences at the CC. In the forthcoming section, I discuss about how each form of cultural capital contributed in college integration of students. The theory of cultural capital is accepted and used widely in American CCs. In an article on social capital and student success, Sandoval-Lucero, Maes, and Klingsmith (2014) have explained how the participants in an African and Latino CCs gained from student relationships and interactions with friends, family, faculty members, and staff. The social and cultural capital had a positive influence on students' performances (Sandoval-Lucero, Maes, & Klingsmith, 2014). Yosso (2005) defines social capital as networks of people and community resources. The literature suggests that students with low-income have minimal social capital, and this adversely affects the academic and intellectual development in the classroom (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Pascarella et al., 2004). Social capital provides the background information to understand RQ1a and RQ1b, which refers

to the effect of academic services and policies of the CC on students' experiences. Kostka CC creates strong social capital by building positive relationships with teachers, peers, and management. Social capital provides moral and emotional support to the students and they believe that they are not alone in the journey. The network of people and community resources boost their determination and empower them to keep moving ahead. Resources like transportation pass, mid-day meals, internship, guaranteed employment, and computer lab aid in reducing the students' daily hardships. The option of paying in installments with grace period gives them an opportunity to get back to education. As Maslow's "Pyramid of Needs" states that when basic psychological and safety needs are fulfilled, an individual can work on self-esteem and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). In reference to RQ1a, and RQ1b that pertains to academic services and policies that affect the students' experiences, Kostka CC is supporting the students with basic needs, so they can focus on academics. The faculty members' positive personality and creative teaching approach are essential to create a conducive environment for effective implementation of services and policies and to provide the students with emotional and moral support. The students find comfort in the fact that they are not alone in the mountainous journey towards success, as they see their peers going through a similar phase. The participants revealed that a safe and caring environment in the college resulted in a sense of inclusiveness and promoted trust among each other. The students' experiences at Kostka College have been positive due to strong social capital.

Like social capital, the navigational capital also provides a framework for RQ1a, RQ1b and RQ1c, which relate to the impact of academic services and policies on students' experiences. Navigational capital refers to skills of maneuvering through social

institutions (Yosso, 2005, p.80). The college environment and comprehensive curriculum of Kostka College make up its navigational capital. The positive environment and holistic curriculum help in setting the foundation of academic services and policies such as life skills, spoken English, and internship among others. The results indicated that the life skills curriculum enables the students to deal with loneliness, communication barriers, stage fear, stress, and peer pressure. These skills facilitate the students to navigate their way in college, home, and workplace. The internship offers a platform to students to use their skills at the prospective workplace and learn from their experiences.

Similar to other forms of cultural capital, aspirational capital helps in understanding RQ1a, RQ1b and RQ1c, which relate to the academic services and policies and its impact on the students' experiences. Looking back at the administrative and faculty members' perspectives on the impact of academic services and policies, I realized that the forms of cultural capital like aspirational, social, and navigational were created for the sound working of the services and policies. Yosso (2005) refers to aspirational capital as the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers. When the students are mentored, counseled, and motivated on a regular basis and receive an opportunity to enhance their skills and knowledge, they are able to overcome their obstacles in life and move ahead. The participants are aware of their background and socio-economic conditions of the family. They are conscious that education is a powerful tool that can help them to uplift their standard of living. Regular counseling and mentoring empower them to work harder to achieve their goals. As mentioned earlier, experts from the field visit share their life stories of hardships and success. The students connect to the stories and are inspired and motivated to study hard.



The framework of Tinto's theory of institutional departure (1993) aids me to understand RQ1, which deals with effect of the academic services and policies on the students' experiences. The interviews with the management pointed out that the one of outcomes of academic services and policies is retention of the students. The academic services and policies like life skills course, spoken English course, subsidized fees, part-time jobs, assured employment, three-month internship are offered, so the students are able to complete the course successfully in college. Kostka CC incorporates the vital elements of Tinto's longitudinal model of institutional departure (1993) in their program for stronger academic and social integration in college. Students from varied disciplines enroll in Kostka College after completion of their 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Rahul had revealed that most of the students have weaker spoken English and strong memorization skills. The participants belong to lower SES and are uncertain about their goals and intentions. The institutional experience of Tinto's model is a vital phase, which varies from college to college. Kostka College follows step-by-step method of teaching to strengthen the students' academic performance. The faculty members develop affable relationships with the students and encourage them to create the same among each other. The students participate in extracurricular activities like cultural events, field trips, and training workshops. The students' relationships with the faculty members and their involvement lead to academic and social integration in college. When I apply Tinto's integration model to the participants of Kostka College, the results vary for each one of them. Rahul plays a critical role in the academic and social integration process, as he is the coordinator of the college.

Listening to the participants' interviews and building on the Tinto's framework and the theories of integration, I respond to RQ1a, RQ1b, and RQ1c, which deal with the effect of academic services and policies on the students' experiences, and its impact on students' integration. Among the participants, Jai and Ishwar have had positive institutional experiences and are progressing towards stronger academic and social integration. Both the students have had above average academic scores and a good grasp of the English language. They are engaged in extracurricular activities and build healthy relationships with the faculty members and peers. I inferred that Ishwar and Jai had strong will and determination, and clear goals and intentions. On the other hand, Aarushi was performing well in academics and extracurricular activities and I believe that she is still working on building a strong rapport with the students and faculty members. Furthermore, Aarushi's goals and intentions were not lucid and her will and determination kept vacillating. As for Bhumi, I observed that she struggled to communicate in English and was still taking time to grasp the new language and technical concepts. Bhumi was uncertain about her interest and aptitude in the visual designing program and was still exploring the new field. She was attempting to fit in the college culture, but I am unsure whether her integration would lead to completion of the three-year program.

## **The Voyage of Mind, Soul and Body: Britto Community College**

This is the second part of the results chapter, which describes the analysis of data collected at Britto Community College (CC). While deciding on the places for data collection, South India was a certainty on my list. However, I was contemplating on which city in South India I should choose. During that period, I met my cousin Shami, a *yoginee* who had recently attended a yoga camp in Pondicherry, an urban district. Over a cup of tea, I briefed her about my dissertation topic and she shared her experience of Pondicherry. She spoke about Pondicherry's rich culture and people and mentioned that she had come across several vocational colleges and suggested that Pondicherry would be a good field site for data collection. Shami resided in a community guesthouse, which was a new concept for me. People in the guesthouse live like a community; they have meals together, interact, and live like a family. I was fascinated with her experience and decided to research CCs in Pondicherry. I conducted an informal analysis on CCs in Pondicherry. The city is influenced by diverse cultures and has four CCs. In school, I recall studying about the history of Pondicherry and reading about the Dutch, Portuguese, British, and the French rule in the city. In addition, according to the 2011-2012 census, the city's poverty index had increased to 17.5% as compared to 1.2% in 2009-2010 (Dutta, 2013). With a diverse culture and increasing poverty, I was keen to hear the stories about students' experiences in this city. Thus, I decided on Pondicherry as one of the field sites for the data collection.

I booked our tickets in an emergency quota, which is three times the normal fare. The train journey from my hometown to the field site was 25 hours long. My family was concerned about my travel to an unknown city, which was far from home. Upon my family's insistence, I decided to take my cousin Maiveez along with me. Having over

affectionate parents, my mother packed a huge food bag for our train journey. In India, delays in public transportation are a norm. Restlessness grew among the passengers, as the train was late by an hour. As the train approached the station, all the passengers rushed towards it, as it halted for just a couple of minutes. In India, females generally avoid travelling by second-class compartments unless accompanied by a male or in a group. For our own safety we opted for a three-tier air-conditioned compartment. Two South Indian couples occupied our carriage with three noisy children.

I had never been to Pondicherry and was not familiar with the local language. During our trip, I realized that the train does not halt at Pondicherry, but at Villapuram Junction, which is an hour away from destination. Since our neighbors were from that part of India, we decided to seek their help. We introduced ourselves and inquired about the route. The couple was kind and warm and was able to guide us with the route. Coincidentally, Manoj, the husband was in the education-training sector and his wife, Kalpana, was a writing tutor. They were keen to hear about my research study. Like me, they were unaware of the concept of CCs in India. They quizzed me with several questions about CCs. For a while, the questioning session felt like the dissertation proposal defense. The couple was analytical and inquired about the philosophy, mission, and internship elements of CCs. We discussed the differences between a regular four-year college and CC. Additionally, the couple was curious to hear about my experience at Texas State University. Kalpana shared her experience of studying at Chennai University. It seemed like we conducted a cross analysis of higher studies in the two different countries. When their destination arrived, Kalpana suggested that we get off at

the Villapuram junction and commute to Pondicherry in a bus or train. Apparently, the private taxicab services are expensive.

The sun was scorching when we arrived at the Villapuram Junction. We passed through the narrow lanes and vegetable bazaar to reach the bus stand. We were optimistic about finding participants for the research and therefore, we carried suitcases filled with backpacks (the appreciation token) along with our luggage. As we strolled through the lanes, people in the bazaar looked at us with curiosity. The aroma of fresh herbs, spices, and fruits was energizing. I halted at all the stalls to inquire about the cost of the fruits, while my cousin walked ahead. We reached the bus station and observed the condition of the local buses. They were similar to the Pune buses with bleached colors and rustic looking seats. On a dry Sunday afternoon, the bus was crammed with old and middle aged passengers commuting to remote areas. On our one-hour journey, I observed several buildings, churches, temples, and statues of French influence. The beautiful churches were built in the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century. I was in awe of the city's architecture and I felt like I was on a trip to Europe. We arrived at the Pondicherry bus depot; it was a massive space with passengers buzzing around.

Auroville, a universal town, was created with an intention that men and women of all countries could live in peace and harmony irrespective of creed, politics, and nationalities. Our reservation at the Aspiration community guesthouse was in Auroville, a small town thirty minutes away from Pondicherry, was confirmed. Negotiating fares with auto rickshaw drivers is a skill and my cousin was an expert. After bargaining the prices, we were on our way to Auroville. The auto driver was a chatterbox, as he briefed us about the location of the CC and the tourist places that we could visit in Pondicherry.

The word Auroville means City of Dawn; it is an experimental township situated 8km northwest of Pondicherry.

The community guesthouse captivated me. The place was green in color, with fruit and vegetable plantations. The place was like a retreat where people of all ages came for spiritual, physical, or emotional evolvment. The guesthouse was spacious with varied kinds of comfort categories, ranging from basic accommodation with thatched brick, or concrete tiled roof with common bathroom to brick rooms with attached bathroom, *veranda*, and garden. We were fortunate to have a brick room with bathroom and an open veranda. The room was located in the greens with fresh air with no air conditioner or hot water. We were our own servers and had to keep the room clean and wash our utensils. We were in a cosmopolitan neighborhood living among Russians, French, Malaysians, and Americans. At dinner, we met people with diverse ethnicities and each one of them was on a path of attainment. I distinctly remember Diana, a Russian *yoginee* who had come to complete her yoga certification program and was headed to Himachal Pradesh. She interacted with us and shared that she was a volunteer for a non-profit organization that builds toilets in remote mountainous regions for lower socio economic status (SES) and promote girls' education. We also met a young American who was volunteering as an intern in a hospital. It felt amazing to meet people on my journey who had travelled thousands of miles for a noble cause. The interactions with the travelers led me to reflect on and question my actions, beliefs, and purpose in life. I was fascinated with their stories and purpose of travel. Like them, I too was on a mission to hear students' stories at the CC. To commute internally in the city, we rented a two-wheeler non-gear bike and we were equipped to explore the CCs in the city. Our

first stop was the Pondicherry University Community College, which was 8 k/m away from Auroville.

At the narrow gate of the Pondicherry University CC, there was a security guard who knew Hindi and guided us towards the principal's office. We had to wait for almost two hours to meet the principal. The wait time gave me a chance to explore the setting of the college. Plants and trees and a public playground surrounded the rectangular two-floored building of the CC. The first office on the right hand side of the entrance was the principal's office. Further down the hallway was a staircase that led to the first floor. On our way, we passed the staff room and a library.



**Figure 3. Pondicherry University Community College. Main Building of the College.**

We decided to wait in the library where a book exhibition was ongoing. My enthusiastic cousin jumped on this opportunity and borrowed a book on counseling to complete her assignment. I sat in the middle of the library and observed the space. The library had a computer lab with ten computers placed along the wall. In the middle of the room stood a large table for reading and writing. The library had several wooden shelves of dusty books. Students in schools uniforms walked in and out of the library. The females wore

light blue *salwar kameez*, an ethnic Indian attire, with a dark blue *dupatta* and males were dressed in trousers and a shirt of the same colors. A student was deeply absorbed in a healthcare video, as she jotted notes in her book. I inferred that she was enrolled in the nursing program. Another student watched a cookery show. I was amused to see students learn through technology in a remote part of India. The librarian was inquisitive and engaged us in a conversation inquiring about the purpose of our visit. He was surprised to hear that we had travelled from the western to the southern region of India for research. Finally the wait time was over and we had the opportunity to meet Payal, the principal of the CC. We sat in front of a woman in her fifties who was wearing a south Indian *sari* and a striking green circular *bindi*.

After a brief introduction, Payal spoke about the impressive work she had done in the field of CC. She had recently presented a paper on ways to improve the model of CC in front of the Union Ministry of Education. She explained the different models of CC to us. The first category is associated with the university/government and the second falls under the Christian missionary. Pondicherry College falls under the first category and is affiliated with the University Grant Commission (UGC). In her term as a principal, she has implemented new ideas for the CC model. The college conducted need analyses with several industries in Pondicherry. The rationale for the research was to study the requirements of skilled manpower in the workforce. The analyses results revealed a high demand for individuals in hospitals, cardiology, and the tourism industry. Based on the analyses, the college started to offer several programs in nursing and tourism. During the need analyses, she collaborated with industry experts and conducted training workshops for the students. The management believes in cultivating the seed of reflection and



guidance in students. Thus, each week Payal had discussions with the students about the experience of the program, their fears, and expectations about the future. She briefed the students about job postings in the market. Payal observed that most students were interested in getting into politics. Digging deeper for the rationale, she discovered that the students perceived that politicians were blessed with power and authority. When she probed them to think of an alternative career option, the class was suddenly silent. The students had not thought of an alternative plan. She asked them to be analytical and reflective while deciding their future. Payal often traveled to remote villages to dialogue with the parents and encouraged them to send their children to college. In recent years, the influx of rural students has augmented; there is, however, a long way to go.

Payal stressed on the formulation of students' skills, as she spoke about the curriculum of the CC. In her tenure, she has experienced that several students drop out during the first year due to difficulty in comprehension skills or financial struggles. Payal is a believer of skills development rather than memorization of the content. The management had recently organized a program for the students to test their creativity skills. The faculty members were amazed with the students' marvelous ideas and realized that marginalized students bloom when they have a platform to prove their skills. For Payal, students in the rural community were like uncut diamonds that the CC polishes through skills development. In her UGC discussion, she has proposed that students should be employed immediately after the first year and should have an option to enroll for an advanced program at a later time. Once they are financially settled and feel the need for new knowledge to grow in life, the students can continue their education. In short, the students are prepared for white-collar jobs.

During the discussion, I shared my teaching experience of the learning framework course for underprepared students in USA. She was open to the idea of integrating the learning skills framework and counseling sessions into their coursework. Payal shared the accomplishments of the CC with us. In the previous year, two students from the Pondicherry University College were selected to visit and study at an American CC. She has been invited to CCs in USA on several occasions, but she has passed on this opportunity to the students and teachers, as it would greatly benefit them. The principal has been working with the government to improve the model of CC and has received a grant of Rs.1.5 crore (\$160, 000). In the future, she intends to organize conferences where students and industry experts from various fields would meet on the same platform. The experts could address students' concerns, train them, and enhance their skills and knowledge. There is a high influx of foreigners in Pondicherry and several of them visit the college for community service. The foreigners teach spoken English to students for two hours per week.

The conversation with Payal lasted an hour, at the end of which, we finally spoke about the research interviews. She insisted that there would be a protocol to follow before we conduct the interviews, which could take couple of weeks. She asked me to visit the college after two days and submit an application letter. I thanked her for sharing rich concrete data with me and we decided to keep in touch via email. We departed the college with excitement and sadness. We had the guesthouse booking for a week and had not planned to stay for more. We decided to try our luck with another field site, which was Britto CC.

Britto CC is located in the Villapuram district. I insisted on following my lead but since I am not good with directions, our experience of getting to the college was adventurous. We boarded the bus for Villapuram district, which is an hour and a half from Pondicherry. Crammed into a noisy bus, which moved at leisurely pace, we reached the district. At the Villapuram bus stop, we asked the auto driver about the address. I realized that I goofed up and we landed in the wrong district. I was disheartened and irritated with myself, as we lost another day in the city. At this point, I began to doubt whether I would get participants for the interview. My optimistic cousin gave me assurance that there would be light at the end of the tunnel. We decided to call Britto CC and obtain accurate directions for the college. While researching the college online, I came across profound quotes of philanthropists across the world on their web page. Coincidentally, the quote on the front page was one of my favorites. The inspirational extract was from a speech made by The Aga Khan. He said,

There are those who enter the world in such poverty that they are deprived of both the means and the motivation to improve their lot. Unless they can be touched with the spark, which ignites the spirit of individual enterprise and determination, they will only sink into apathy and degradation and despair. It is for us, who are fortunate, to provide the spark.

The management at Britto CC was inspired by the above quote. The founders provide the means and motivation that ignites the light in the lives of villagers in the vicinity.

Fortunately, the college was closer to Auroville than Pondicherry, and with a positive attitude, we headed towards the college. The college was away from the city in a rural area accessible to the local villagers. It took a while to locate the college and for a long

time we were skeptical whether we were headed in the right direction. Finally we saw the structure of the CC, which was in the middle of nowhere. There was an open field in front of the campus and on the backside were fresh green farms. A parking lot stood under the long branches of an old tree outside the college campus. We parked and headed towards the principal's office.

The campus seemed to be a new construction, as though recently inaugurated. There was a small courtyard in front of the building with a soothing fountain. As we headed towards the office, a middle-aged woman draped in a lovely green sari with a broad smile on her face, stood near the door. Her name was Nitya and she was the principal of Britto CC. She had a charming personality, and greeted us with a glowing face. I briefed her about my research and she instantly agreed to help me with interviews. I stared blankly at my cousin wondering if this was a dream. I was touched by her generosity, as she personally assured that we had all the resources for the research. Nitya spent the entire day with us; she arranged for the participants, sat with us throughout the interviews, gave us a tour of the college, and introduced us to the director and faculty members. When it was time to leave, she also walked us to the gate to bid adieu.

### **Foundation of the Temple: The Beginnings of Britto College**

Before we dive into the services and policies of Britto CC, in the forthcoming section, I discuss the establishment of the CC, its philosophy, essential features and background information about the students. I used the metaphor of a temple to describe the results of Britto CC, and named the subsections of this part of the chapter as follows: layout and design of the temple: structure of the college /strategic planning; characteristics of the temple: policies & services of Britto college; rituals of the temple:

the classroom pedagogy; and attainment: outcome and impact of community college. When describing Britto CC, Nitya said, “It’s a temple, and I tell my children you are all gods for me. I serve the children of god, which is service to god. I don’t keep pujas or any other rituals.” She believes that she is playing the role of a devotee and by serving the students, she is serving god. I had an opportunity to interview Nitya and she narrated an exciting story about the foundation of the college. Nitya and her husband, Santosh who is the director of Britto College resided in a metropolitan city of Mumbai. Eight years back, Santosh worked at a senior position in the Reserve Bank of India. At that time, he had a spiritual insight about serving mankind and he quit his job. At the age of 52, Santosh migrated to Pondicherry with his wife and mother and started working on the prospect of a CC. They had minimal knowledge about the concept of CC, but they were determined to build one. Nitya articulated,

In 2007 my husband, children and I came to this place in a Pondicherry village. In 2008, we started this college. We came with Rs.35000 (\$585) in hand and went door to door and collected Rs.3.5 lakh (\$5740) as donation. We started this college under a shed and worked for 5 years under the shed. Last September, we constructed a new building. This is the seventh cohort. In all we have completed six cohorts and graduated 540 students.

Nitya’s story about the initial years of Britto College was captivating. With limited available resources, Santosh aspired to open a CC in the middle of nowhere. Nitya shared that her husband was not reluctant to knock on the doors of the villagers, since the donation money would equip the villagers with education.



**Figure 4. Shed of Britto Community College.** A picture of the shed where Britto Community College was established in 2008.

The villagers helped the couple to build the shed. It was made out of hay and was used as a low cost sustainable option. The college was in operation for six years under this roof. To the villagers, the establishment of the CC seemed like a miracle. The vision, courage, and determination of the couple made this miracle possible for the villagers.

#### **Layout and Design of the Temple: Strategic Planning**

Britto College has been set up with precise details in order to help in accomplishing the goals of the college. The college conducts need analysis for the programs offered, accumulates socio-economic information from nearby villages, and focuses on the induction of students.

In the previous chapter, I spoke about the different types of CCs: they are NGOs, UGC approved, and the ones that lead to a BVoc degree. Britto CC is an NGO CC, as Santosh established the institute under a charitable trust. Santosh and his close friends came together to fulfill his dream project of community education for the underprivileged youths of India. The college offers one-year diploma programs in diverse fields such as: refrigerator and air-conditioning mechanism, nursing and health assistant, fashion designing and garment making, desktop publishing, computer hardware servicing and networking, and computerized accounting (Tally) package.

**Maternal philosophy of the college.** The adjective ‘maternal’ is associated with the philosophy of the college, as the institute educates the students in a loving and affectionate environment. Nitya stressed on the philosophy of Britto College before delving into the design of the program. She said that the underlying philosophy of the college is to transform the useless students to useful students. Nitya clarified the term “useless students” below,

Yes, these children are failures in academics and have not even completed 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade and are hence termed as failures and this college is only for failures. We have accepted this school for failures in academics, not in life.... we may be failures in academics but we are not failures in life. We give these children proper guidance. Once these children are brought together under a roof, they are given special training and life skills. There are certain norms and principles in life that you have to follow. So we teach them how to lead a purposeful life, as we consider purposeful life very important.

The college reaches out to school dropouts especially from 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Similar to Kostka College, Britto College places a great emphasis on the life skills course. The students are taught varied skills from basic to complex. The investment to instill survival skills in the students is humongous, as it is an investment of the faculty’s time, patience, tolerance, optimistic attitude, energy, love, and affection. Nitya strongly emphasized basic human values of affection and love. The staff, management, and teachers welcome the students with open hands and love them tremendously. As a mother selflessly nurtures her children, the college develops students’ skills and knowledge.

**Rustic students.** Most of the students at Britto CC are from rural areas. Nitya informed me that the students come from a disturbed environment and they are not at ease and peace with themselves. The college is aware of the socio-economic conditions of the villagers. She elaborated,

And most of my children come from the fishermen community and daily laborers who are not educated and hence, they do not know the value of education. The parents do not know the value of money and once the children fail, they consider them as waste. The students are forced to take up odd jobs and they get into bad company. They start smoking and drinking, and at the end of the day, they are not fit for anything. So what we aim for is to give opportunities to such children who are pushed away saying that they do not belong to the society. We teach them various skills and get them assured jobs so that they can stand on their own feet.

The faculty members and staff are well versed with the profile of the students. Nitya introduced me to Mitesh, a faculty member of Health Assistant program, who has been working in this college for the last five years. Mitesh has completed his Masters in Science and has worked in a hospital for two years before joining the college. His voice was soft, as he modestly talked about his accomplishments. While talking about the students' profile in the classroom, Mitesh spoke rapidly with a heavy south Indian accent. He remarked,

Most of the students are dropouts. Among the students, 75% of the students are dropouts and 25% come from lower SES. The students are from poor families and they do not have the adequate funds to enroll in the college, but they are



interested in the nursing program. Hence, they join the CC, since the programs are offered at a reasonable price.

Nitya shared that there are 40 villages in the vicinity of Britto CC and the number of dropouts in these remote areas is high. She shed light on the connection between the Indian public education system and the reason for student attrition. She explained,

A child goes to school, he listens to the teacher, he has to retain the information and then he has to produce it during the examination. Doing all these three things is not an easy job for everyone. When you are not able to produce what you have learnt, you are termed as failed. It's not that the child does not know anything; however, he just has a difficulty putting it down on paper in a proper way.

Listening, retaining, and reproducing in the written exams are three skills that are essential to survive in a school. In a majority of public schools, the teaching technique is retention through memorization. As a result, students who have low retention ability score lower grades. With lower grades, the probability of getting into a renowned four-year university is low. On the other hand, Nitya explained that at Britto College, the children are given individual attention and the focus is on quality education. An admission to a good college leads to good job prospects in the future. Although Bosco College caters to dropout students, its doors are open to everyone. Mitesh pointed out that the college has a minimum age for admissions but no maximum limit. The age group ranges from 18 to 40 years old. Thus, the classroom is comprised of students of varied age groups and each one of them brings their experience to the class.

**Deeply rooted socio-economic factors.** The college accumulates information about the elements that affect a family's income, education, and occupation, as these

factors affect the students' actions, behavior, decisions, and value system. Nitya revealed that political parties are prominent in Pondicherry. Politicians persuade the youth, especially the dropouts, to join the party rally. In return, the students are tempted with incentives. At times, due to the political influences, the students get distracted and indulge in bad habits. Nitya elaborated,

We need such children and these children either join political rallies or fan clubs where they are given a place to stay, food to eat and a bottle of beer. This cannot happen every day, you've got to have a job of your own and we give them a diploma and the company recognizes this diploma.

These bad habits have been destructive for the students and the college wanted to intervene and break the pattern. Thus, the college offers one-year diploma programs that focus on academic and non-academic features resulting in holistic development of the students. The diploma programs lead to blue-collared jobs and multinational companies recognize the program. Nitya spoke about the structure of the programs that are offered at Britto CC,

We have only technical programs like mechanical engineering related courses like two wheelers and four wheelers and we also specialize in hardware networking, electricians, computers and accounting packages with front office management. These are diploma programs, nine months coaching and three months hands-on experience. Whatever course a child takes he goes and works at those places, which include hospitals, and companies. After one year, we take the final exams and they immediately get jobs at places where they have previously worked. Before a year they were treated as useless and careless. We cared for them and

trained them properly and with technical training they bloom into beautiful flowers. Till yesterday their family members and the society did not respect them. Then they get a job and ultimately are subject to respect.

The college instills the life skills component, which helps the students to deal with their socio-economic conditions. Students go through the process of learning, unlearning, and relearning and work on their behavior, attitudes and values. The students' responses indicated that they observed a positive change in their own behavior and habits and felt confident to deal with their challenges.

**Affiliation with Tamil Nadu Open University.** A feature that has contributed to the recognition of Britto CC is their affiliation with Tamil Nadu Open University, which also leads to vertical mobility. The college conducts a need analysis to determine the demand of skilled manpower in different sectors and collaborates with industrial partners. The amalgamation of need of manpower and collaboration results in the creation of a new program. Nitya affirmed that some of the programs offered at Britto College are affiliated with Tamil Nadu Open University. The implication of this affiliation opens the door of higher education for the students. Mitesh gave an example from his course, saying "Britto College intakes 25 students each year for the health assistant program. Our college programs are affiliated with Tamil Nadu Open University, as they will give the certificates. The criterion is that we can intake only 25 students." The affiliation with the university provides the stability and security of acceptance of the program in the workforce industry. The college has limited seats for the program, so the faculty members can focus on quality education.

**Excellent enrollment.** Nitya mentioned that the college has a unique marketing strategy, which has increased the enrollment of the students. The institute does not advertise their programs to the people. The college has built goodwill for themselves based on the quality education they provide. Nitya described,

Our college, the students and parents are the ambassadors for our college. They say last year I went to this college and got a degree. I have a job, so why don't you join. So in this way each student attracts two or three students. At the moment, we have 250 students but we plan to bring in 400 students next year and we plan to reach 700 over the longer course.

In the last seven years, the enrollment numbers have increased significantly.

Furthermore, alumni from the previous cohort and people from the self-help groups spread the college information to others. A self-help group (SHG) is a village-based financial intermediary committee usually composed of 10–20 local women or men. SHG, also known as mutual help, mutual aid, or support groups, are groups of people who provide mutual support for each other. In this group, the members share a common problem, often a common disease or addiction. I was amazed at the unique way in which the students were informed about the college.

Recent graduates of Britto College are keen and excited to share their positive experience with people in their neighborhood. Students are eager to convince their peers to enroll in the college, so they also get an opportunity for a better future. I met Bhavika, a bubbly and enthusiastic, student at Britto CC. She wore the college uniform, a light blue *salwar kameez* and her hair was tightly braided. She looked extremely fragile, but when she spoke she sounded determined and confident. Bhavika had discovered her goal

and purpose in life at the CC. Talking about future enrollment of students, Bhavika spoke about a strategy, which she plans to employ in the future. She said, “Yes, I have made a plan to get students for the next year. I am going to create a pamphlet, which has information and details about the CC. Then, I will go and distribute these pamphlets in the schools.” The students are the ambassadors of Britto College, as they represent and share their college experiences to others. The students’ stories are powerful, as they are told first hand. The true insightful experiences of the students stimulate the light of learning in others. As a result, people from nearby vicinity visit the college to find more information about the programs.

I was moved when Dhiraj told me about his enrollment process in college. A top ranker with 91% in 10<sup>th</sup> grade, Dhiraj, is currently enrolled in the diploma in refrigeration and air conditioning mechanism course. Nitya and other faculty members spoke highly of him. He is committed, disciplined, sincere, and a person of few words. Currently, he is a top ranker in the CC and strives to become better. Sadly, due to financial difficulties, he could not enroll in a regular college and joined a CC. When I inquired about the enrollment process at Britto CC, he said,

There are several auto drivers in this area who are aware of the college and the programs that are conducted in this college. One of the auto drivers, Ashok, told me about the program and he came along with me to the college to inquire about the program. He came along with me, when I enrolled in the course.

Dhiraj shared that he did not have a strong rapport with his parents. His parents rarely participated or supported him in his education endeavors. Fortunately, he met a kind-hearted auto driver, Ashok, who guided him to Britto CC. The college is surrounded with

several villages and the villagers are aware of the CC and the courses offered at the college. The local people play a significant role in marketing the CC to visitors, students, and people in neighborhood. Britto College was created under the association of a trust and the founders have collaborated with other charitable institutes. Abhay, another student at the college, was enrolled through a trust. He is originally from Rajasthan and was settled in Chennai, while his father worked for the Indian army. His father expired at an early age and the family went through financial hardships. A charitable trust in Chennai supported Abhay's family during their turmoil. With the trust's support, he completed his 10<sup>th</sup> grade from Open University in Chennai and wanted to take a job to support his family. Abhay shared,

Actually, I came to Pondicherry looking for a job and was struggling to find a job. In Pondicherry, there is a market for making bamboos; from bamboos we make different accessories and handicrafts. Then my trust contacted me, as they got to know about this college. My trust and I, we both came to the college and took a tour of this college. We got information about several programs that are offered at the institute.

The charitable trust guided Abhay to the CC and changed the direction of his life. The college tour aided Abhay's in his decision of seeking admission at the CC. When I asked Abhay about his thoughts and feelings during the college tour, he described:

I thought this experience is going to be very similar to school experience. The way they taught in school would be similar to the teaching of this college. I cried a lot when I started the program in this college. When I came to visit the college,

I liked the college for cleanliness and at that very moment, I decided I want to join this college.

I was taken aback when Abhay spoke of cleanliness, only to later find out from Nitya that several students come from small rural areas where the environment is unhygienic. Thus, many students like the clean and spacious environment of the college. Furthermore, the faculty members shared that several students did not have access to basic toilet facilities. The female students feel fortunate to enjoy the benefit of these amenities at the CC.

**Enduring relationships.** The management at Britto CC spent extensive time on building strong relationships with one another in order to create a strong support system. Morrow (1999) defines the term social capital as “sociability, social networks and social support, trust, reciprocity and community and civic engagement” (Fuller, 2014, p. 744). In an article, Fuller (2014) spoke about the significance of social relationships between individuals, institutions, and communities. Social relationships are important, as they encourage trust among communities. The services and policies of Britto CC indicate the presence of social capital. The director Santosh and principal Nitya inculcate the foundation of this framework in the CC. The college does not believe in hierarchy. All members of the college, from the director to an administrative officer build warm relationships and create trust with the students. Nitya gives an example of the admission process,

The students adore director sir (Santosh). During the time of admission, the director talks to the parents and students. I sit here (office) for the admission process. I do the admission work and send them to the director’s office. He will talk to each and every student and the parents individually. He will not miss out

on any child. So all the students and the parents feel that he is the role model for them.

Santosh spends adequate time meeting students, talking to their parents, and getting to know them better. This develops trust in the students and their family members. The parents feel confident about enrolling their students at Britto CC. The faculty members are in alignment with Santosh's philosophy and practice the principle of building relationship with students. Mitesh, a faculty member, explained, "The philosophy of this community college is that teachers are at par with the students. Teachers and students are equal in the classroom. This attitude helps me to create a strong rapport with the students." When students and faculty members are at the same level, the question of authority, supremacy, ego, and attitude disappears. Thus, the foundational values of the college are manifested in its structure and the design. Britto College works towards empowering and training the students to succeed in life.

### **Characteristics of the Temple: Policies & Services of Britto College**

The characteristics of a temple are reflected in its art and architecture, from painting to sculpture, from symbolic icons to engravings, from thoughtful layout of space to fusion of mathematical principles with Hindu sense of time. Similarly, the uniqueness of a CC is manifested in its academic services and policies. This section discusses RQ1, which deals with the students' perceptions of their experiences with the academic policies and services at Britto CC. The findings from the participants' interviews reveal the services and policies of the college, which are student-centered approach, assured placement, industrial collaboration, three-month internship, subsidized fees, comprehensive curriculum, extracurricular activities, community service, and resources.



The assured placement and three-month internship offers security for future, the comprehensive curriculum focuses on holistic development of the students, the flexibility of grace period provides access to education. These services and policies lead to smoother transition for the students at the CC. Also, the services and policies of the college are tied to the mind, soul, and body. The curriculum offers knowledge that sharpens the students' minds and increases their knowledge. The peaceful, calm, and joyful environment combined with the staff's love and affection soothes the students' soul. The extracurricular activities such as cultural events, yoga, indoor and outdoor games strengthen the students physically. The services and policies of Britto College exhibit their philosophy and education quality.

**Magnificent director.** One of the people, who played a vital role in designing the services and policies, is Santosh, the director of Britto CC. He was a dynamic and strong-headed personality, dressed in a south Indian attire. He welcomed us and inquired about the purpose of our visit. There was no trace of pride or arrogance, as he narrated the story of the establishment of Britto College (mentioned earlier). He also showed us a PowerPoint presentation about the accomplishments of the college. He seemed optimistic and had a clear vision about the CC. Santosh spoke with a firm voice, yet he was humble and modest. He gave me a book of the CC as a souvenir along with the published articles. Like a caring father, Santosh's personality was warm and affectionate; he hugged and blessed me when I was departing. I was moved by his warm gesture. After meeting him, I understood why the principal, faculty members, students and villagers are in awe of him. He practices what he preaches and has dedicated his life to empowering the young minds with education. During our conversation, Santosh

discussed the academic services and policies that are centered around the students, as the college follows a student-centered approach. The college has created a simple facility that provides the right environment to learn peacefully, joyfully, and systematically.

Nitya spoke on similar lines during the interview,

The students feel they are a waste. We sit and talk to them daily and each day we consult 20 children. We put our hands around their shoulders, as these students have not experienced a touch of love. They tell us that no one has ever taken good care of them and that they are obliged. Love speaks, love can achieve anything and my teachers and I, and we follow two simple rules: first they are our own children. Second what change we wish to see in them is first taken into action by us. We change for them and we play the role models; as what a father does, the son follows them. Here, we are the role models and our teachers go down to their level and talk to them. You will be really surprised to see that everyone interacts together and we don't see any difference in them.

The director mentioned that the management at Britto CC follows this philosophy. The interviewees and faculty members mentioned that they address the director as the father and the principal as mother. The staff at the CC loves the students and creates a safe environment for them. As a faculty member and a teacher trainer, I too believe that the students can be positively molded with love, care, and affection. In this process of student development, the parents are involved as well. Regular meetings are held with parents to gain their commitment and cooperation in the effort to inculcate a sense of responsibility among the students. Santosh, Nitya, and the faculty members interact with parents on a regular basis. In addition to updating the parents with the students'

performance, the parents are reminded that they are partners in shaping their child's future.

**Assured source of income.** A policy that attracts several students and stabilizes their life is guaranteed job placement that assures the students of a stable source of income. The college offers technical programs that are in demand and would provide livelihood to the students. The students come from lower SES. Mitesh, a faculty of Nursing and Health Assistant course, provides additional information about the students' background. He revealed,

In our college, most of the students' mothers are working and the fathers are drunkards. Out of 25 students, 80% of the students' fathers are drunkards. They don't have a job, mothers are working, and doing labor work and the family is surviving. After the completion of the program, the students get a job and start earning and support their families. This is an important contribution towards their home.

A guaranteed job is a hope of survival for students and their families. Another faculty member, Puja acknowledged that several female students in her class were married. In order to attain a job and have a steady source of income, the married adults were getting back to college. Bhumi, Abhay, and Dhiraj, the participants, affirmed that one of the reasons to enroll in the CC was job placement. Nitya pointed out that the students' performance at internships is critical to obtain a job. The CC has industrial partnerships with the active local industries and other employer organizations. A salient feature of the college is a compulsory internship. Since the job placement is provided immediately after the completion of the internship, the students are able to apply the skills they

acquired and receive monetary benefits. Job placements also work as a motivational factor for students to work hard and perform better.

**Affordable tuition and a generous heart.** Another policy of Britto CC is subsidized fees and a grace period for all students to pay their tuition in installments. Like other CCs, the students are allowed to pay the fees in installments. However, there is one additional factor that makes this college unique. Nitya elaborated,

We have sponsors who sponsor their fees, so we charge a nominal fee of Rs.5500 (\$90), as anything given free has no value. So they know they have put some money and they have to make use of it and if you don't charge them, they don't come regularly. Since our aim is to help the poor, we charge Rs.5500 (\$90) per annum. Those who can pay are offered to pay in installments. Even if they can't pay, I tell them to get a job, earn and then pay. They do it and not a year has gone past by when I have not received my money, I have always been a gainer. If not this year, next year they come to me and pay me the money.

At times, economic conditions of the students are so poor that they cannot afford the monthly installments of Rs.500 (\$10). In this case, the college permits the students to pay the fees once they complete the program and start earning, which would normally be a year. When the students are given a chance, they become self-conscious and take the onus of making the payment. Nitya expressed that she rarely came across a student who had failed to make the payment. The college does not remind the students about paying their fees; it places its trust and confidence in them. This motivates the students to focus on academics and succeed at college. The students are touched with the kind gesture and the trust placed on them. After graduation, the students want to make a contribution to

the place where they have gained their education. Bhavika shared an example of her contribution towards the college. She expressed, “After completion of the program, I will definitely come and visit the college. I intend to donate my first salary to the college as my contribution to the college.” The participants felt that they had acquired endless benefits from the college and each one of them intends to contribute either in terms of skills, knowledge, or monetarily.

The comprehensive curriculum is a characteristic that builds the students’ foundation. The college offers advanced technical and specialized programs. The curriculum is updated consistently with the latest technological advancements. Puja, a faculty member, stated that the office and administration course integrates the latest version of Tally. Another faculty, Mitesh mentioned that the health assistant syllabus is of the graduate level. He added, that Britto CC differs from a regular college in terms of its methodology. Apart from the technical content, the curriculum comprises of compulsory life skills and spoken English classes. Unlike the other sites I visited, Britto CC invests an extensive amount of time in developing the students’ life skills.

**Essential skills.** An important policy that is integrated in the coursework is mandatory life skills and spoken English courses. In Pondicherry, the present condition of the villagers, who are farmers or fishermen, is deteriorating. Since the farmers own small pieces of land their source of income is limited. In order to sustain their living, they borrow money and bear a huge debt burden. They live in primitive clay houses with no toilets and struggle for two meals a day, drinking water, and clothing. The students at Britto College come from such families. The life skills course provides essential skills to

the students and is taught for 45 minutes each day. The faculty members stated that the course begins with personal hygiene. Puja, a faculty member explained,

In most of the students' houses, they don't have toilet facilities. So first thing we teach them is how to use toilets, and how to be hygienic. We also teach them about food items in a healthy dietary system, since most of them eat non-vegetarian food from streets. So we tell them what food items have vitamins and nutrients. So we start with the food diet.

Basic things like personal hygiene, information on food dietary, and dressing appropriately instill discipline and good habits in the students. Nitya added that they teach students how to dress neatly. All the students enrolled in the nursing and health assistant programs are females. Mitesh, a faculty member in this program, spoke about the importance of having discussions on sensitive topics with the females.

Also, all the students are females and they are from remote villages, so personal hygiene is a concern. Most of the students are adolescents; they are unaware of menstrual cycle. They don't travel during their menstruation. The students are ignorant about several basic issues. We have discussions on these topics, and we introduce the students to disposable napkins and how they are used. We have dialogues and conversations on these sensitive topics. Sometimes attitude is an issue, based on the age group, the girls are immature and childish. The age group is 18 -20 years old. We work on their attitude.

As stated above, several girls have superstitious beliefs like not travelling during their cycle, which are passed on from previous generations. Most of the students' family members are not formally educated. Thus, the students have minimal knowledge about

healthy living. Any new knowledge acquired by the students also benefits their families. After the basic skills, the students are taught how to deal with their fears, stress, emotions, anger, loneliness, and shyness.

During the life skills course, the students discuss their goals in life and purpose of life. Santosh frequently addresses the students about the significance of having goals and a purpose in life. Santosh uses his life story as an example to inspire and motivate the students and reflect on their purpose in life. Like a sailor lost in a storm, the students are lost and unconscious about what they want in life when they enter the college. Britto CC focuses on building the moral values of the students and the life skills course instills the seeds of building a good character and personality. The vision, mission, and the curriculum aim to impart ethical values based education to the students. Mitesh shares his thoughts about the integration of moral values in the curriculum,

During the first month, we work on the interest levels of the students in the course, and then we motivate them. We communicate to students that after completion of the program, they will get a good job and a good salary package. The reason that students drop out of school is weaker value education. In India, in several villages in school education, values are not important. Each day, we focus on building the value system, as you know that values are not build in a day, it is developed over a period of time.

The staff and the management at Britto College stated that they practice and teach moral values to the students. Bhumika, Abhay, and Dhiraj affirmed that they enjoyed and learnt from life skills course. Dhiraj expressed that he learned to deal with his anger issues. He also discovered his skills and potential. He has set a benchmark for himself, and each

day he pushes and strives to achieve his goals. In the life skills course, the faculty members have activities that develop students' skills such as anger management, time management, leadership skills, and team building, among others. Bhumika articulated that this course helped her think and reflect on the purpose of life. The students spoke about how reflection and being conscious about their actions are vital and they are implementing these skills in their daily lives. Another student, Abhay, spoke about his thoughts on life skills,

I thought studying here is like a dream. I never thought I would study the course. But I am doing it now. In my school there was no cleanliness, no housekeeping. I learned about house-keeping, how to live a correct life. There will be dark thoughts in your life, how do you deal with them. Life skills helped me to deal with the dark thoughts, and they teach us spoken English and communication skills.

The students learn to deal with their greatest fears. Along with life skills, mandatory spoken English course is a part of their curriculum. Since most of the students are from remote areas, their foundation of English language is not very strong. Mitesh described his thoughts about the students' language,

In Pondicherry schools, English language is not given importance. We all learn in our local language. Frequently, parents don't know English, so they use the local language at home. The main challenge is that students don't understand what they read. They know the alphabets; in school time they know the language, as they are taught to memorize. So, even if students know Basic English, they don't comprehend what they read. So the biggest challenge is comprehension of the



language. It is imperative to focus on the English language during the schooling time, so their language is developed. This is the case for most of the students who are enrolled in the course, so we give emphasis to learn English in the first two months.

The participants could not speak in English before coming to the CC. It's been six months since the college began, and they all currently speak Basic English. The participants were new to the language and struggled at times, therefore Nitya was present throughout the interview to support them with translations.

**Holistic development.** Holistic development forms an essential part of the philosophy, curriculum, and course structure of Britto CC. This is achieved through academic learning, wide array of extracurricular activities, and learning resources. The extracurricular activities consist of cultural events, elocution competition, yoga, indoor and outdoor sports, essays, speeches, *rangoli* competition, and celebration of festivals. The college believes that academic and non-academic activities are vital for an individual's development, so they integrate both the components into the course structure. Along with the students, the faculty members also participate in the extracurricular activities. I was amazed to learn that each day begins with a yoga class, which is a compulsory activity for all the students. I was fortunate to get a college tour from Nitya, where we visited a huge multipurpose hall that is used for yoga and cultural activities. The faculty members practice yoga along with the students. There are three yoga instructors who cater to the students and members. In the interview, both the faculty members and students expressed their love for yoga. Bhumika narrated her yoga experience,

On the first day when I did yoga, I felt it was too hard and physically strenuous.

Before coming to this college, I have never done yoga; in fact I have rarely indulged in any physical activity. I have realized that yoga helps me to deal with my anger.

She felt that yoga calmed her emotionally and mentally and this helped her to be attentive and focused in the classroom. Dhiraj and Abhay also shared that they enjoyed yoga class and they didn't like coming late or missing this class. Puja, a faculty member elaborated the significance of the yoga class. She explained,

Yes, the first class of the day is yoga and we teach the students the benefits of yoga. The yoga instructors inquire with students if they have any particular problems or pains. Then, they will guide the students with specific exercises that will help them to relieve the pain.

Yoga builds strength, awareness, and harmony in the mind and body. Yoga also helps to deal with stress and have a positive approach towards life. Along with practicing yoga, the instructors discuss about the benefit and purpose of yoga. Puja mentioned that understanding the significance of the practice helps the students to appreciate the practice. She said,

In the beginning they don't like yoga, because it is new for them. They are ignorant about the benefits they can derive with yoga. What is the purpose of meditation? We orient the students with the benefits and strengths of yoga, how it can help an individual personally. Also, we discuss with them the benefits of meditation... It is not easy for us to explain them; it is difficult as the background

they come from is very different. As I mentioned most of them are from fishermen community ...

The students take time to understand and enjoy the practice. Over a period of time, students realize the benefits of yoga and intend to continue the practice throughout their lives. Apart from yoga, the college has indoor games such as carom, chess, table tennis and outdoor games like cricket, football, and *kabaddi*. The college has an open space in front of the main building and this space is used for sport activities. The college conducts sports tournaments among the students and with other colleges. Last year, Britto College won the cricket tournament and was awarded a big trophy. Nitya displays the trophies in her office. Dhiraj, an interviewee shared that he likes playing chess. He feels that chess helps him to think strategically and increases his patience. Like many Indians, Abhay is a huge fan of cricket and loves playing the cricket tournament. On the other hand, Bhumika spoke about the cultural activities and about her involvement in the elocution competition. She shared,

Several extracurricular activities and events occur at our college. I participated in the elocution competition and won a price. Initially, when the teacher asked me to participate in the competition, I was really afraid and I said no. At home, when I was sharing the conversation with my mother, she pushed and encouraged me to participate. I was really scared to speak in front of the crowd, however, I attempted and participated, and surprisingly I won.

Bhumika was smiling when she shared the above incident with me. She added that as a school student, she never participated in an extracurricular activity due to low self-

confidence and self-esteem. Her parents were extremely happy of her accomplishment, and her self-confidence and self-esteem increased after this event.

Furthermore, the college provides additional resources to aid student learning. The library is located on the fourth floor of the building with several windows for ventilation and sunlight. Nitya stated that the campus does not have air-conditioning, but there are adequate windows in each classroom for fresh breeze. The students meet each week for one hour to enhance their reading skills. During the college tour, Nitya showed us the computer and technical course labs. The college has strong industrial partnerships with several multinational companies (MNCs). As a part of corporate social responsibility and industrial partnership, the companies have built these labs for Britto College. The sophisticated computer lab has 20 computers. The resources are well maintained and the students are taught to keep the environment clean and tidy. Nitya said that the students clean the college campus on a regular basis. The students are responsible for the environment they live in. The partner companies have built labs for specific technical programs like air-conditioning and mechanism and nursing. The students learn through hands-on experience with the help of technical equipment. On the ground floor there is a projector room, which is used for training workshops or to show documentaries to the students. I would imagine that an extensive amount of planning and time was invested in design and structure of the building to serve the students' and faculty members' needs.

**Developing sensitive and generous individuals.** Another important policy of the CC is mandatory community service, which is part of the coursework. Santosh, during our conversation, stated, “As human beings, we have accumulated and utilized

resources from nature and creation around us. Humans cannot be receivers; it is our duty to give back to the society. To serve humans is to serve God.” Britto CC firmly believes and practices the concept of serving humanity. This value of selflessness is instilled in the students through community service. The students visit the nearby villages in small groups for community service every fortnight. Abhay conveyed that community service is his favorite activity, as he feels content doing selfless work for other people. Puja gave the following examples of community service,

We go to nearby villages and we take suggestions from the *panchayat*. We ask them if they require any help to clean streets, or to clean temples, or ponds or roadsides. So they tell us what they need help with; for example my temple is dirty, can you come and clean it? Then, we divide the students in teams; they go there and clean the temple or any other areas as per the requirement. Sometimes, the students give us suggestions for their villages; my village site is so dirty or roads are covered with the plants and things like that. The last time when we went to do community service which was one-month back, we went to an orphanage house. And they cleaned the orphanage house and cooked for the students. They spent some time with them and performed a skit for them.

Abhay said that he likes talking, interacting, and meeting the local people. He expressed that the students are overwhelmed with the villagers’ response. Initially, Abhay did not enjoy doing the community service. Only over a period of time, he understood its essence and started enjoying the task. Puja shared her observation of the students’ experiences,

In the start, they don't like the activity; we force them to do it. Once they start doing, they enjoy it and get engaged in the activity. There are times when the panchayat members and the village people come and affectionately pat the students for their good work. Students come and share their stories with us, I recall one of the students stated that the villagers came and said 'Thank you so much' and hugged him. So they are happy and excited and willingly want to go for the forthcoming community service.

The students are delighted to receive the villagers' blessings. After community service, the students share their thoughts and feelings about their experience in the classroom. The students have discussions and dialogues about the purpose of community service. The college instills moral values in the students. These activities create consciousness among the students and teach them to be humble and kind human beings. The management offers various services and policies like affordable cost that provides easy access to education, English skills that help in personal and professional life, and the philosophy, curriculum, and course structure that caters to an individual's mind, soul, and body. This information gives a clear understanding of students' perceptions of their experiences at the CC.

### **Rituals of the Temple: The Classroom Pedagogy**

The faculty members and the staff at the Britto CC play a significant role in the implementation of its services and policies. At Britto CC, the methodology of the classroom includes induction model and step-by-step teaching. The members build a strong relationship with the students and their families. They are a role model to the students and regularly guide and mentor them.

Imagine a class has begun at Britto CC; the students are seated and the faculty member narrates a story. The name of the story is “The Power of a Word”. Once a Sufi was healing a sick child. He repeated a few words, and gave the child to the parents saying, “Now he will be well.” An antagonistic that witnessed this said to the Sufi, “How can it be possible that by a few words spoken, anyone can be healed?” An angry answer is never expected from a mild Sufi, but this time he turned to the man and said, “You understand nothing about it. You are a fool.” The man was very much offended. He was furious and his face was red. The Sufi said, “When a word has the power to make you hot and angry, why should not a word have the power to heal?” This is one of the short stories that the faculty members begin their class with each day. The members revealed that each class commences with a short moral story, as this is a strategy to inculcate moral values and engage the students. At a temple, devotees perform rituals for the fulfillment of their wishes and resolution of difficulties. Rituals are the medium that connects the devotee to the creator. Similarly, pedagogies in the classroom are the link between students and faculty members who implement the academic services and policies of the college. The members pointed to the prominent factors that are necessary in implementation of the services and policies: creating a right environment and strong rapport with the students and parents, counseling and mentoring the students, crafting creative instructional activities, assessing the class, dealing with and finding solutions to the classroom challenges, and providing immediate feedback to the students.

**Induction model.** Puja, a faculty member of the diploma in computer and office administration program, was a young dynamic woman from finance background. She has been working at Britto CC since three years. Although she was a south Indian woman,

Puja did not have a heavy Tamil accent and spoke English fluently. Puja spoke with zeal and was excited to share her experience of the college. She pointed out that creating a strong rapport with the students is one of the factors that the faculty members focus on during the first ten days of the class. While talking about settling the students in the beginning of the program, she used the term “induction model” and explained,

The starting classes are critical and vital, especially the first ten classes. The starting classes will be induction model, as we make them play games and have fun activities for them. We as faculty members share our stories, where I come from, what is my background, what is my context and my story.

The induction model is critical, as this phase lays the foundation of the program. The induction period helps the students to become calm, comfortable, and settle down in the new environment. Nitya shared that it takes three months to settle down the students and bring them under control, after which it’s a smooth process. As indicated earlier, the faculty members create a loving and affectionate environment for the students.

Both the faculty members, Puja and Mitesh, began the course in a similar manner. The teachers introduce themselves, share their personal stories, give background information about themselves, and how they arrived at the CC. The members then conduct an icebreaker activity and get to know the students. In addition, Puja engages the students in formulating the rules and regulations of the classroom. She asks the students about the kind of teacher they want in the classroom. Most of the students respond that they don’t want a strict faculty who would reprimand them all the time. Puja concurs with them and in return the students have to listen and fulfill her expectations. Thus, there is a mutual understanding and decorum between the students



and faculty members. Puja revealed that they observe the students meticulously and assess them informally on the first day. She explained,

In the first class itself, we try to collect maximum information about the students. We find out which students are having problems. Among them, some students will act differently. Different means that they are normal but they have lot of issues. We can assess this information by studying their facial expressions, their face. So first class is critical. While talking to them, we can understand students' body language. Past three years, I have been observing the normal students. The normal students are active and they have mediocre concentration. Other students have low concentration span, they won't be able to answer, and they would look disturbed. We can make out from their eyes and body language while talking to them.

Puja mentioned that her observation skills have become better over a period of time. The faculty members spend an extensive amount of time inside and outside the classroom with the students, so they can know them better. Each day, the faculty members sit with the students at lunchtime to strengthen their rapport. As the students' bond with the members becomes stronger, they share their personal/family problems. Sometimes, the challenges at home hamper the students' academics. In this case, the faculty members step forward and attempt to connect with the students' parents. Mitesh expressed,

After the class, students share their personal family problems, and we have a discussion on these problems. Sometimes we share our mobile numbers, so we can communicate to the parents directly. These problems can be personal or medical and we provide support to the students in dealing with the problems. As

teachers, we definitely draw the line and maintain it. We make sure that we don't offend students in any way. In the classroom, there is no authority figure; we both are at the same level. We assure that the students don't take advantage of our kindness and take us for granted. We are conscious and aware of what role we play in the classroom.

Thus, the members are conscious about their role in a student's life. The strong rapport with the students aids them to engage the parents in the process of student development.

**Parents are partners.** Santosh, the director of Britto CC, had mentioned that it is crucial to involve the parents, as they are partners who could contribute towards holistic development of the students. Hence, ongoing activities are planned to connect and dialogue with the parents. If required, the faculty members visit the students' house and talk to the parents directly. As stated earlier, the parents are treated as partners in creating the students' future. The faculty members meet with the parents each month and update them about their child's performance. Along with the faculty members, the principal and director address and meet the parents individually. The director discusses the future plans of the students with the parents and encourages and motivates them to be involved in the educational journey of their child. He explains the significance of education and offers to support the family with additional resources. Nitya and Santosh converse with each student; they personally know their names and family background and follow their performance in the college. When Satya's parents visited the college, they personally met Santosh, Nitya, and the faculty members. Satya shared her parents' experience about the college,

My parents met the director sir, talked to the teachers, and they saw the new infrastructure. They took a tour of the college. They never spend a penny or gave a penny to anyone. Looking at the director sir and listening to his story that he has come from somewhere and started this college, they were amazed to see the work the director sir is doing for people in the villages. They were touched to see the way the director helps other people; looking at that, they want to help and support someone too. My parents said that the faculty members at the college are always smiling. So you have got very good teachers.

Satya was touched by her parents' thoughts. She felt that the college was not only inspiring her, but also her parents to serve the community. The college is playing an important role in building good citizens for the society.

**Fabulous mentors.** For faculty members, mentoring is part of their daily routine. They guide and support the students in academics and non-academics activities from time to time. At Britto CC, the faculty members and the management counsel the students frequently. The counseling sessions and the timings vary from student to student. Puja pointed out that she counsels at least five students each day. Some students require four to five sessions and some need more, as they come from disturbed environments and struggle academically. Additionally, Britto College has a part-time counselor who visits the college each week and works with few students. Puja affirmed that each day in the classroom is different and brings new challenges. As stated earlier, the socio-economic conditions of the city influence the adolescents. Puja shared that the political parties sometimes attract the poor youth in politics with money and alcohol. As a result, some of the students indulge in drugs, cigarettes, and alcohol. As the college is acquainted with

the situation, they attempt to deal with the problems by mentoring, counseling, and instructional strategies. The instructors use documentaries to educate the students on the ill effects of consumption of drugs and alcohol. Puja gave me an example of how she approaches the students,

I start by asking them to talk about something they like, because we can't begin the conversation with what is your problem. They tend to hide the problem, if we ask them to talk about the issues. We have a friendly conversation about things they like, and then I ask them to talk about their family, their relationship with their parents. Then slowly they reveal what is the problem or what is bothering them. The thing is that sometimes students have bad habits. In order to address the topic of bad habits, we identify strengths of the students. We discuss with them about their positive strengths, and then have a conversation about the consequences of bad habits and what can be done to break the old bad habits.

The transformation of habits takes a while and positive reinforcement is given from time to time. Puja articulated that these documentaries are intense and affect the students deeply. Along with the movies, the faculty members have one to one discussion about sensitive topics. Puja described the students' reaction to the movies,

Faculty members create a strong relationship with the students, and this relationship is built over a period of time on trust. Students confide in us, it does not happen suddenly, takes time. We show documentary movies to the students on addiction to drugs and alcoholism, causes of cancer, interviews of cancer patients, and their suffering. We show these documentaries frequently, students get frightened of the diseases. They share that they are scared of the thought of

having a cancer. They realize that they don't want to have this life in future, and have physical consequences like hair fall, weight loss among others. Sometimes we show these movies every day, and each day we show a different documentary. The faculty members identify the students who indulge in unhealthy habits and deal with them individually. Apart from dealing with bad habits, the documentary movies are shown to motivate and inspire the students. There are several motivational Bollywood movies that demonstrate how a common man becomes successful with hard work and determination. Students also read autobiographies of several activists, politicians, businessmen, and sportsperson. The staff and faculty members frequently formulate innovative instructional activities to teach or deal with students' challenges.

**Step-by-step teaching.** Like Kostka College, Britto College also follows the step-by-step teaching method. Mitesh explains that the pace of the students varies from person to person and they have to plan according to the students' competence and language proficiency. A student whose foundation is stronger receives instruction for the advanced course, unlike a regular college where all the students are taught at the same pace. Mitesh conveys that most of the regular colleges first teach theory followed by practical application. However, in Britto College the methodology is the opposite. He narrated,

First, we teach the students practical and then we teach them theory. We demonstrate in the laboratory and the students are trained practically; for example, the different instruments used in the hospitals. After the training, we give them the theory; we explain the definitions of concepts and terminology. While explaining, we use the blackboard to display important terminology. Then, we

ask them to connect practical with theory and explain in their own words. In this manner, we are able to engage the students effectively.

From my experience, this method is different from a regular school or college. The faculty members shared that this method helps the students to comprehend effectively. In addition, the students are keen to learn from hands-on experience. The members use some fascinating ideas for the assignments. Puja shared an example of an assignment for the computer and office administration program, which was to interview a celebrity. Through this activity, the students learn how to research, how to prepare a questionnaire, how to interview, and how to strike up a conversation, among others. Another assignment was to visit a bank and get all the relevant documents to open a bank account. For nursing class, Mitesh uses laboratory resources and assigns scenarios to the students to perform on mannequins. The diversity in assignments makes the class lively and fun. In English class, the students have various engaging activities like word games, guess one word, crosswords, and others. Students read the newspaper each day to polish their communication skills and the faculty members have oral and written activities on the readings on the following day. Later, the students share their thoughts and feelings about the assignments and the challenges they face. The faculty members teach in-depth followed by discussion, exploration, reflection, and analysis.

**Teamwork.** The faculty members face challenges every day in the classroom, but the staff has a strategy to deal with the challenges. The college timings are from 9.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. and all the faculty members meet in Nitya (principal) office after college hours. They brief each other about the day's activities and discuss challenges they encounter. The team brainstorms, gives their ideas and opinions and suggests

strategies to deal with the problems from their past experience. Nitya and Puja both used the term family for the CC. The team lives like a family and supports each other throughout their problems. Nitya highlighted two vital things about the challenges,

First they are into their own world, they (students) don't respond to you. They are very aggressive in nature and are always in the fighting mood. One spark is enough for them to start a fight, so we start with life skills. First, time management and then attitude. We give more importance to attitude because when they enter, each one comes with a different mindset. I find it difficult and so we teach them about what is life, what you haven't achieved, why have you been termed as failures, we explain them with stories, and talk about different people. Many people have come a long way; if you see our ex-president Abdul Kalam, he came from a very poor family and all you need is hard work, hard work, and hard work.

All the faculty members spoke about students' attitude in the classroom. The life skills course aids in dealing with student attitudes. Mitesh expressed that he loves his job and is content with it and believes that his strength is his attitude. While teaching, he is conscious about the students' competence and proficiency and teaches accordingly. He is at par with the students. Mitesh and Puja assess students' learning occasionally and alter the instructional strategies as needed. They frequently use peer learning in a study group. The faculty members have to create multiple strategies especially in the spoken English class. Mitesh said,

We start from the scratch, from basic, from alphabets like the students are taught in first grade. In this process, the students understand and realize what are

alphabets, what are phonetics and what does it imply. Then, depending upon their pace and maturity they grasp the language. We discuss with students about the significance of English language and motivate them to study. We focus on two factors; first is creating curiousness and excitement and second is developing interest among the students, so the urge to learn is high.

The faculty members acknowledged that the students' learning becomes better with motivation and interest. The students receive immediate feedback from the faculty members. The instant feedback assists the students to resolve their doubts and work on their areas of improvement. In Britto College, students, staff, and faculty members are open to feedback. After class, the faculty members reflect on their teaching and assess the strengths and areas of improvement for their class. Mitesh and Puja shared that they struggled extensively during the first year at the CC and seek help from Nitya and Santosh and other members. Mitesh narrated an example of his learning experience,

In the first year, we had few strategies. During the final exams, they (students) don't perform well, and struggle to accomplish their goals. Then, I analyzed the problem and found out what the problem was. Students use to blame me for their lower performance in final exams. At that time, I had to assess the problem. I realized that students felt bored to write; verbally they did well, but when it came to writing they don't perform well. Next year, I focused on the writing skills; I discussed with the students the importance of writing and encouraged them to write frequently. This strategy worked in my class, first concentrate on verbal skills and then writing skills.



Mitesh expressed that each day he learns from the students, so there is mutual learning and growth for all of them. Santosh frequently addresses and conducts professional development sessions for the faculty members and staff. He discusses the faculty's challenges, motivates and inspires them, enhances their skills and knowledge, and provides support that is essential for quality education.

### **Attainment: Outcome and Impact of Community College**

For a devotee, a temple is a special place in which the inner and outer worlds meet. The devotee has a purpose when he/she visits the temple and an anticipation of experiencing divinity. Similarly a student enrolls in the college for various reasons and the impact of their experience at this temple of education is boundless. This section answers RQ1c, which deals with the outcome and impact of the students' experiences with academic services and policies at Britto CC. When talking about their experiences at the CC, the participants spoke about its effect at the micro and macro level. The findings indicate that at a personal level, the students have enhanced their skills, knowledge, and aptitude. Holistically the students have developed their moral values and have a positive attitude towards life. The program has helped them gain recognition and acceptance in society through blue-collar jobs. There is vertical mobility, which is improving the standard of living of the marginalized community. In addition, this section responds to another research question, which refers to the faculty and administrative members' perceptions on the impact of services and policies on the students' experiences. The members spend extensive time with the students inside and outside the classroom and observe them closely. The faculty members were able to provide insights about the

effect of the services and policies on the students in terms of academic, emotional, moral, linguistic, and soft skills.

For a flower to bloom, it requires sunlight, water, and temperature. All the factors have to be in adequate quantity, or else the flower may not bloom. Likewise, Nitya uses the analogy that the students bloom like flowers at the end of the year. For the student to succeed, a combination of the right environment, love, affection, technical skills, knowledge, motivation, counseling, mentoring, and life skills are provided to the students. The participants indicated that they have learned and groomed their skills in time management, computers, analysis, questioning, reflection, writing, anger management, survival, and team building during the program. Bhumika shared a fascinating experience with me,

Earlier, I use to get angry often. Yes, I use to get angry on my parents and myself. The reason I used to get angry is because my parents were not able to fulfill my expectations. When I asked anything from them, my parents were unable to purchase that thing for me. I use to be upset and throw my tantrums on them. After coming to community college, I realized that if my parents were unable to fulfill my demands because of financial condition, it is not their fault. I understand that they have constraints. Coming here, I don't get angry anymore, I mean I know how to deal with my anger.

Like Satya, other participants also felt that they have become better in dealing with their anger and frustration.

**Role model.** Santosh is a role model for parents, staff members, and students, as they look up to him for his values and actions. He has frequent discussions with the

students about significant topics like humanity, positive perception towards life, community service, and good habits. After listening to Santosh's discourse, Bhumika started reflecting on her actions. Over a period of time, she has pondered over her thoughts, actions, and attitude. Bhumika has discovered her goal and purpose in life. She aims to become an office administrator and aspires to work for a big multinational company (MNC). She considers Santosh as a role model. Every time Bhumika listens to Santosh, she is empowered and highly determined to achieve her goal. She shared an example of his talks,

During his speech, director sir was talking about how people live selfishly on the earth. All of us receive food, clothing, and shelter from God's creation via nature, animals, and natural resources. He was talking about giving back to the society. At that point of time, I wondered how could I contribute back to the society. I like helping other people; I want to help those children who don't have parents. I want to support the children by providing them with education. I want to be affectionate, love and take care of them. I am deeply inspired with the director. He is my role model; he guides me and inspires me in all endeavors.

I was amazed to know that Bhumika understands the meaning of empathy at her age and wants to practice it. Bhumika expressed that her family has acknowledged the positive changes in her in the last few months and feels that their daughter has become wise and mature. In fact, she convinced her brother to enroll in the CC and he plans to enroll in the electrician program soon. My conversation with Bhumika made me cognizant of the fact that Britto CC is indeed empowering the youth to get back to education.

**Power of love.** Most of the participants spoke about the loving and caring environment at Britto CC, which contributes to a strong support system for them. The experience for every student and faculty member is distinctive. For Yogesh, Britto CC has given him love, affection, support, strength, and the tools to move forward in life. Yogesh discovered that he feels happy coming to the CC. At home, he experiences sadness and wishes that the college were open on Sunday. He is conscious of what his future would have been, if he were not enrolled in the CC. He feels that he would have done some odd jobs and would have been sitting at home for the most part. Now that he is part of the college, he is certain of having a job in the future and is confident that the technical and life skills would help him for life. As mentioned earlier, Yogesh is a top ranker in his class and is cognizant of the skills that are required to be the best. He has created high standards for himself and works hard to accomplish his goals. Exams are extremely important to Yogesh and he has the zeal to fulfill his dreams. The CC experience is enhancing his reading and decision-making skills. He has observed a positive change in his attitude, and is determined to achieve his goals. Yogesh said,

I go home and do some work at home preparing for the next day. During the other time, I read books, and I don't go out with my friends, because I don't want to get distracted and waste my time unnecessary. I might as well invest my time in education. The reason I don't go out with my peers is that they will teach me to drink or smoke. I don't want to fall into bad company. Instead of going and wasting my time with them, I prefer to invest my time constructively.

Yogesh shared that he often faces constructive and destructive choices in life. The life skills course and the college experience have equipped him in making wise decisions and

he is prepared to face the consequences. Nitya spoke highly of Yogesh, as she loved his attitude towards life. Yogesh intends to complete the program and pay for his higher studies. He aspires to complete his bachelors and join the police force.

**Impact at a micro level.** The faculty members and participants expressed that CC is like home. Abhay also used the metaphor of home to describe the CC. For him, coming to college is like coming home, where the faculty members are like family members who teach and take care of them. Abhay spoke of his lessons learned in college about spirituality, humanity, and other skills. The college regularly conducts training workshops for students to enhance their soft skills like time management, leadership, team building, and positive attitude. He distinctly remembers an activity that was conducted to improve time management skills. He descriptively explained the activity,

I recall one of the activities. We had a plastic container with sand in the bottom and we were given rocks and pebbles. The purpose of the activity was to fit the larger rocks and pebbles into the container at the same time. We all wondered how we fit everything at the same time. The aim of the activity was to see that sometimes we get so hung up on the little things that we cannot determine how to fit the more important larger thing in it. In order to accomplish the goal, we have to dump the sand out and place the large rocks and then the pebbles, and then pour the sand over the top. Thus, there is room for the important things first and less important are to be filled in later on. After the activity, we had discussion among the peers, about what the big rocks, small rocks, and sand are in our life. Then, the faculty members used to tell us stories about great individuals who

struggled to an extent. However, they had dreams and they achieved the dreams with will, hard work, and determination.

The above activity teaches time management, perception in life, organization skills, reflection skills, formulation and creation of goals, and the steps to accomplish these goals. The faculty members show inspiring and exciting Bollywood movies to students followed by dialogues and discussions. The students realize that they have to work hard and invest their time and energy to fulfill their goals and succeed in life. Abhay acknowledged that this college has given him direction in life or else he would be lost and struggling to survive. All the students spoke about contributing back to the college. As alumni, he wants to contribute to the college. He said, "Once I complete my college and become successful, I will contribute back to the college (paying back to college). My aim is to build a canteen for this college." The college does not have a canteen and as alumni, he wants to build a canteen for future students. Abhay, reflecting on the lessons learnt, added that his confidence level has increased while talking to people. He has worked on his personal hygiene and dressing sense. He gave a simple example of how wearing an ID card instills the seed of discipline. Abhay shared another example of the lessons learnt,

In Chennai, I used to not be very helpful to people around me. I wondered why should I help them. After coming to CC, in my class when students approach me for help, I enjoy helping them and I feel like supporting them. I think I have become more helpful and supportive human being.

Abhay feels that coming to CC has made him conscious about his moral values and he is integrating these values in his daily life. He is cognizant that the diploma program will

aid him to improve his standard of living. He believes that he is an ambassador of Britto College. It is his duty to carry the good name of the college, as his behavior and quality of work will affect the internship program for future students. The college is integrating responsibility and discipline in the students with their loving and caring approach. Thus the students have seen changes in skills, attitudes, and aptitudes in themselves and their peers.

**Impact at a macro level.** While most students spoke about their individual experiences at a micro level, the faculty members discussed the overall impact of the services and policies on students' experiences and society. Nitya declared that the students are transformed at the end of the first year. She firmly believes in contributing back to the society; that money is not everything in life and cannot buy happiness. The college believes in giving love, time, and affection to the students and integrates moral values and a sense of service to humanity. Most of the students are in contact with Nitya and the faculty members after completing the program. Talking about alumni contribution, she revealed,

These diplomas are only recognized in companies with blue-collar jobs. I am very proud to say that my nine children (students) are abroad; they are working in Dubai, Singapore, Kuwait and 20 other children are entrepreneurs and they earn quite a lot. And they employ my other students, I am proud to say that. Year after year, many are becoming entrepreneurs.

Some students become entrepreneurs and have industrial partnerships with Britto College. The current students are enrolled in internships at companies established by alumni. The college is effectively creating an environment where students from

marginalized communities are educating, employing, and supporting each other. The students are in turn contributing and serving the society. The diploma program equips the students to work in blue-collar jobs. In the long run with higher education and advanced skills, these students have an opportunity to enter the white-collar industry.

Mitesh commented that the diploma programs provide the students with education and jobs, which leads to respect in the society. He mentioned that education and a job provides you a stable source of income and one can contribute in the family. As a result, the family members and the society respect and value the individual. Most of the students were dropouts and considered themselves as failures; that society has labeled them and does not value them. However, peoples' perception changes when students complete the program and start earning. The alumni visit the college frequently and share their stories and experiences with the students. Nitya described the alumni's experiences,

Our motivational speakers are our past students. We get students from previous cohorts who want to share their experience. One alumnus began his story as a student, his initial days in college, and his behavior and thought process during that time. Then they compare to the present time, they freely reveal that when they started the program, they dislike studying and it was not easy for them. Once they start with the internship and placement, suddenly they receives respect from the neighbors, and from the families as his dress code changes, he has started earning. So life itself changes, there is transformation. The students share their detailed experience with us in the classroom. They share their perception about



how life is different, as they receive respect from the society. Before this, he felt meaningless.

The stories of the alumni touch the hearts of the students and faculty members. The students' attitude and perception towards life have changed and they have become positive. Puja describes the formula for a successful CC as: Successful CC=Relationship of faculty with the students + skills + knowledge + attitude. The four ingredients are significantly vital for the transformation process. Britto CC differs from a conventional college. Puja explained that several regular colleges focus on the course content and faculty members are not bothered about the students' emotional and mental well-being; they do not focus on the integration of moral values or on life skills. On the contrary, Britto College focuses on empowering the students and integrating them in the society. Faculty members play a critical role in this process; Puja expressed,

The thing is that we should not be a faculty; I should be a mother, a sister, and a friend to them. Only then we can interact and connect with the students. The imperative element is to connect with the students. We have to make them modest, and teach them how they are going to face the society, and how they will resolve the problems. The student has to be bold. These are things... hmm values, which we teach to the students in this college.

Britto College integrates value-based education in their curriculum. All the faculty members are in alignment and work together to achieve this goal. Nitya, Puja, and Mitesh revealed that the CC is a home to them and coming to this place gives them a spiritual feeling. They are at ease and peace with themselves, as they feel that they are playing a small role in uplifting the lives of the marginalized community. Mitesh and

Puja added that they love the way the management implements the academic services and policies. There is no hierarchy between the members and management and they work as one family. When I asked Nitya what Britto CC means to her, she shared,

It's a temple; I tell my children you all are gods for me. I serve the children of god, which is service to god; I don't keep pujas or any other rituals. I have three sons of my own; I don't meet them very often. One is in USA and the other two are in Chennai. I rarely go to Chennai like once in three months, but I want to be here and see my children. God has given me 800 plus three children and more to come. I plan to have 20,000 children by the time I leave this world and I pray to god to give me strength.

Nitya is a calm, confident, and enthusiastic person. She is concerned and cares about the students' performances. She has great leadership skills and is a good manager. She believes in building relationships and invests in creating strong bonds with the students, faculty members, and staff. She believes in the philosophy of teamwork and makes sure that each one of them is focused on the students' success.

I admired Nitya's attitude towards her staff, students, members and her life, as it helped to create a positive environment in the college. She is an extremely optimistic and courageous person. During her interview, she discussed ways the institute could improve and what additional steps should be taken to help students who have been neglected from society. The students and faculty members, including Nitya, profess to adore the director and appear to be inspired by him. The college was recently recognized and awarded the best model of CC in India. Leaders and administrators from various colleges in India

visited Britto College to observe the operations and implementation of academic services and policies at the inauguration ceremony in 2014.

During the tour, I had an opportunity to meet the counselor of the college, a young and dynamic south Indian who works with different non-profits organizations and counsels around 2,000-3,000 students in Pondicherry and nearby districts. I pondered that I was fortunate to meet people, who believe in community service and work passionately for the betterment of humanity.

Nitya strongly recommended that we should visit Chennai and meet Adam and Charles. Adam is the director of ICRDCE and I had been struggling to get an appointment with him. She mentioned that Charles, the assistant director of ICRDCE has recently completed his PhD on CCs in India. She emphasized that I would get productive data after meeting both of them. She went out of her way to call Adam's assistant and scheduled an appointment for me. While talking to the assistant, she mentioned that I was her friend and I got an appointment immediately.

Nitya strongly believes in the philosophy of community service and practices it. Her dedication and sincerity towards her work inspired and motivated me. I always wondered what I would do after completing my PhD. After meeting her, I had an idea about how I could contribute to the Indian CCs. In spite of the great work she does, Nitya did not have a trace of ego or arrogance; she is a modest, humble, affectionate, and generous human being. I am thankful to god that I bumped into Nitya on my journey of CCs in India and the world is a better place to live in because of people like her. Before I departed, she hugged me like a mother. At the end, I was overwhelmed by her grace and approach that brought joyful tears to my eyes.

## Reflection

On several occasions in my life, my father has reinforced to me the phrase *where there is a will there is a way*. I thought the founders and the faculty members of Britto College strongly believe and practice this quote. I am sure that many people have spiritual insights in their lives, but only a handful of them follow and fulfill their calling. I had goose bumps when Santosh narrated the story of the establishment of Britto CC. To start a college under a shed, on donations without the help of government and political institutions, must have been mountainous. I am glad that I went to Pondicherry and came across this college that transforms the lives of many students. I remember being frightened and having anxiety about how and when I would accumulate data for my research study. I can lucidly visualize the campus building and its courtyard; the place was soothing and peaceful. Listening to the perspectives of the faculty members and the management on the impact of the academic services and policies on students' experiences, which pertains to RQ2, I learnt that for effective implementation of services and policies, the management spends extensive time interacting, counseling, or mentoring the students. Unlike other CCs, the management of Bosco CC was actively involved at the grass root level. I perceived that Nitya and Santosh (principal and director) believed that their participation in creating a conducive environment for students was as important as the faculty members' involvement. Further, on the day of the interview, Nitya chose to sit with me in the interviews, as she was also keen to hear the students' stories. At the end of the day, Nitya acknowledged that she had an opportunity to learn more about the students, which would help strengthen her relationship with them. Over a span of ten hours at Britto College, I experienced the team members' warmth, affection, and love. I

felt comfortable and part of the system. For a sound operation of academic services and policies, Britto CC invests in various forms of cultural capital: aspirational, linguistic, and social.

While responding to RQ2, which deals with the impact of academic services and policies on students' experiences, the management revealed that most of the students come from a challenging environment. To ensure that the students fully engage in academic services, the CC incorporates various forms of cultural capital, which gave me a better understanding of RQ1 and RQ2. The aspirational, linguistic, and social capital provides a foundation for effective implementation of academic services and policies. As mentioned earlier, the aspirational capital refers to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future in spite of dominance of barriers and difficulties (Yosso, 2005). I recognized that it is challenging for the students to sustain their hopes and dreams in the disturbed environment that they come from. The college inspires, motivates, and counsels the students and discusses strategies about how to be firm on their goals and intentions. The students experience difficult situations; some of them can't afford two meals a day and some don't receive care, attention, and love. Nitya shared that most of the students' fathers are alcoholics who physically abuse their wives, while some students are influenced to indulge in alcohol and drugs. The students live in conflicting environments, as home atmosphere is tense and the college setting is conducive and loving. Knaggs, (2012) conducted a research study to understand the gap that exists between the lower and higher SES college students, despite their efforts. Knaggs recommends creating an environment that increases the likelihood of a stronger integration in college. Responding to RQ1 and RQ2, the participants revealed that Britto

CC builds a strong and positive environment through its academic services and policies. The alumni's performances have exhibited a strong social and academic integration in the CC. The faculty members are cognizant of the students' barriers, thus they formulate additional services and create new pedagogies in the coursework. For instance, to address the students' obstacles, the management integrates activities like watching documentaries, alumni meetings, trainings by experts, and share personal stories, which boost the students' will and confidence to accomplish their dreams.

Another form of cultural capital that provided a framework for the research questions was linguistic capital. Yosso (2005) defines linguistic capital as the intellectual and social skills that are acquired in more than one language. Britto CC teaches the technical concepts and spoken English in two languages. They enhance the students' aptitude by teaching them presentation and communication skills. The teachers develop the students' interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. The faulty members use storytelling to communicate the important life messages, a technique that also enhances the students' linguistic skills. Furthermore, instructional strategies like presentations, research, visiting a bank, or conducting interviews were used to improvise the students' intellectual and social skills.

Social capital is a form of cultural capital that comprises of a network of people and community resources. A strong social capital was essential for the students, so they are actively engaged in the various academic services and policies. As compared to other field sites I visited, I recognized that Britto CC has formulated a strong network of people and community resources. The institute has developed strong relationships with the students' parents, as they consider them partners in their children's development. The

college brings in alumni to talk to the students, who share past experiences, failures, and success stories at Britto College. The students connect to the alumni and consider them a strong network. Bosco is one of the two field sites that integrate the concept of community service in their curriculum, which help the students to build relationships with people outside their college. The students build warm and healthy relationships with the community, which strengthens their social capital. The college has invested in advising, counseling, and mentoring, which are necessary resources for student retention. In addition, the students have extracurricular activities like yoga, chess, and other indoor/outdoor games for strengthening the mind, soul, and body. These elements of faculty engagement, supportive family, and campus involvement are essential for social integration in college (Knaggs, 2012).

Listening to the participants' interviews and building on the Tinto's framework and the theories of integration, I respond to RQ1a, RQ1b, and RQ1c, which deals with the effect of academic services and policies on the students' experiences, and its impact on students' integration. According to Tinto's model (1993), the pre-entry attributes of family background, skills and knowledge, and prior schooling of the students are not very strong, as they enter college. Britto College works on these three elements and strengthens it. The faculty members assess the students' skills and attributes during the first 10 days of college and work throughout the semester based on their proficiency levels. The college gathers information about socio-economic conditions of the students' family and supports them financially. In fact, the college goes one step further and builds a solid relationship with the parents by meeting them regularly and informing them about the students' progress. The students enter the college with uncertain goals and weak

intentions. In the life skills program, the students discover and formulate their goals and intentions for the future. The faculty members, along with the director and the principal, refine the goals and work on a plan of action towards fulfillment of these goals. The training workshops and activities are intended to increase their vitality. The college accommodates students who have external commitments like part-time students and married women. Since some students struggle to support their family, the college accepts deferred fees after completion of the program. The members and the staff work on creating a positive institutional experience for the students. They live like a big family with love, care, and affection. The faculty members' warm personality and positive attitude create an open learning environment, where students are excited to learn the moral values and technical concepts. The faculty members regularly interact and dialogue with the students inside and outside the classroom, such as during lunch break, yoga sessions, and extracurricular activities. Britto College offers several activities for formal and informal experiences with peers, staff, and the management. All these elements lead to strong academic and social integration. Nevertheless, there are occasions where students become weak or their family hardships affect them. The faculty members, however, never give up on their students; it is the trust, assurance, and love that help the students to keep moving ahead. There are circumstances that are beyond the boundaries of CCs like family situation, migration, and death, yet Nitya and Santosh stretch themselves to retain the students in every possible way they can. In a true sense, the college is creating good citizens for the society, as the transformed students ignite the light of positive change around them.



### **The Peanut Butter Factory: Bosco Community College**

This is the third part of the results chapter in which I present the findings of Bosco Community College (CC). In the first part of this section, I describe my journey to Bosco CC and provide supplementary information about the college. This field site is located in Gujarat in one of the oldest cities, which is famous for peanuts. I have used the metaphor of a “peanut butter factory” to describe the themes of Bosco CC. The themes in this segment are:

- Peanut Butter Ingredients: Elements of Bosco Community College;
- Roast the Peanuts: Services and Policies of Bosco Community College;
- Processing the Butter: Internship Experience; and
- Transferring the Butter into a Container: Outcome.

### **The Long Journey**

Rumi, a great poet expressed in his poem Earsight “It takes skill to extract oil from a nut.” This is a metaphor Aalya used for the students at the end of my visit to Bosco CCs. This residential CC for girls is located in one of the narrow lanes in the city of Gir. In the nineties, four nuns started the college, which is one of the oldest CCs in India. Gujarat’s cultural context is different from other states in India, as the state is a blend of conservative and modern culture and is developing rapidly. Somnath, one of the largest cities of Gujarat, is huge and lively. During the research, I stayed in Somnath, which was three hours away from Gir, as I was fortunate to have relatives in this kite city.

I was tense and skeptical about how I would accumulate data; thoughts like management support, locating the college, and finding the participants revolved in my head. I strongly believe that there are no coincidences in life and people come in our

lives for a reason. During the journey, I met people who helped and supported me with the data collection process. Along with anxiety, there was an ingredient of excitement as to what lay ahead. My parents were my companions in the data collection process, as they commuted long hours with me to the remote places. Apart from travelling with me, they were keen to hear and discuss about the students' voices and my experiences at the field sites. In India, the second most populated country, train is the cheapest mode of transport and getting confirmed train tickets from Pune to Gujarat was a challenge. We decided to travel to Gujarat via Mumbai, as the tickets from Mumbai to Gujarat were cheaper. However, the lower cost also had a price in terms of longer commute hours with crowded compartments. I distinctly remember the date of our travel, as emotions were high for India and Pakistan cricket match. In India, most individuals are cricket devotees and the journey from Pune to Mumbai was buzzing with radio commentary, excitement, disappointment, anxiety, and emotions. We reached Mumbai Central, the biggest railway station in Mumbai, and had three hours to explore the station until departure.

The streets of Mumbai were roasting and the heat was unbearable. The platform was vacant, a rare scene in Mumbai, either because it was Sunday morning or the dramatic cricket match. Around me, people were glued to their cellphones listening to the scores of the match. There were restaurants that catered to people of all classes at the station. We opted for a local vegetarian *thali* (buffet with limited quantity and dishes) restaurant. An unskilled economical laborer who is employed to carry luggage smiled, as he passed our table and I smiled back. When my father went up to the counter to settle our bill, the same laborer asked my father if he could buy him a cup of tea. My father later shared that the laborer approached him because I smiled at him. My warmth cost

my dad a cup of tea. I pondered about how a laborer survives and how much he earns in a day. With the rising inflation, several middle class-families along with the poor were feeling the heat. I marveled about how a common man survives.

As we headed for the train to Gujarat, we came across several Gujaratis who conversed in a heavy regional accent. On a hot and humid afternoon, a delay in the train's arrival tested the peoples' patience. Our second-class compartment was packed, as commuters with unconfirmed and waitlist tickets crowded the walkways. The commute time was nine hours and I decided to make optimum utilization of our time. After talking, reading, playing cards, and eating for 15 hours, we reached Somnath. I was exhausted and worried about finding good candidates in the days ahead.

**The *dabba gaadi*** (The slow train). I discovered that the CC in Somnath was recently established in 2014. After thinking it through, I realized that the experiences of the students at Somnath could have been brief, as the college was established six months back. The CC in Gir was one of the oldest in India and therefore, I decided to visit this place. The fastest and cheapest mode of commute to Gir was by train, so I booked the tickets. My father decided to come along with me, as he was hesitant about me travelling to a new place by myself. It was a pleasant morning when we left at 6.00 a.m., which is unlike Somnath's usual weather. We boarded the train and realized that my father and I had different seats. The train halted at every station and took forever to reach Gir, so I named the train *Dabba Gaadi* (slow rail). Many students boarded this train and I inferred that several colleges were on the route from Somnath to Gir. I attempted to have a conversation with a young man who sat next to me. He shared that there are five to six colleges in Gir and several students from small towns and cities use the train for

commuting. I inquired if he was aware of CCs and he responded that he was not a student. In fact, he worked in Gir and commuted from Somnath every day for three hours each way. I was surprised to hear that he travelled six hours each day for work and pondered how he managed his life. I felt six hours was long, but realized that several people residing in rural areas need to travel long distances to earn their daily bread. The estimated travel time to Gir was three hours and the train was running late. My father and I inquired about the best way to get to the college and each person suggested a different route. We got down at the station and observed that several students took a back route (shorter route) to the main road. It was hot and sweaty, as we followed the students through the short route in a narrow lane and finally arrived at the main road.

Since the college was far from the railway station, the auto driver quoted a fixed fare. We tried to negotiate, but the driver would not budge and finally we agreed and boarded the auto. Bosco CC was located behind a famous township center, which was a recent construction. The area behind the township was residential, which is comprised of many narrow lanes with houses on either side. The college was located at the end of a narrow lane. Finally, we saw the signboard of Bosco CC, which was written in Gujarati and English. I wondered the reason for the geographical location of the college, as it was a residential area. I inferred the reason could be safety of women and a quiet and peaceful environment. We were able to enter the gates of the college campus freely, as there was no security guard at the gate. At the end of the lane was a wide-open space and the campus had numerous trees. I observed that several girls sat on the open ground and were having their breakfast. In front of the open space were two buildings; one was the college building and second was the dormitory. The college building was a traditional

two-floored structure and had a banner with the college name in Gujarati. I asked the students for the principal office and they all pointed to the entrance to one of the buildings. As I entered, I saw small sized offices for the staff and teachers and adjacent to them was the principal's office.

**The setback.** I asked the principal if I could come in and she nodded. I observed a south Indian woman wearing a gorgeous green and white *saree* behind a desk; her name was Aalya. She had short hair and dark complexion, wore glasses, and small earrings. She looked firm, confident, and smart. I introduced myself and explained the purpose of my visit. She examined the invitation letter and the consent form and inquired the reason for not taking an appointment beforehand. She spoke bluntly and stated that it was difficult for her to grant me permission on a weekday and stressed that I should have called earlier. I explained to her that I tried calling the college number, which was listed online but I didn't get a response. I shared that I was willing to travel again. She inquired if I could come on a Saturday, to which I agreed. After listening to my positive response, she immediately calmed down. Aalya expressed that she felt bad that she could not accommodate me that day knowing that I had travelled more than three hours. Aalya inquired about my research study and the reason for selecting CCs as my topic. She was surprised with the selection of my topic and was keen to know how I would contribute to the field of CCs. She explained about the concept of CCs and the industrial partnerships. Aalya had been working at Bosco College for 17 years and had collaborated with several multinational companies (MNCs). She shared that her experience of working with Indian MNCs had not been pleasant and she preferred to work with international companies. She elaborated that most of the Indian companies struggled to diligently fulfill their

corporate social responsibility (CSR). She was extremely particular about who Bosco CC collaborated with, as the institute intended to network with only those MNCs that were committed to the cause of CSR. The college had a tie up with Essar Limited, 10% of whose holdings belonged to a German company. She enjoys working with this company and spoke highly of the Germans, as they were committed and sincere to the cause of CSR. I was disheartened upon departing from the college empty handed but with the hope of meeting the students and the faculty members on Saturday.

**What you seek is seeking you.** The famous mystic poet Jalaluddin Rumi says, “What You Seek is Seeking You” and I strongly experienced it during my visit to Bosco CC. For Saturday’s trip, my cousin brother and his wife decided to come along with me. We got confirmed tickets for Gir but the return tickets to Somnath were not confirmed. The morning train was super-crowded, as compared to the last time probably because of the weekend. The train journey was interactive, as we discussed about CCs. As I explained the concept of a CC to my cousins, the woman next to us overheard our conversation. She started conversing with me and shared that she lived near Bosco CC and had always thought of visiting this institute. She was a housewife and had an older son who had moved to Somnath for higher studies. She was depressed because of loneliness and was thinking of pursuing a part time program. She inquired about the concept of CC and was keen to learn more about it. I explained the model to her and the programs that were offered at Bosco College. I stated that I was apprehensive about the route to college and she immediately suggested that we all travel in one auto and she could drop us to the college. I wondered about the coincidence and perceived this as a

positive sign for both of us. After listening to our conversation, she seemed determined to visit the college and I was eager to listen to the students' voices.

Upon our arrival at Gir, the kind lady dropped us to the CC. As I thanked her, she insisted that we visit her place. We entered the college at around 11.00 a.m. and I introduced my cousins to Aalya and waited for the students to arrive. As I waited for the students, I closely looked at the architecture and color of the building. It was an old construction, but it seemed that the interior was recently painted. The first student that I interviewed spoke English really well. My cousin and I were amazed with her fluency in English. In my prior experiences at numerous teacher trainings in Gujarat, I have observed that students speak fluently in the regional language, which is Gujarati. I came across only a handful of people who spoke fluent English, despite the fact that many students have studied in English medium schools. My cousin shared that she had an inferiority complex listening to the student's English. My cousin decided to explore the *city of peanuts*, as I continued the interviews. I was not feeling good with my energy levels due to lack of sleep and long hours in the train. I needed caffeine to keep me alive, but I was too shy to ask for it. As far as I recall, there were no restaurants near the college, no chai stall where I could get a cup of tea. I had to walk quite a bit to get to the main road. I drank gallons of water, which helped to regain my energy.

During my visit, I had an opportunity to have lunch with the nuns. The lunchroom was located on the first floor of the academic building near the prayer hall. It was a size of a large classroom with a wooden dining table with six to eight chairs. A small corridor space had been converted into a makeshift kitchen where two women were making fresh *chapattis* (Indian bread). As we sat down to eat, the sisters inquired about my research

study. One of the nuns was an older woman who had been a part of the college for 15 years. She mentioned that four nuns started Bosco CC in 1996. Aalya, the principal was young when she arrived at the CC and has been here for the last 16 years. The college had limited staff, as the budget was minimal. The model of Bosco CC was different from the others, as it was a residential college. The students were not allowed to go outside the campus, as they adhered to a strict policy and routine. The schedule is comprised of cleaning the dorms and college arena, attending the prayer times, and gardening. In the process of doing these activities, the students were assigned leadership positions. The experiences at the residential college were instilling the skills of discipline, responsibility, commitment, and spirituality in the students. The nuns and the faculty members have dedicated their lives for betterment of the students. I was fortunate to hear the narratives of the students and the faculty members.

### **Peanut Butter Ingredients: Elements of Bosco Community College**

This section provides supplementary information about Bosco CC. The city of Gir is a famous center for peanut processing and has established a brand name around the country. The ingredients needed to make peanut butter are raw peanuts, salt, oil, honey or sweetener, and cocoa powder. Correspondingly, the elements of Bosco CC are objectives of the college, structure and design of the program, and profile of the students. The college is like a peanut butter factory, where they create educated women leaders.

**Concrete structure and design.** The structure and design of Bosco CC is different from other CCs. As mentioned earlier, the college is a boarding (residential) school for women. Among all the colleges I visited, Bosco College was the only institute that offered the dormitory service. The college is affiliated with Open University and



admits students who have completed 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The institute offers one and two-year diploma programs in office administration, computer education and functional English, nursing assistant, gruhini, advanced tailoring, and pre-primary teacher's training. The courses run throughout the year from June to April like a college academic year. The institute is rigorous and each student has to adhere to the rules and regulations of the college. The students live in the dormitory and visit their parents during the winter and summer breaks.

Aalya gave me a tour of the college. The academic institution was a two-floored building surrounded with trees and plants. In front of the building was an open space where students had breakfast, played sports, did yoga and recreational activities. The principal's office was spacious with a wooden desk placed in the middle of the room. A huge picture of Jesus Christ hung on the wall and the other white walls were adorned with verses from the Bible. Adjacent to the principal's office was a guest room for the visitors. The visitors' room had a desk and a bed with an attached bathroom. As we turned to the right side, there was a long hallway with classrooms and a library. The three classrooms varied from large to medium sizes. The big classroom space was assigned to the life skills course. The library was adjacent to the largest classroom and I conducted all my interviews in this space. The library served a two-fold purpose, of a classroom and the reading room. There was no air-conditioning in the building; however, all the classrooms had windows for fresh ventilation. The classroom had traditional style wooden desks for students and a huge blackboard. Opposite to the library was a staircase, which led to the lunchroom for the faculty members. At the end of the horizontal row was another staircase, which led to the second floor of the building. The

second floor had classrooms of varied sizes. On the right side was a classroom, where the tailoring classes were ongoing. As soon as we entered the classroom, the students stood up and greeted us. On the sidewalls of the corridor, there were verses from the Bible and quotes of Christ about charity and humanity. As we headed downstairs, Aalya led me to the tailoring room. I noticed that the students were stitching the college uniforms. She explained that these students had completed their tailoring program from the college and the institute had hired them after completion of the program. They stitched curtains, uniforms for the college and also got clothing orders from outside clients. After the meeting, I recognized that Aalya may have come across as extremely firm and disciplined leader to me, but she deeply cared for the students and genuinely wanted to improve the lives of the marginalized community.

**Tribal *Adivasi* community.** The *Adivasi* community is a tribal group across India that lives in harmony with their surroundings. In the past, the *Adivasi* community lived in forest, which gave them food, clothing, and material for housing and medicine. For *Adivasis*, all things are imbued with divine spirit and are deserving of respect. They live in the villages near their food and water source. The *Adivasi* communities engage in agricultural production, gather forest produce, manufacture and sale of products based on minor forest produce and wage labor. They live in houses of renewable resources, which are made of bamboo, wood, thatch, and mud. The life of the *Adivasis* is mainly spent outdoors, as they use small clearings to grow essential crops. Today, in India *Adivasis* are among the most deprived and oppressed community (Ambagudia, 2015). There is an extensive amount of gender bias and oppression that affects women. In India, the incidence of poverty among the tribe continues to be very high (Ambagudia, 2015). Most

of the students at Bosco CC belong to *Adivasi* community. Aalya asserted that Bosco College has largely catered to this group and around 250 out of 280 students in the current cohort belong to *Adivasi* community. During the tour visit, we came across a closet, which was filled with the Ayurvedic medicines. The *Adivasis* have rich knowledge of herbal medicines. Hence, the college offers a course in herbal medicine and produces and sells the medicines commercially. Aalya mentioned that the *Adivasi* communities are anemic and the students are taken to the hospitals for regular checkup. The community has minimal information about the anemic diseases. The college ensures that the students learn about this disease and educate their family with the new knowledge. Aalya stated that most of the students' fathers were farmers and their economic condition was dreadful. The students belong to lower socio economic status (SES) and education could help them to get good employment and improve their family's financial condition.

**Objectives of Bosco community college.** Alaya shared the vision statement of Bosco CC, which is “Education for the Empowerment of Tribal Women.” The college aims to include the excluded academically, economically and socially disadvantaged groups in the society. The institute desires to offer the best to the least and provide access for all who want skill-based education. Aalya highlighted the objectives of the college, which was to enable women to become independent and self-reliant through education, vocational programs, and life skills. The institute wants to equip the students with leadership skills and promote a sense of entrepreneurship among them. The institute particularly wants to promote community building and preserve the *Adivasi* identity and culture for their integral development. The college ensures the participation of women in

*gram panchayat* (local governing body) and other women's organizations. Aalya shared that the college wants to strengthen the linkages with various industries and explore job openings for the students. Bosco College intends to build bridges with the rural community and provide resources to the tribal community. For the past 16 years, the college has empowered the young *Adivasi* women through integration of objectives in the courses they offer.

### **Roast the Peanuts: Services and Policies of Bosco CC**

To make peanut butter, the peanuts have to be roasted properly, as the roasting gives the butter a deeper flavor. The roasting also helps to separate the oil and it is easier to blend into smooth butter. Likewise, the services and policies of Bosco CC are firmly integrated into the system, which makes it easier for the students to blend into the workforce. In the following segment, I respond to RQ1a and RQ1b, which deal with the students' experiences with academic services and policies at Bosco CC and the perceived impact of these experiences. The participants' responses provide a lucid understanding of the various services and policies that are offered at Bosco CC and how they contributed in social and academic integration in the college. The various policies and services of Bosco CC are: enrollment and marketing, financial grants, internship, assured jobs, dormitory service, transportation service, extracurricular activities, library, gardening, upgrading general knowledge, Christian prayer and meditation, health check-up, computer room, tailoring room, life skills, spoken English, and extracurricular activities. As Bosco was a residential college, most of the students were away from their families for the first time in their lives. To create a homely environment for the students, the college introduce services like extracurricular activities and meditation that provided

emotional and social support, resulting in a strong bonding among the students and their teachers. The services and policies of financial grants helped in access to education, extracurricular activities developed their leadership skills, daily prayer and meditation gave them strength, English and life skills prepared them for internship. All these elements created a strong support system and contributed in retention.

**Primeval method of enrollment.** I was deeply moved by Farida's story. Before joining Bosco College as a teacher, she was a student at this institute. As Farida walked into the library, I noticed the blue cotton *salwar kameez* and a scarf around her neck. Her thin body floated in the loose *kameez* (a long shirt) and her long hair wavered in the air. She sat upright and looked at me through her glasses, as if eager to start the interview. Farida came from a small town and had a difficult childhood. Her father was an alcoholic forcing her and her brother to stay with their grandparents. As a child, she felt frustrated and unloved and the family struggled with financial difficulties. The Christian preachers resided in the same village and supported the troubled families. The missionaries helped Farida and her sibling in financing their education. As a part of the humanitarian work, the preachers informed the villagers about the CCs. In 1996, four nuns started Bosco CC under the non-government model (NGO) model in Gujarat. The missionaries spread the word about the CCs that run under the Christian alliance to different rural villages and remote areas.

Another approach employed by Bosco CC is enrolling the students through word of mouth. The college is well known among the *Adivasi* community, so the parents of the students pass the good word about the college. Bosco College is famed for its spoken

English course, so the enrollment for this course is high. One of the students, Salima shared,

I am not from Gujarat and I am from Shrivasta, which is out of Gujarat. Despite my sister in law studying in this college, I was not aware of this college. My father came to know and told me about this college. I came to know that they teach English; first I thought that they only teach computers, but when I knew about the office administration program, I joined the college.

Like Salima, Amreen's father got to know about the course through an acquaintance and encouraged her daughter to study at Bosco. Another student, Sabiha remarked that her neighbor, who was pursuing the spoken English and computer program at the college, told her about this program. Seema, a student of diploma in office administration course expressed,

I wanted to be a nurse, but my mother told me about our financial position, which was not stable, so my father told me not to go. Then my father got to know about a girl from our village, who was studying at this college. She got a job and seeing her, my father told me to come here. So I gathered information and came to study here.

Seema's father was assured that studying at Bosco CC would aid her daughter to find a job and provide a steady source of income. Nisha spoke about the programs that were offered at Industrial Training Institute (ITI). ITI institute is a government training organization that offers one year diploma and certification programs. Prior to joining the CC, Nisha was enrolled in one of the programs at ITI. Aalya explained that several students of Bosco College were enrolled in ITI, as it is a government organization. In

India, numerous people perceive that the government programs are accredited and have a higher value in the market place. Nisha elaborated on her experience studying at ITI and explained that teaching of the course was similar to school teaching. There were many students in one cohort with limited faculty members and resources. Additionally, the education was not student centered. Since Nisha had the opportunity to study at both the colleges, she was able to distinguish the institutions in regards to methodology, curriculum, faculty approach, and activities. Until now, through word of mouth, Nisha has enrolled three people at Bosco College. Similarly, Salima had spread the good word about her college experience to her extended family. As a result, Salima's cousin has enrolled in college and is studying in the first year. The graduates from the college are excited and keen to share their optimistic experiences with others and enroll them at college.

**Benevolent financial grants.** Most of the students come from tribal communities, so the source of income for the family is considerably low (see Table 3). Aalya said that they offer financial grants to the students and allow them to pay in installments. The cost of the fee is reasonable and was inclusive of living cost, mid-day meals, and uniforms. Over the last 16 years, Aalya has built strong cordial relationships with numerous multinational companies (MNCs) and receives grants and donations from some of them. The grants from diverse MNCs are a part of their corporate social responsibility (CSR). This enables the college to bear the living cost of the students.

**Learning platform and stable income.** Similar to other CCs, Bosco provides the experience of working in a professional environment to the students during their internship. In the past, the students have either worked in an office, hospital,

manufacturing industries, or tailoring workshops. The college has a program called teacher-training program, which creates teachers for the future. Some alumni from this program have joined Bosco CC and are applying their teaching skills. The diploma in office administration is for two years and at the end of the second year, the students undergo an internship. The students in the current cohort are working as interns at Essar Limited and would soon graduate from college. After the internship, the students take a written exam and the college supports them in finding a job. Since the students travel from remote areas of Gujarat, Aalya assists the students in finding employment either in their hometown or in Gir. The participants expressed that they were excited to graduate from the college and get a job. Farida commented, “The College helps the students who cannot go for higher studies and gives them a chance to come here and study. There are vocational programs and so after finishing programs they can apply for jobs and help their family.” Farida completed her diploma course in office administration and volunteered in the teacher-training program. Later, she enrolled in this program and became a faculty at the CC.

**Discipline and leadership.** Dressed in a pink *salwar kameez*, Sabiha looked at me anxiously, as she sat on the chair. She was worried about speaking in English, I assured her that she could speak either in Gujarati or English whichever language she was comfortable in. Sabiha struggled to communicate and moved back and forth between English and Gujarati. She smiled throughout the interview, but on occasions, struggled to respond to the reflective questions, so I had to simplify and paraphrase them. She expressed that she did not comprehend the meaning of hard work until she came to Bosco CC. The college introduced her to a laborious and successful world and made her realize



the importance of education. While talking about rules and regulations of the college, Sabiha described her schedule,

We wake up at 5.30 a.m. and then there are prayers at six o'clock. Around 7 a.m. there is yoga and at 8.30 a.m. we come together for assembly. The class begins at 9 a.m. Then we have lunch from 11.15-1 p.m. and then there are classes from two o'clock. All the students do gardening from 5.30 to 6 p.m. After six o'clock, we have studies until 8 p.m. We have prayers at 8.30 p.m. and study time until 10.30 p.m. So there are prayers, gardening, and studies, balancing of all activities.

The students have a fixed rigorous schedule, which they have to adhere to. The college environment is disciplined and firm. The students of Bosco College live in campus dormitories next to the main building. Aalya explained that the students are divided into groups and each group is assigned a task. The task consists of serving the food, maintaining the dormitory, cleaning the campus, gardening, and so on. Each day, the students do gardening for half an hour and each week a new leader is appointed for the group. Thus, the college is equipping the students with leadership and communication skills, discipline, and responsibility. Apart from internship and college picnics, the students are not allowed to go outside the campus. On Sunday, the parents are permitted to visit the students and are allowed to take them outside the campus arena. The management is extremely particular about prohibition of cellphones. The concept is similar to a boarding school, where strict rules are enforced on the students. Aalya mentioned that when students do not adhere to the rules and regulations, there are consequences and in worst conditions the students are sent back home. She added that in order to focus on academics and instill hard work and discipline; the firm rules and

regulations are necessary. Nisha, a student shared her thoughts about rules and regulations, “I don’t have a problem, if we don’t use mobile phones it is good for us. When I joined the college, it was very difficult for me to adjust. But now I can manage, I am staying nicely.” Some of the students were hesitant and struggled to live without mobile phones and comply with the strict schedule. These students took longer time to settle down in a disciplined atmosphere. Seema, a participant remarked that in the beginning of the semester she sobbed a lot, as she struggled to fit in the college setting. Over time, the students adjust and adapt to a firm environment with the help of a support system in the college.

**Tedious commuting.** Nisha is originally from Maharashtra (western region of India). Nisha and I were from the same town and spoke Hindi and this helped us to connect immediately. She instantly relaxed, knowing that she had an option to speak in Hindi or English. Nisha was charming and enthusiastic. Throughout the interview, she spoke with confidence and reflected on the questions thoroughly before responding. Nisha’s father is a farmer with a family of five people. Her father got to know about the CC through other farmers and insisted that she enrolled at Bosco CC. I was surprised to know that Nisha had enrolled in a Gujarat CC, as there were several CCs in Maharashtra. When I inquired about the rationale of joining Bosco College, she responded that she was unaware of the existence of CCs in Maharashtra. She expressed that she was the only one from Maharashtra in her cohort. Most of the other students were from Gujarat and it took a while to mingle with the group. As the students reside at the campus, there are no transportation services offered at Bosco College. The institute arranges for a bus for

college activities and picnics. During the internship, the students commute via public transportation in a bus or train. Nisha shared her travelling experience,

From here (college) to Ankleshwar, it is 15 km. We have to travel by train and it takes some time. When we come back in bus, there is lot of traffic, so sometimes it takes three hours or so to commute. It is tiring and annoying. But we have to manage because we want to learn, as we want to do something about our lives.

Nisha elaborated that travelling has increased her patience and tolerance level. Students travel for the internship for three months from Monday to Friday. Travelling to the internship was tedious for the students, as Salima expressed that the train or bus is extremely crowded and at times, the students have to run to catch a train. In a day, the students spent around four hours on the road due to traffic. Aalya frequently communicates with the students and motivates them to develop patience and tolerance, as she strongly believes that these skills would help them go a long way.

**Fun time (extracurricular activities).** Bosco College organizes several extracurricular activities for the students. The activities are centered on the *Adivasi* festivals and celebrations along with the national ones. The extracurricular activities comprise of teacher's day, picnic day, annual day, and indigenous day. Festivals like *Navratri*, *Diwali*, *Christmas*, *Holi*, and *Sports Day* are celebrated together. Amreen, a student of the college said, "Yes we have events, we have Christmas programs, and on *Adivasi* Day we have dances and I participated in the Annual Day." Several extracurricular activities are conducted, so each student gets a chance to participate. Students learn how to work in teams, organize and plan a program, and implement a plan of action. Aalya pointed out that while working and planning the cultural events,

students learn the essential skills of team building and leadership. There are differences of opinion among the students on several occasions, but at this platform they learn to resolve their differences, accept each other's ideas and reach a common consensus.

**Constructive resources.** Amreen was my first participant for the interview. She was skinny, had long hair, wore a green and red *salwar kameez* and spoke fluently in English. She was confident during the interview and looked composed. She was thoughtful, as she answered the questions and seemed to be reflective about the responses. She knew her strengths and areas of improvement. The college uses television as a productive resource; Amreen spoke about watching the news daily. Every day, the students get together and watch the news on the television. Based on the news, the principal and the faculty members have a discussion about politics, economy, trade, employment, culture, and international news. Amreen gave an example of one of the discussions, "In the evening we get together and watch the news. Then, we have discussion about our country's prime minister, chief minister, like that." The idea of watching the news and having a discussion to engage the students in the country's policies and economy seemed like a good strategy. Additionally, the students are abreast with what is happening around them.

Nisha and Salima spoke about the library as a constructive resource and the opportunity to read numerous books. The library space had a huge bookshelf of fiction and non-fiction books in different languages. Aalya ensures that the students spend adequate amount of time on reading. One hour of the course schedule is assigned for reading each day. Seema narrated, "Each day from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m., we have the reading class and the teacher monitors each one of us, as we read individually." Seema

elaborated that the library consists of several storybooks and gave examples of the traditional mythological Indian stories, which she had read. The reading class ensures that the students comprehend what they read. Occasionally, students in India can read the language but struggle to understand and interpret the readings. Seema asserted that she has benefited from the reading class and intends to continue the practice in future. Reading one hour each day enhances the students' comprehension and reading skills. In certain regular colleges in India, the activities are rarely centered on reading and comprehension, so the reading habits and skills are not strong. Another resource that Bosco CC offers is computer lab. The students are taught computer skills starting from Microsoft Word, Excel, and Power Point to computer designing. Farida, the faculty member stated that the students are divided in groups of ten, since there are only ten computers in the lab. It is easier to teach the theory and practical in smaller groups, as she can give individual attention. Another resourceful gift, which the students receive from Bosco College, is a dictionary. Aalya mentioned that each student is given a dictionary, so they could translate the Gujarati words to English. In the interview, Amreen spoke about using the dictionary quite often. Students learn new vocabulary and use the dictionary to comprehend the meaning of difficult words.

**Instilling life skills.** The students spoke about their learning from the life skills course, which answers RQ1c, which is the perceived impact of students' experiences in CC. Instilling life skills is one of the primary objectives of the CCs. The following experiences of the students disclosed that they learnt English skills, problem solving, communication, patience, time management, and social skills. The students applied these skills while working on their summer assignments in their hometown and in their

relationship with family members. The experiences indicated that life skills activities like interviews, research, readings, discussion, and reflection paper augmented students' self-esteem and confidence level.

I distinctly remember Salima, my third interviewee at Bosco College. She had a dark complexion and beautiful long hair. Her body language and facial expressions seemed to indicate that she was anxious about conversing in English. From the tone of her voice, I felt that she seemed uninterested in the interview. She repeated ideas from time to time, as if these thoughts were running in her head. I inferred that the students were instructed to speak in English, since they have been taught spoken English for the last two years. There were times when her responses were one sentences and I probed her to dig deeper, realizing that thinking was not natural and pleasant for her. As we started the conversation, she stated that she had a negative perception towards life and had a lower self-esteem because of her dark complexion. Before coming to Bosco College, she did not know what she wanted in life or what she was good at. The college experiences helped to boost her self-confidence and self-esteem. Aalya was the only faculty member that taught the life skills course. She has immense knowledge and experience, as she has been teaching this course for last 15 years. For Salima, the thing that struck her most was the instances that the faculty members used during the course. She recalled,

I used to think and listen properly to the life skills and there are some things that made sense to me. Various examples in which the teacher shared the stories of people who had nothing and then they accomplished everything through passion and hard work. If we listen, we feel that even we can achieve that.

Salima added that the stories aided her to connect to vital elements of her life. These stories motivated and pushed her to work hard and become better. Students revealed that they were unaware of the life skills course and have gained a great deal of knowledge from it. Nisha spoke about a moral value that she learnt in this course. She said,

I didn't know about life skills until I came here. It teaches how to live your life and before thinking about yourself, think about your own family, about others and how to help your parents. If anybody is facing difficulty, then try and help them.

Earlier, Nisha never thought of the attributes required to live a purposeful life. Initially, she lived in her own comfort zone and now she was conscious and sensitive to activities in her surroundings. On the other hand, Seema learnt the value of hard work and how to communicate confidently with others. In addition, the course helped her to change her attitude and settle down in the CC. In the beginning of the term, Seema was hesitant and wanted to go home, as she was unwilling to adjust with others. After attending the life skills course, she learnt to be sensitive and empathetic towards other. The course taught her critical skills; she elaborated,

Before, I found it difficult to understand the life skills but today it helps me to understand who I am. I did not like working in groups but when I came here, I started working in groups and learnt to communicate with others. I learnt about other peoples' experiences and also got studying tips.

Seema enhanced her studying skills, which she intends to employ throughout her life.

Most of the students found the life skills course beneficial and constructive. As one of the faculty members, Tina gracefully commented, "Life skills course is about life, how to win, how to contact people and if someone comes to you with some problems, how to

handle it.” The course is a captivating feature of the CC that distinguishes it from a regular college.

**Fluent English.** With rapid industrialization and growing inflation in India, people in the *Adivasi* community are aware of the significance of education. The community is conscious of the reality that in order to have a good job, being able to communicate in English is essential. Hence, many students enroll at Bosco College for the spoken English course. It was a great accomplishment for the college that at the end of two years, the participants were able to communicate in English. Aalya uses the analogy of extracting oil from peanuts to explain the hard work it takes for the faculty members and students to become proficient in English. In spite of this, the principal felt that the students have a long way to go. The reading classes, assignments, activities, and discussions helped the students to enhance their language. The ability to speak in English is an advantage for them during the internship. Amreen stated,

Only last year, I started learning grammar. And until last year, I was not able to speak English clearly but in the second year I made progress. I tried to communicate more with other people. And now when I am at internship and training, people talk with me in English like the supervisor, and the HR head. They tell me that I am speaking good English. I feel good about everything and me... means if I am able to talk now it's because of life skills.

The participants started with basic words, moving on to complex sentences and have come a long way. Like Amreen, other participants were keen and excited about conversing in the new language. The language helped Seema to survive at Bosco CC. Seema was anxious when she started the college, as she did not know Gujarati. She was



worried about how she would communicate with other people on the campus, not understanding the regional language. As they started learning English, she was able to make friends and communicate with others. Like Seema, other participants were glad and grateful that the two-year diploma program had a mandatory Spoken English course. Thus, this section discusses RQ1a and RQ1b, which deals with students' experiences with the services and policies offered at the residential college that instill skills and values, offer accessibility, and help in social and academic integration.

### **Crush the Peanuts until Ground: Implementation of the Services and Policies**

For the peanut butter to be smooth, the peanuts have to be finely ground. Similarly, for effective implementation of services and policies, the faculty members have to be efficient and rigorous. This section gives a better understanding of RQ2 related to the faculty and administrative members' perceptions about the impact of services and policies on students' experiences. The techniques used in the implementation of services and policies are creating a conducive environment, employing instructional activities, using innovative assignments, creating a support system, monitoring and assessing students regularly and having a positive approach towards teaching. The conducive environment allows the students to be comfortable and express their opinions freely, the diverse instructional strategies and assignments aid the students to learn through multiple intelligences, frequent monitoring and continuous feedback helps the students to assess their learning and enhance their skills. The faculty members play an important role in implementation of services and policies, so their experiences and observation helps in in improvising the services and policies for the future.

Tina, a faculty member, who was draped in a flowery purple sari, was petite and had a firm voice. She was extremely expressive, as she used her hands and eyes to articulate her thoughts. Tina came from a lower SES with seven family members. She managed to complete 12<sup>th</sup> grade and wanted to become a nurse. Due to financial difficulties, she started working as a cook for the missionaries in a village. She travelled with them to different places for a year. She was keen and enthusiastic about learning and the preachers suggested her to join Bosco CC. She enrolled and pursued a diploma in office administration for two years. The sisters liked her dedication and commitment to the college and inquired, if she would be interested in the teacher-training program. After completion of the course, the college hired her and since then, she has been working as a faculty member at Bosco College. Tina teaches basic and advanced computers and helps in activities such as reading, pronunciation, comprehension, and exams.

**Favorable environment.** Most of the participants revealed that this was their first time away from home. Prior to this, the students had not lived in a dormitory with rules and regulations. The faculty members were aware that the students struggled and were hesitant to change. Farida shared her student experience; she was disheartened and frustrated with her situation when she started college. She received immense love at this college, which changed her attitude towards life. In a caring and affectionate environment, she transformed into a mature, wise, and warm human being. The first month is a critical phase for the students, as they deal with their emotions and settle down in the new environment. In the first week, the faculty members conduct games and activities to break the ice among the participants. Tina (faculty member) shared that the

students are diverse in attitude, behavior and values. Some students take ample time to get out of their shell and some adept easily, while few have attitude problems. Tina discussed,

Yes, in the beginning, we have 25% of the students who do not open their mouth or are too angry because of their attitude problem. But slowly, we make them understand that they should mix with other people. If there is any difficulty in studying, we will help them and in the end, it will be good.

Tina elaborated that the attitude problem arises because the students are from diverse regions of Gujarat. The students tend to form cultural groups and are glued to that group. The members create strategies, so they mingle with other students. At times, when the faculty members are struggling to deal with the students, they seek the principal's help. Tina gave an example of a student who did not utter a word for a long time, leaving the faculty members unsuccessful after several attempts. The members failed to comprehend whether the student was struggling with the language or personal problems. Finally, they informed Aalya and she dealt with the student personally. Aalya is a role model and strong support system for the faculty members. For Farida, this was the second year of teaching at Bosco College; she explained,

Sometimes, I feel that students find it difficult to understand and sometimes I feel nervous. I face difficulties when I say something wrong and the students tend to immediately question me, so before going to class, I revise my lesson plan with the principal. Also, I prepare and plan for classes for the entire week.

The faculty members are reflective and conscious about their teaching practice, as they want students to have good education. The participants shared that the faculty members

are cordial and stretch themselves to help them. Sabiha stated that the members were strict and friendly. All the participants expressed that they were comfortable with the members and were not afraid to resolve their doubts.

**Creative minds.** There is a diverse combination of students in the classroom, active, lazy, enthusiastic, slow, aggressive, and passive. The faculty members have to be creative with the activities in the classroom. Like other colleges, the members employed the theory of multiple intelligences, which includes kinesthetic, audio, visual, logical, emotional, naturalist, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences. The members used role-play in the classroom to teach the students. Farida uses technology to teach the theoretical and technical content. On the following day, the students have discussions and perform role-plays on the same topics. Thus, students have a chance to learn through multiple styles such as audio, linguistic, and intrapersonal skills, as the members assess their knowledge. Through the art of drama, students enhanced their communication, presentation and team building skills, and work on comprehension and retention of knowledge. Sabiha remarked that drama was an effective strategy to retain the concepts and they used this strategy for all the courses inclusive of life-skills. Tina shared an example of the classroom strategy,

We give them programs and drama (1 hour every day). After one week, we change the groups. In the first month the students study with their friends. We observe and monitor the students' progress and shuffle the groups each week. Putting them in different groups each week helps them and at the end of the year they all come together.

The faculty members assess and observe the students through the drama activities. After the implementation of the strategies, the students have discussions and dialogues.

Discussion is a vital part of all the programs, while the topics range from technical content to relationships to identity and self-esteem. At times, some students don't take an initiative in participating in the activities. In such a case, the faculty members motivate and inspire the students and simplify the content for them. Salima expressed, "When I start to study, I feel sleepy and tired and if I don't find it interesting, it gets more difficult." To engage the students in the activities, the faculty members are creative and modify the strategies from time to time. In the computer course, Farida uses the tape recorder and provide notes for the computer theory. For most of the students, English was a new language and hence, the members explained the concepts in Gujarati. Tina discussed the use of diverse techniques in the classroom, she stated,

...With sisters' help, I give them examples or I make them write or make them draw anything they understand. Hence, we use different techniques like drawing and showing pictures and comprehension in normal papers. Then we work on comprehension lessons, extracting answers from the reading passages and answering the questions.

Tina pointed out that the comprehension passage was a new technique, which they recently started teaching. Initially, the students memorized the questions and answers; however, the university exam pattern has changed. The comprehension reading strategy is taught to the students, which requires them to think, reflect, research, and paraphrase. In addition, the members use the techniques of symbols, pictures, metaphors, analogies,

and examples to explain the concepts. The content is simplified, so the students understand and retain the concepts thoroughly.

**Innovative assignments.** Since the students live at the campus, they get Diwali and winter break for ten days each, and summer vacations for two months. The students receive assignments, which they need to complete during the break. They are given practical assignments, where they utilize the skills learned in the classroom. Since most of the students belong to *Adivasi* community, the assignments are based on the concerns and challenges of the tribe. Amreen shared an example of a task that she had completed during the summer break.

Last year, first time we went for holiday and we got a project of sickle cells and health. We had to explain others, so I started from my house. I explained the concept to my brother. What are sickle cells and what safety measures to take? Then, we had to explain to other villagers too.

Amreen's family was surprised when they heard her briefing about the disease. She confidently explained the concept to her neighbors and villagers. After completion of the task, the students wrote a reflection paper on their experiences. Aalya assesses the papers critically and provides verbal and written feedback to each one of them. Salima spoke about another project, where they had to accumulate information about the *Adivasi* community from their ancestors and other villagers. Many *Adivasis* were upset that the community was losing their culture and traditions because of the growing industrialization. The students had to write a paper on the *Adivasi* culture, their experiences of talking to people, their thoughts and feelings about the topic, and what could be done to preserve the culture. Through the reflection paper, the students were

developing their critical thinking, writing, communication, and research skills. I was captivated by the innovative topics that Aalya used for the projects. Nisha, another student, spoke about an exciting assignment which she enjoyed doing. In the Indian culture, there are biases between the caste systems. There are tensions between the families during an inter-caste marriage, especially between Hindu and Muslims or between sub-castes. The students had to interview couples that had an inter-caste love marriage. In India, an arranged marriage is a part of the culture, where the families are involved in finding a spouse for their sons and daughters. At times, when individuals are in love and want to marry they have to seek the family's consent. The students created a list of questions which they had to inquire, such as how their lives were pre and post marriage, what were their thoughts and feelings about the marriage, how did their families respond to the marriage, and pros and cons of a love marriage. Like other projects, the students were supposed to write a reflection paper. Nisha was amazed with the results of the interview. She realized that people pay a price when they take impulsive decisions and some actions have life-long consequences. Salima also recognized the difficulties that a couple face in a love marriage. Inter-caste love marriage is a trend among the *Adivasi* youths and hence, Aalya ensured that this assignment was a part of their coursework. I felt the assignments are a good technique to make the students reflect on the critical elements of life. In addition, Nisha talked about a *gram panchayat* project, which helped her to overcome her fear of communicating to people. A *gram panchayat* is a local self-government organization at the village or small town level and they elect a head, usually a senior member of the village that is called *sarpanch*. Nisha explained,

Last year, I went to meet the *sarpanch*, I was frightened because it was my first time. If they would scold me, then what I would speak in front of them, I was thinking like that. But nobody was there and I was alone in the *taluka*. So I was frightened, but I thought if I would not go then who would go? Finally, I gathered courage and went and took his interview.

Nisha inquired about the *sarpanch*'s role and responsibilities and had a discussion about the challenges that the village was facing. The *sarpanch* spoke about the future plan of action and the pressing issues that had to be addressed. Nisha was glad and surprised by her interview skills. She thoroughly enjoyed the discussion and realized what role she could play as a youth of the village. In all, the students relished the hands-on experience activities and felt confident, responsible, and independent.

**Support system.** Bosco College believes in and practices an open door policy.

The faculty members and nuns along with the principal form a strong support system for the students. Occasionally, Aalya motivates and inspires all students and has one-to-one discussion with each of them. Even though the members are cordial and friendly, they have laid down their expectations to the students, so they could succeed in college. In the strict and disciplined environment, the students are expected to complete their homework and assignments on time. Seema expressed that she was not a hard worker in the beginning of the semester, as she took the coursework lightly. She shared an experience,

Yes...first time when the class teacher told me to by heart a poem, I did not do it and I was told to stand out of the class. I felt very bad and at times I have gone to the principal's office. She tells us to work hard and if we don't work hard, we will not get anything in life. Then, I learnt to work hard.



Seema explained that she did not like the feeling of standing outside the class. She felt guilty and realized that the diploma program was not a piece of cake. In the college, each action had a consequence. The members instill the seeds of hard work, discipline, and commitment in the students. When I asked Seema about her future plans, she said that she desires to study and work hard and be the best version of herself. The students are taught to compete against themselves, as each one of them sets a benchmark and works towards achieving the goals. The participants acknowledged that the faculty members and staff have supported them in difficult times.

When I inquired Aalya about the strategies to deal with attrition, she responded that the institute supports and helps the students in many areas of their lives, so they don't become a potential dropout. In the past, some students have left college, as they had developed anemia. Knowing this, Aalya has arranged for regular health checkup once every two months for all the students. Some students drop out of college when they get a job and start earning. In such a case, Aalya has one-to-one discussion and explains them the significance of education. She explains to the students that the CC would provide them with a blue-collar job after the completion of the program. Time and again, the principal and faculty members have discussions with the students about their goals, thoughts and feelings, progress, barriers, and support from the institution. The members find a way to deal with the students' challenges, so they have a smoother journey in college.

**Monitor and gauge.** Tina spoke about a remarkable strategy that the faculty members use to teach the diverse students. She explained,

We take exams and according to that the students are classified in clever and below average groups. When they are mixed, the clever ones will answer all the questions and the others just sit and watch. So we inform the students about the distinction. They know their groups and I explain them the reason for distinction and they don't feel bad about it. We tell them what would have happened if they were sitting with the other groups.

The members explicitly explain the rationale for dividing them into groups to the students. They want to be transparent about the grouping and have open discussions about it. Tina said that this strategy has worked for them in the last few years. The faculty members employ different strategies for each group. Each week, the students are tested on what is learnt and the members assess whether the students have comprehended the concepts. The faculty members evaluate the test papers and provide written feedback. During the week, the members revise the difficult concepts in English and Gujarati, the regional language. An entire class period is dedicated to work on the difficult concepts and clarify the students' doubts. Farida, a faculty member, assesses the students' performance and decides, if additional classes should be conducted for them. She narrated,

Every Saturday we take tests, so accordingly I take extra lectures based on their progress. If the student is weak, I also take classes on Sunday. I call the students on a daily basis and give them 10 minutes to revise. I ask them, if they have any difficulties and sometimes by looking at the face of the student, I come to know whether the student has a difficulty or not. At times, the students come voluntarily and ask me about their problems.

The faculty members build a strong rapport with the students. The members observe, monitor, mentor, and interact with the students on a daily basis. The members know each student individually and are aware of their strengths and areas of improvement. Based on this, a future plan of action is created.

**Appealing personalities.** The participants shared that faculty members have a pleasing personality and are willing to learn from the students. Farida reads several books to improve her knowledge and spends ample time in planning for the class. She affirmed that she does not know answers to all the questions. She elaborated,

Sometimes the questions asked by the students are difficult to answer, so I really struggle. It's a mutual relationship between students and me. When the students ask difficult question, I don't directly say I don't know. I tell them that I will research for the answer and get back to them.

This is Farida's second year of teaching at Bosco College and each day in the classroom is a learning experience for her. She observes the classes of other faculty members and learns from their teaching style. She seeks Aalya's help and is open to feedback. She is conscious that no one is perfect and one needs to upgrade his or her knowledge regularly. Farida is glad that she has the privilege to work as a teacher and has an opportunity to contribute towards improving students' lives. Tina recently completed five years at the institute and her confidence level has improved with each passing year. She discusses every lesson plan with Aalya and receives feedback; together, they brainstorm new ideas, create assignments, and reflect and assess the previous classes. Tina stated that members frequently have one to one meetings with Aalya. Apart from these, each month there is a faculty meeting, where each member reports the progress of students, difficulties faced in

the classroom, status of the curriculum, and discusses how to resolve the existing challenges. As the enrollment numbers are increasing, a strong support system is created for the faculty members, so that they don't feel alone and vulnerable.

### **Processing the Butter: Internship Experience**

The internship experience of the students is similar to processing the butter. The more you process the butter, the smoother it spreads. After two years of rigorous college course work, the students were in the last week of their internship. After the internship, the students have to appear for a written exam and then the college would support them to find a job. During the internship, the students employed the skills they had learned at the CC. This section responds to RQ1c, which deals with perceived impact of the students' experiences at the CC. In the internship phase, the students practiced spoken English, computers, communication, time management, administration and organizational skills.

Seema wore a white *salwar kameez* and looked relaxed, as she sat down. She struggled to converse in English and took time to respond to the questions. While responding to several questions, Seema's answers were brief and to the point. As soon as we spoke about the internship, her eyes widened and her body language changed. She was excited and keen to talk about the internship experience, as she felt this was the most beneficial phase of the coursework. The internship starts at 9.15 a.m. and ends at 5.45 p.m. In order to reach the office on time, the students leave at 7.30 a.m. and come back at 8.30 p.m. The students are stuck on the road due to heavy traffic. They carry their lunch box, a bottle of water, and a notebook to the office. Seema spoke about her role and responsibility at the workplace,

I do filing, numerical filing, alphabetical filing, and sometimes typing and a lot of other things. And I observe them talking and dealing with clients. Yes, sometimes there is a lot of work and I also have difficulty in understanding and then I forget to ask what I have to do.

Seema explained that people at the internship are cooperative and support her with the language and the assigned task. With the help of the life skills course, she has overcome her fear of talking to people. She sought help when she struggled with the office work. Seema was using all the skills that she acquired at Bosco College.

Sabiha felt that the tasks assigned at the internship were smaller goals. She worked on one goal at a time and felt that each goal made her efficient. Salima was apprehensive about the internship and remarked,

Before going to the internship on the first day, I thought it would be a big office and I would not be able to talk to anyone. But when I went there, I was introduced to everybody and they talked to me nicely. I realized that they were nice and I could talk to anybody and they would help me and I can take suggestions from them.

Each student was assigned a department and they all had different supervisors. Like Sabiha, Salima experienced a warm and supportive work environment. Salima realized that internship was preparing her for future employment. The workload and structure at the internship was a glimpse of the future workplace. Amreen was grateful to Bosco College that she learned how to speak in English. She was confident of conversing in English and her supervisors appreciated her speaking skills.

Amreen enjoyed working in the company. She had a strong rapport with her colleagues in the department and was polishing her work skills. At the end of each week, the students wrote a reflection paper about their work experience at the internship and submitted the paper to Aalya. Students received verbal and written feedback on their reflection paper. The internship experience boosted the students' confidence and self-esteem. The students were excited and motivated to work hard and were working on their future goals. They expressed appreciation to Bosco College for the insightful internship experience.

### **Transferring the Butter into a Container: Outcome**

At the end of two years at Bosco College, the students felt equipped with infinite skills and knowledge. The learning from the college is life long and will help them to move ahead in life. The students discussed the impact of the college experience with regards to vertical mobility, time management, anger management, leadership skills, spoken English, reading and writing skills, retention, and discipline, which gives a clear comprehension of RQ1c, which deals with the students' perceived impact at the CC. The students revealed that that the spoken English, communication, time management, social and leadership skills helped them to survive and perform efficiently during internship. Anger management helped the students to be calmer and strengthen their relationship with their family members. In addition, the students have observed a difference in their personality in terms of positive outlook, higher self-confidence and self-esteem, maturity, independence and responsibility.

**Lifelong learning.** For Farida, the learning is ongoing as a student and as a faculty member. The experience at Bosco College has given her purpose and direction in

life. She is currently pursuing her bachelor's degree externally. The diploma program has given her a stable source of income and an opportunity to serve other people. For Farida, the diploma program was a tool of vertical mobility. Bosco College is affiliated with Open University, which enables the students to pursue their bachelor's degree externally, if they choose to. The safe and affectionate environment helped Farida to change her perception towards life and she was attempting to do the same for the students. The institute has done remarkable work in shaping students and breaking their old patterns. Salima and Seema both spoke about having a pessimistic attitude towards life. Salima expressed,

Before I was thinking negatively and did not believe in myself and thought I was useless, I was thinking negatively. When I came here I was thinking about everything that I didn't know. Before I was scared of speaking in front of others. I was scared to go to any office and was not aware of the documents to be submitted. Now I am able to do what my father was capable of doing.

Salima said her biggest achievement in college was breaking her old habits. She was not a hard worker and today she realizes the value of putting in the efforts. She shared, "I am from a small town. Earlier, I was thinking negatively and did not believe in myself. I have a darker complexion and I thought I was useless and I could not think." She has now been able to accept herself because of the college experience. She added that she can distinguish the difference between good and bad and would think through before taking a vital decision in her life. She felt enthusiastic and has developed an interest in office administration and has the zeal to keep moving forward in life. Initially, she was

frightened to communicate with people, but now she feels confident and takes the initiative to have a conversation with others.

Seema, another student, has started believing in herself and has realized that she derives strength intrinsically. At the end of the first year, Seema had gone home for summer vacation, where she met with an accident. She fractured her right leg and was unable to walk without crutches. Seema's parents wanted her to stay back at home, however, she was determined to get back to school. It was not like Seema did not struggle with her walking stick, but she was brave and dealt with the challenges. She spoke about Aalya's teaching of believing in oneself, as confidence in oneself is a crucial element for success. Apart from self-confidence, Seema acknowledged the lessons of discipline, behaving with others, taking responsibility, and improving relationships with her parents. Trisha too spoke about her reformed healthier relationship with her parents. She stated that before she joined the college, she was frustrated with her parents and threw tantrums. After the life skills course, she has learnt to deal with her anger and emotions and is more patient. Seema elaborated that occasionally due to financial struggles, her parents were unable to fulfill her basic demands. As a result, she threw tantrums and was upset with her parents, as she perceived that they did not care for her. After attending the life skills course, she comprehended her parents' situation and became empathic towards them. She realized that it was her parents' circumstances due to which they struggled to fulfill her demands. Like Seema, Salima, and Sabiha acknowledged that they have learned to deal with their anger. Sabiha remarked that she realized that frustration was suppressed within her. In life skills classes, she dealt with her frustration and channelized her energy positively.



**Lifelong attributes.** Students learn to be responsible, independent, and prepare for leadership positions as a result of attending CC. Adhering to the strict environment, students become responsible. Cleaning and maintaining the dormitory and gardening instill independence and leadership skills. Salima stated, “In the first year, seniors did all the work, but in the second year, I learnt to cope up and be responsible and took leadership positions.” Students learn reflection and analytical skills through activities and assignments. Amreen shared that they have had discussions about their thinking, goals, purpose in life, and plan of action to achieve the goals. The students practice yoga and meditate to calm down and concentrate better. The participants have explored their skills, knowledge, and attributes and discovered new elements about themselves.

When I asked Nisha to reflect on what she gained from her college experience, she expressed that she had become wiser and matured. Her family has observed positive change in her personality. She commented,

When I go home, they give me a lot of encouragement. If there is a small quarrel, I tell them that you shouldn't be fighting. If you behave in this manner, your kids will also learn from you. I also tell my brother and sister and they are very pleased. They say you're younger than us but you are more mature and we learn from you. I'm youngest in my family, but they are giving me more respect. Nisha's father was extremely pleased with her behavior and appreciates the positive change. I was amazed to hear Nisha talk about self-reflection and perceptions of her behavior. Nisha explained that she never thought she would survive in this strict environment. Not only did she survive, but bloomed like a flower.

**Meaning of community college.** During the interviews, I asked the participants what the CC meant to them. In most of the regular colleges, the purpose and aim of the teachers is to complete the syllabus. The focus is on memorization skills and minimal time is spent on development of other skills. On the other hand, Bosco CC gives the students what they need, such as skills and knowledge for life. The faculty members invest heavily in grooming the students. What students learn from the CC stays with them for life. The meaning and the role of the CC were different for students and faculty members. When I asked Farida about what a CC means to her, she responded,

Here we help a child to progress in the society, which is in contrast to what the normal colleges do. Many efforts are taken to help the students and we don't allow the children to feel dull and rush to finish our syllabus. When we talk about a community college, I feel it's a place where students are trained for jobs and a place for employment. It is a place for the community by the community and of the community and due to the community college many students get jobs.

Bosco CC aims to work together as one team to accomplish the short and long-term goals. The college supports and provides help to the faculty members. Tina shared that during the first year, she felt lonely and wondered about her role. She clarified,

...But now I feel like I am a part of something bigger and I am not afraid of communicating with others be it big or small, what caste or religion. Earlier, I did not have the courage, I did not answer nor did I talk to people but here I answer everyone's questions and help them. Now I have become courageous and confident enough and I feel like I have grown here much.

Tina has enhanced her teaching skills and was pleased to be a part of the CC. She felt content working at the college and was glad that she was contributing in creating good citizens for the society. She enjoyed training and grooming the students and seeing them fly was her reward. The certificates are issued one month after the completion of the program and the students are required to come in person to collect the certificate. The management is keen to know the students' progress and future course of action. During the discussion, the members inquire if any students need additional support from the college. Salima used the metaphor of the sun to describe the CC. Sun is the strongest source of energy and is essential for growth of humans and plants. Similarly, the college supports and offers emotional, material, and spiritual strength to the students, so they can succeed in life.

In the end, I thanked Aalya for her warm hospitality and support for the research. I briefly shared with her my experiences with the students. She used the analogy of peanut oil. She elaborated that the peanuts have to be crushed hard to derive oil; similarly a strict and stern environment of the CC is essential to produce successful students. Aalya felt that the students are extremely talented and skilled. They could do much better than their current performance, as they often tend to underestimate themselves. She feels that they have to push the students to get the best out of them.

### **Reflection**

A motivational speaker Jim Rohn says, “we must all suffer one of two things: the pain of discipline or the pain of regret or disappointment” (Jim Rohn, n.d.). When I read this quote, I thought of Bosco CC. Through my observations and interviews, it is clear that Alaya, the principal of Bosco CC, works to practice this philosophy at the institute.

A rigorous schedule and strict implementation of the academic services and policies sow the seed of discipline. She feels that the students have to be committed and for that, discipline and hard work are essential. The background information of the students and their behavior provides a foundation for RQ2, which deals with the management's perspectives of how academic services and policies affect the students' experiences.

Bosco is a residential girls college. At the time of enrollment, most of the students were aggressive and had rigid attitude. The students perceived that their experience at CC would be similar to their prior school or vocational college. The participants shared that they had not anticipated a strict schedule, a disciplined environment, and mandatory activities. The students believed that they would get away without working hard in CC and could complete the program by memorizing the material for exams. The students went through a process of learning, unlearning, and relearning. At the end of two years, the management observed a significant difference in the students' skills, behavior, and personality. In reference to RQ1c, which dealt with the perceived impact of the academic services and policies of a CC, the students did not realize the effect of the academic services and policies, until they were in their internship phase. The mandatory spoken English and life skills helped the students to perform well at their internship; the compulsory reading time enhanced their reading skills; the frequent writing summer assignments aided them to efficiently communicate via emails; and life skills course boosted their self-confidence and self-esteem. However, the participants expressed that they endured the pain of discipline, which was not easy, but essentially beneficial. The students also realized the importance of hard work and commitment and noticed the positive difference within them. The practice of discipline assisted them in every

endeavor of life. The students inculcated these values and were a role model for their family in the *Adivasi* community. The college aims to create *Adivasi* women leaders and empower them to contribute to their community and family welfare.

Similar to other CCs, Bosco CC practices different forms of cultural capital in its everyday functioning. The various forms of cultural capital guided me to understand RQ1 and RQ2, which deal with the perceived impact of academic services and policies on students' experiences from the perspectives of the students and management. Bosco CC integrated aspirational, linguistic, social, and spiritual capital into the academic services, policies, and curriculum. Aspirational capital is practiced at Bosco College, which is defined as activities to sustain hopes and dreams of future, irrespective of the real, and perceived barriers (Yosso, 2005). As mentioned earlier, the students belong to a tribal *Adivasi* community that lives in poverty. The students are cognizant of their conditions, as they have limited and fluctuating income which deeply affects their quality of life. In the life skills course, Aalya gives examples of various leaders like Abdul Kalam, the ex-prime minister of India, who belonged to a poor family, and with hard work and education, accomplished his goals. A few faculty members at Bosco College belong to the *Adivasi* community and share their personal stories with the students. The life skills course plays a vital role in sustaining the students' dreams and hopes. Innovative assignments like interviewing an inter-caste marriage couple, interviewing *gram panchayat*, accepting a leadership position in village, and briefing the community about anemic disease and several others, change their perception towards life. These activities formulate not only aspirational capital but also form a part of social capital. The aspirational capital helps to motivate and encourage the students, while the social

capital creates a support system for them, so they can actively participate in academic services of the college. Social capital refers to a network of people and community resources (Yosso, 2005). The field assignments provide the students an opportunity to interact, discuss, and build relationships. The students apply their life skills in the field and navigate in the community and society. Since it is a residential school, the students live together and develop strong bonds with each other. The peers provide emotional and moral support to each other in all endeavors. The students utilize the social capital to attain education and employment. Additionally, the students use social capital to empower the *Adivasi* community by sharing their knowledge and encouraging others to get back to education.

Another capital that is part of Bosco College is linguistic capital, the intellectual and social skills that are attained through communication experiences in one or more language or style (Yosso, 2005). The faculty members use linguistic capital to ensure that the students are able to take advantage of the academic services like reading club, news discussion, mandatory summer assignments, internship, and research. Bosco uses Gujarati and English to teach the concepts and curriculum. Moreover, the faculty members employ the art of storytelling and role-play in the classroom. Tina shared that at the end of each lesson, the students are asked to perform the concepts in form of a role-play. The teachers assess and monitor the students' performances through the technique of drama. It is also easier for students to retain and comprehend the complex abstract information. The college schedule allocates one hour of reading each day. The students read the English text loudly and explain what they have understood from their readings. The listening and rephrasing of the learning develop the students' linguistic skills. The

daily news and discussions on the events happening around the world contribute to cross-cultural awareness and linguistic skills.

Bosco College integrates spiritual capital, unlike other field sites, which helps the students to integrate in college. This form of cultural capital helped to comprehend the students' experiences at the CC. Bosco CC is formulated under a Christian organization and is highly influenced by their philosophy. Each day, the students have prayer time, where they pray and are briefed with Christ's teachings. During the interview, each student spoke about Christ and how he sacrificed his life to the wellbeing of the humanity. I was amazed to hear about the humanity and charity of Christ from the students, even though they were not Christian. Tina, the faculty member shared that each day the scriptures from the Bible were read, followed by a discussion. It was interesting to observe that the students spoke of similar thoughts and ideas about Jesus and his teachings. The students revealed that they derive their source of energy from the prayers and meditation. The teachings and stories of Christ integrate moral values, as the students spoke about honesty, humanity, charity, and helping other human beings. This creates a positive environment and students derive their source from the creator, which helps them to integrate in college.

Tinto's theory of institutional model (1993) provided a framework for RQ1 and RQ2, which deal with the perceived impact of academic services and policies on students' experiences from the perspectives of the students and management and helped me to understand the students' integration process in a CC. Bosco College's services and policies incorporate the components of Tinto's longitudinal model of departure (1993). With regards to the pre-entry attributes, the students come from the tribal community.

Most of the students have completed their 12<sup>th</sup> grade in Gujarati and have weaker social and communication skills. Most of the Indian schools are centered on grades and focus on memorization skills. Bosco College works on the pre-entry attributes of the students. The management gathers information about the tribal community and creates programs and extracurricular activities around the culture and values of the tribes. From our conversation with the members and the principal, I realized that students go through a process of unlearning, relearning, and learning. The students are comfortable in their old patterns and struggle to adapt to new ways of learning. The first three months are extremely difficult for the students, as there is change of environment, habits, and values. Over a period of three months, the students settle down emotionally, mentally, and physically.

Like other colleges, the students enter with unclear goals and weak intentions. In the life skills course, the students discover their interests and aptitudes and formulate their goals. Since the students live on the campus, Aalya and the faculty members ensure that the students are committed and dedicated to education and focus solely on studies. The institutional experiences may have firm boundaries, but the college offers positive formal and informal experiences. Each week, students have exams, where the concepts are revised and reinforced. There are several forms of formal and informal assessments to enhance the academic performance. The faculty members, principal, and nuns follow an open door policy and are willing to help them at all times. Aalya personally monitors the students and spends adequate time with them by interacting, mentoring, and providing feedback. The college has several extracurricular activities inclusive of festivals of the tribal community and national festivals. The students live, work, eat, and study together,



so they spend ample time with each other forming strong peer bonds. All these factors build cultural capital and lead to strong social and academic integration. The faculty members and principal reiterate and continuously work on the students' goals. Several activities are conducted to augment the students' willpower and motivation. Aalya spoke about the students who could not complete their program successfully, as some students fell sick and returned home, and some found it difficult to survive in the disciplined and firm environment. However, the management is continuously modifying their services and policies to retain the students effectively.

## **A Ship in the Ocean: Victoria Community College**

This is the last part of the results chapter, in which the findings of Victoria CC are presented. When I think of Victoria CC, an image of a ship comes to my mind. The ship is an integral part of our lives, as they pass through seas and rivers and carry precious things for life. The ship serves our cultural, humanitarian, and scientific needs. Like a ship, Victoria CC is a medium for several marginalized students, which aids them to migrate from one phase of life to another. I have used the steps of building a ship to explain the themes of this college. They are as follows:

- Design of the Ship: Creation of Victoria CC;
- Assembly of the Ship's Engine: Services and Policies of Victoria CC;
- Smooth Sailing: Implementation of Services and Policies; and
- Arrival at Port: Outcome and Future course of action.

In addition, I have described my visit to the college and provided supplementary information about the physical, social, and economic context of the college. The mission of the college is to empower the underprivileged and marginalized population through life skills training towards a better life. I came to know about the existence of Victoria CC from Adam's assistant on my trip to Chennai's field site. The structure of Victoria College is different from Kostka and Bosco CC, as it is a non-government organization (NGO) model. Fortunately, the college is situated in my hometown and has two campuses. I had an opportunity to visit both the campuses and listen to the stories of the students and members of Victoria College at Tulsibaug and Ranchi.

## **Automobile Hub**

Victoria College is a product of Tiscon, a multinational automobile company with several blue-collar employees that is located near the Tulsibaug campus. Tiscon funds the college as part of their corporate social responsibility. Coincidentally, my cousin's sister, Shamsha, conducts training workshops for the blue-collar employees at Tiscon. She mentioned that these trainings help the employees to move from blue-collar to white-collar jobs. Shamsha gave me a ride to the college, as Ranchi was an hour away from the main city. My father frequently spoke about the town of Ranchi, an ancient part of Pune city, which I had never visited. It is a rapidly growing town with good infrastructure and transport facilities. The town has several local rail linkages that provide connectivity to several cities and towns nearby. Over the last few years, there has been an influx in the population due to employment opportunities in various industries. The special economic zone (SEZ) is defined as an area that has different business and trade laws, as compared to other areas in the same country. These regulations have certain measures that are associated with foreign direct investment. Ranchi falls under SEZ, which is promoted by the Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation and has become a major automobile hub. Victoria CC is located in this industrial area, where they train manpower for specific technical skills in the automobile industry.

On our way to Ranchi, Shamsha shared her experience of working at Tiscon. She conducts five-week soft-skills workshops from Monday to Saturday. She teaches them communication, presentation, and critical thinking skills and works on their spoken English. The employees disclosed that they rarely get a chance to practice their spoken English. Shamsha added that the students are open to learn and receive feedback from

the instructor. They are keen and enthusiastic about learning new things. Attitude plays a vital role in the students' learning and these students have a positive attitude towards it, as compared to most students in a conventional college. She stated that one of the skills that the students require is stronger reading habits.

Victoria CC is 15 minutes away from Tiscon. Shamsha dropped me off on the main road and I headed towards the college, which was ten minutes away. The campus is located in one of the commercial buildings on the second floor above a famous private bank. As I walked inside, the campus was a four-room office space with a small reception area. A screen separated the coordinator and director's desk. I was surprised to observe that the director did not have a separate office. A notice board was placed opposite to the director's desk, which displayed the pictures of students, visitors, and faculty members and the events that were conducted at the center. Opposite to the director's desk was a multipurpose room, which was used either as a classroom, or a conference room. The cosmetology class was in progress in a room that was adjacent to the conference room. Outside this classroom, two to three chairs were placed for visitors, so they could sit comfortably. Next to the chair was a narrow corridor, which led to a big classroom. Along the corridor were two rooms, one for computer designing and another for tailoring program. As I walked through the passage and peeped inside the classroom, I saw two faculty members teaching computer designing on a projection screen. In the tailoring class, four students surrounded the female instructor, while others were scattered in the room on the floor and a few sat at the sewing machine. The room had around six to seven sewing machines and I realized that students took turns to use them.

I entered the office and headed towards the coordinator's desk. I introduced myself and inquired if I could speak to the director of the campus. Amaan, the coordinator, informed me that the director had recently resigned. Currently, the center had a working director whose name was Krishna, who unfortunately was not in the office. Amaan asked me to verify my identity as a student. I left my contact details with him and he promised to call me at the end of the day. As I headed back to Pune city, I decided to inquire with the auto driver about the directions. The driver suggested that I should take an auto to the nearest bus stop, as the railway station was extremely far. Only later I found out that the bus stop was five minutes away from the college and the auto driver fooled me and charged a fortune for the ride. The one and an half hour bus ride from Ranchi to home was interesting, since I hadn't travelled in a public bus in my hometown. It was intriguing to observe the condition of the buses and the various kinds of people who commute on the bus. I was unaware that specific rows on the left side of the bus were assigned to women and senior citizens. Several college and high school students travelled via bus from home to college in groups. Several senior men boarded the bus with their peers and some with their grandchildren. There was a passenger with two huge suitcases, whom I inferred was heading towards the railway station. At two o'clock in the afternoon, the bus was packed, as passengers got on and off. The travelers' body language implied that they were tired and frustrated. As mentioned earlier, the bus commute is inexpensive, but takes a longer time to reach the destination. In an auto, I would have paid Rs.300 (\$5), while in the bus I paid Rs.30 (50 cents) for my travel. The bus condition was not great, as the seats were old and their covers were ripped. The breeze from open windows was a temporary relief for the travelers. The local bus

experience made me realize my privileges. I have a two-wheeler, which helps me to commute from one place to another. In my life, I have rarely taken the local buses or stood in the long queues. The experience also pushed me to think about the government's role in providing the society with basic infrastructure. In India, a big chunk of the population does not pay their taxes. There are mixed reasons, as some individuals don't intend to pay and others can't afford to pay. I wonder who is responsible for this, is it the government, or the people, or both. I may not have the answer to it, but as a society we have to find a solution. I pondered how the marginalized section of the society lives and survives in this inflated world. I was glad that I had an opportunity to comprehend the role of CCs in the lives of the marginalized population. At the end of the day, I received a call from Amaan stating that the director (Krishna) was open to the idea of research and asked me to come on Friday. Later, I received an email stating that there was a cultural program on Friday and I should visit the campus on Monday.

On Monday, my father decided to come along with me for the interviews. The commute from my house to college in the local bus took one and a half hour as compared to 45 minutes in a car. During our commute, we conversed with the conductor about the address of the CC. He had never heard the term CC but was curious to know about this concept. I was pleased to see that the bus conductor was open to learn new things and was keen to know about different colleges.

We reached the Ranchi campus and met Amaan and Krishna. Krishna was extremely warm and welcomed us graciously. He inquired about my research study and the field sites I had visited. He was keen to hear about my research and was willing to

offer all the resources I needed for the interviews. My father decided to sit in the reception area and read a newspaper, while I interviewed the participants. Krishna informed me that I could start the interviews immediately, as the college closed at 4.30 p.m. He wanted me to conduct all the interviews on the same day, as the college had a field trip and a cultural program over the next few days. I interviewed four students and two faculty members at the Ranchi campus. In the end, I was exhausted and wished I had time to spread the interviews over a few days. At the end of day, I thanked Amaan and Krishna for their hospitality and was glad to gather rich data, particularly from the management and staff. In our conversation, Krishna spoke about another campus at Tulsibaug (in Pune) and made comparisons between the two campuses. I inquired with Krishna, if I could visit the Tulsibaug branch and interview the students and faculty members. He gave me a green signal and asked me to visit the Tulsibaug campus after two days. I was happy to interact and interview students from an industrial town and was looking forward to meet students at Tulsibaug, which was located in the main city.

### **Market Yard**

I travelled with my father to Tulsibaug center on a two-wheeler, as it was easier and cost effective to commute on a bike. The campus is located near a wholesale market, which is famous for fresh fruits, flowers, and vegetables. People from various parts of Pune visited the wholesale market for the reasonable price and good quality. It was easy to find the campus, as it was located in one of the most upcoming areas in Pune. The campus is located in one of the narrow residential lanes, in a reconditioned bungalow, surrounded by several other residential bungalows. Parking was available outside and inside the campus. There was a yard on the left hand side of the entrance with numerous

plants. The office was congested, as there was little room for people to walk. A notice board was placed with pictures of the faculty members along with the students. The soft board had details of the recent events such as cultural and orientation programs. The office administrator, a Manipuri female, greeted us as soon as we entered the office. She assumed that I was a potential student and started marketing the programs that were offered at the campus. She spoke with a heavy accent, as I introduced myself and mentioned that I wanted to meet the working director.

The working director introduced me to Edha, a faculty member of the spoken English course. Edha spoke softly and supported me with the resources throughout the day. The interview room was small in size and was used for teaching a small class or for administrative purpose. The classes were separated with a thin panel. The wall was not sound proof, as the voices easily travelled throughout the floor. A cultural program was being held for the students that day, so several international volunteers were present on the campus. There was a lot of activity around the room, which became a hindrance at times, while listening to the participants. At the end of the passage, there was another room with numerous musical instruments. I inferred it was a music room, but I did not get an opportunity to explore it. On the same floor was a small kitchen, where tea and coffee were prepared for the guests, faculty members, and staff. The house had a staircase that led to the first floor; unfortunately, I did not get a chance to visit the first floor. I learned that computer designing and cosmetology programs were conducted on the first floor. As compared to other CCs, I recognized that Victoria CC caters to a smaller number of students with specific needs. The college might cater to a smaller population, but the mission and vision of the institute was similar to other field sites.



## **Design of the Ship: Creation of Victoria CC**

Similar to Bosco CC, Victoria CC had an interesting history. This section unfolds the story and provides background information about Victoria CC. The designer is the one who plans the layout and structure of the ship. Dirk who worked for Tiscon Company, a multinational automobile company with its roots in Germany, designed Victoria CC. Around 40 years back, Dirk came from Germany to Chennai, a metropolitan city in India and fell in love with the city and its people. He also fell in love with an Indian woman and settled in India. He was moved by the poverty and wanted to support people in any way he could, so he started loaning money to people for food, clothing, and shelter. He came across many people who asked him if he offered education loans. He discussed the idea of starting up an educational institute with the missionaries and established Victoria CC.

Amaan, the coordinator of Victoria CC narrated his story of how he came to the CC. Since Victoria CC is affiliated with a Christian organization, missionaries play a vital role in spreading the word about the college and enrolling staff that believe in serving humanity. This college is registered under the non-government organization (NGO) model and the church supports the institute with donations. Amaan is a Christian and attends church every Sunday. His family received a call from the pastor to inquire if he was keen on joining the college as a coordinator. At that point Amaan was hesitant to commit to a full time job, as he was pursuing his Masters in banking and finance. Four months later, he again received a call from the college and accepted the job, as he was at the end of his degree. In our conversation, Amaan explained that the institute seeks individuals who understand the mission and vision of the college. They wanted

individuals who were simple, honest, respectful, sensitive, with strong communication skills, especially since the students belong to lower SES. This is the criterion that Amaan uses to hire the staff and faculty members. Several highly qualified individuals apply for the jobs, but they are assessed on their attitude. Amaan accepted the job in 2012 and has a dual responsibility of a coordinator and a lecturer.

**Background.** During our conversation, Amaan shared the history of Victoria CC. The first industrial training school was started in South India in 1974. The institute trained thousands of young men, who later started their own workshops/business or worked in various industries as fitters, welders, and carpenters. These programs are offered for two years and are affiliated with the state government. Like other CCs, the institute offers internships and a guaranteed job. The vision and goal of the institute is to adopt sincerity, discipline, and punctuality in the work. The students, staff, and teachers are to respect each other and be a role model for their generation (IID, 2012). Dirk believes that the CC should not spoon feed the poor but rather teach them skills for life. Victoria CC works in the area of training and uplifting the poor. Dirk collaborated with Adam, the director of CCs in India, and acquired the structure, design, and curriculum of CCs from Indian Center for Research and Development for Community Education (ICRDCE).

After the first institute in 1974 in south India, the college established vocational training for young girls and a day care center for families in slums (IID, 2012). Later, they started hostels and offered accommodation to teenage boys and girls during training. Victoria CC has five campuses in South India. The institute decided to start a college outside Chennai; and in 2011, they established a branch in Pune city. There are two

campuses in Pune; the Ranchi campus was established in 2011 and the Tulsibaug campus was started a year later. The locations in Pune have been selected based on the needs analysis and the context. The Tulsibaug campus is located in the heart of the city. Krishna and several volunteers came together to begin this branch in a rented residential bungalow. Krishna is the director of Tulsibaug campus that offers one-year diploma programs in computer application, electronics and household applications, and cosmetology. The firm also offers short-term courses in English language, bookkeeping, and basic computers. The demand and the enrollment numbers for the cosmetology program are high in Tulsibaug campus, as it is located in the center of the city.

On the other hand, the Ranchi campus is located in an upcoming remote town, which is also an automobile hub. Based on the need and the industry requirements, the college offers tailor made programs. Amaan, the coordinator of Ranchi elaborated,

The context and background of a city life is different from the town area. Here there are middle and upper middle class families; their life styles are different from people in lower class. In the town side, there are more villagers, more farmers, the standard of living is lower and the demand of the programs is different at Ranchi center. There is a high demand for tailoring program in this area, because the fees are reasonable, the individual has the flexibility to work from home, and there is additional source of income. The additional source of income is helpful and supportive. This is the context of a village life.

This campus currently offers six-month diploma programs in computer graphics and design, applied commerce, and three-month short-term programs in Tally, basic computer, functional English, tailoring, cosmetology, and 3d graphic design. Thus, the

design and the structure of the program depend on the location and population. The director and coordinator of the campus conduct need analysis from time to time and alter or add new programs according to the students' needs.

### **Assembly of the Ship's Engine: Services and Policies of Victoria CC**

The services and policies of Victoria CC are like the engine of a ship, which aids them to assemble and keep moving ahead. The services and policies make the transition easier for the students at the CC. This section responds to RQ1a and RQ1b, which deal with the participants' experiences with the academic services and policies at Victoria CC. The findings indicated that the flexible timings of Victoria CC allow the students to enter and exit the program at any time during the year, the subsidized fees make the program affordable, the cultural activities provide a platform to students to interact and dialogue with diverse international students around the globe, the mandatory English skills build the students linguistic skills, the extra-curricular activities and field trips provides the opportunity to enhance the students social and soft skills. The participants' responses revealed that the academic services and policies help in college integration.

Additionally, the college assesses the students' skills and supports them in finding jobs, creating resume, offering internships depending on the students' attitude and aptitude. The services and policies of Victoria CC are diverse as compared to other CCs, as they support the students but do not guarantee job placement and internship at the Pune campuses. Since the Tulsibaug and Ranchi campuses are relatively new, the management is continuously reforming the academic services and policies to tailor to the students' needs. The college conducts need analyses for the programs and spends extensive time in marketing and enrolling the students.

The director of Tulsibaug campus, Krishna, is an Australian and the captain of the ship. In India, he is on a voluntary employment and has been working with the institute since last four years. Prior to this, he was working in a renowned university in Sydney as a health science faculty member. He has worked for 23 years in the academic field and has a doctoral degree in neuroscience. Twenty years back, he and his wife had been to India for voluntary service for two years, since then they had a desire to return to India. As their children became independent, Krishna resigned from the job and came to India. For the last three years he has been working as a director of the Tulsibaug campus and his wife is the faculty of the cosmetology program at this institute. I was surprised with Krishna's educational qualification and wondered about his experience working in two contrasting nations. Since the director of Ranchi campus had resigned recently, Krishna was the acting director. During the interview, Krishna spoke about the profile of the students at Ranchi and Tulsibaug campus. He elaborated,

Okay, so my first few years had mainly been involved with the Tulsibaug campus, which is in the city and mainly students from slums. So there's a very different sort of atmosphere here compared to there. The students here are (Ranchi center), you might say, less sophisticated, less city wise, less street wise, simpler and I mean that in a nice way. So that's one difference. The current cohort of diploma students are quite different from any that we've had at either center in any of the last three to four years. They're a bit more mature, most of them are them are working or have family and so they are a very dedicated lot.

The two campuses differ in location, which determines the context of the students. The faculty members come across diverse students with varying level of interest. The current

cohort has a real hunger for learning and the students have made many sacrifices to be a part of the college. In the previous cohort, the students were younger and supported by the family, so they didn't have to make major sacrifices to attend the college. The current cohort was determined and gritty.

**Two sides of a coin: Needs analysis and marketing.** Victoria College conducts a survey in their neighborhood to determine what skills are in demand and the needs of the population. The college offers short-term certification and diploma programs with flexible timings, with morning and evening groups. If the enrollment numbers are high for a particular program, additional cohorts are offered. Currently, there are two cohorts for spoken English and tailoring, one for cosmetology and computer administration. The participants revealed that the college timings are flexible, so it is easier for them to balance work and studies.

Krishna said that need analysis and marketing goes hand in hand. Amaan shared the marketing techniques of Victoria College; they are door-to-door marketing, pamphlets, banners, school visits, word of mouth and collaboration with NGOs and multinational companies (MNCs). When I visited the Tulsibaug campus for the first time, I noticed a huge banner that was posted outside the building in bold capitalized letters in blue color. The huge size could easily attract the eyes of the travelers. The institute places an advertisement in the newspaper and distributes pamphlets. Piles of pamphlets are kept at the local vendors. Another marketing technique, which Amaan spoke about, was visiting the schools, "We take the consent of the management of schools and colleges and are allowed to talk for ten minutes. During this time, we introduce the vision, purpose, and programs offered in the institute." Amaan added that

the principals and management of educational institutions are extremely supportive. Victoria College also involves the current diploma students in marketing, as this activity is hands-on learning experience for them. He further shared that door-to-door marketing is the best technique to enroll the students. Most of the people in this neighborhood are from outside the state and are open to new ideas. The migrants are keen to learn but since most of them are from diverse parts of the country, they don't speak and read the local language. As a result, pamphlets and banner don't serve a purpose. Another challenge is that certain students in the schools and colleges are extremely arrogant and destructive. Irrespective of the challenges, the marketing team is patient and determined to reach out to the students. Word of mouth is another strategy that augments the enrollment process. Each day, the college has a high number of walk-ins who visit the center to inquire about the programs. The director and coordinator spend extensive time interacting with the students about their interests and aptitude. Amaan said that these initial conversations are significantly important, as they build relationships and serve as a platform to communicate the academic services and policies of the college. The caring environment and strong rapport builds the goodwill of the college. The participants in the interviews affirmed that they had heard the good word about the college from their neighbors or acquaintances.

Amaan pointed out that each year the college accumulates demographic information of the area surrounding the college. Near the Ranchi campus, 95% of the people live on rent, as they have migrated from other cities and only 5% of the population is local. He explained,

Most of the people are from Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Bihar. The government does not focus on education; the quality of schooling is not good. These people come to Maharashtra because there are several industries and job opportunities. Many industries hire people from Bihar and UP, as they are hardworking and they are willing to do any task. The students from UP are open and enthusiastic to learn new things. In the previous cohort, there was a student from UP, who was keen towards learning. This student did not have money, had financial difficulties, had family problems, but wanted to learn. In this college, there is a policy that students have to be minimum 17 years old. Even if he is a dropout, that is completely all right, he can enroll in the college. The criterion is that the student should have an urge to study and learn new things.

The students migrate from remote areas in the hope of employment, so they can support their families. Amaan stressed that the students struggle to pay basic fees, as they have to balance their rent, food expenses, and support their families. The college is cognizant of the fact and caters to them in the form of flexible hours, small cohort, and subsidized fees.

Dishta was sitting on one of the wooden chairs, as I entered the room. She stared at me, as I briefed her about my research study. She belonged to a lower socio-economic (SES) family and resided in one of the slums near the Ranchi campus. Dishta had completed her 10<sup>th</sup> grade and had taken a one-year break from studies due to a heart surgery. She had recovered from the surgery and was enrolled in a three-month certificate program to fulfill her desire to learn English. I distinctly remember Dishta, as she looked at me warily at several occasions during the interview. I struggled with her,



as I was not able to gauge whether she understood the questions. Throughout the interview, she did not have any expression on her face. Later, Edha the faculty of spoken English inquired about the interview. I shared my observations with Edha, who concurred about Dishta's blank expressions. As a faculty member, she too struggled to assess whether Dishta has understood the concept or not. Edha and I discussed various strategies that could support her academically and personally. When I inquired about the cost of the program, Dishta replied that she pays Rs.500 (\$10) for the entire program. On contrary, other participants Kajal and Meera pay Rs.1500 (\$25) for the same program. I wondered about the rationale for different fee structures for each student. Krishna clarified my doubt,

Since we are a small college, we do not have the best infrastructure. Generally what happens here is a student wants to leave because he is getting married or his family is moving to the village or financial problem, so the services offered are formal talks with the staff. If there are financial problems we tell them not to worry about their fees, keep coming and the fees are very low. Actually many best students don't pay anything and we have the fee proposal before the admission, so that the fees do not prevent the student from opting out of the program.

Based on the students' socio-economic conditions, the college subsidizes fees for them. The students at each campus pay different amount based on the analysis. Amaan added that the college policy is flexible, allowing them to pay in installments with a grace period. Ruth had asked the management to include Tally in her program at the same price. She shared,

The cost of the fees is reasonable and we have an option to pay in installments. It is an advantage to pay fees in installments. The cost of the fee is Rs.5000 (\$84). Since, I wanted the Tally program in my course structure, they added it and did not charge me additional amount. Since, I could not pay additional amount, we negotiated and the institute agreed to subsidize the fees.

Krishna used the word tailored programs, as it is customized according to the needs of the students. Meera, a housewife, remarked that the program timings were flexible, as she had to fulfill her household responsibilities. She likes the structure of the course and the small class size, as individual attention is given to each one of them. The ratio of students to teachers is low and each program differs from another. Krishna explained,

So again we don't have a formal structure, you see the staff student ratio is 1:9.

Yes we have a specific criterion of five students to start the program and we make many case-to-case decisions and we discuss it in the staff meeting. We do not start the program until we have five students. If there are four students we give it a try to get it going, otherwise the staff will just be sitting there, might as well teach four students.

Krishna added that the Ranchi campus has four to 10 students and Tulsibaug has one to five students in each cohort. The students enjoy the personalized attention and quality education.

**Enhancing skills and knowledge.** Akbar, a confident 22-year-old student at Tulsibaug campus walked in the office wearing blue jeans, a yellow T-shirt and a black vest. The stud in his left ear and sunglasses in his jeans pocket stood out. He had a charming personality and spoke passionately about his life. Akbar shared that he was

uncertain about his spoken English; however, he spoke fluently throughout the interview. His eyes sparkled as he talked about his passion, dreams, and work. Akbar is originally from north India, born in a big family of seven members. At a young age, he lost his father and the family struggled for daily survival. The church supported his family and enrolled the children in a school. Due to bad influence and peer pressure, Akbar went off track and failed in 8<sup>th</sup> grade mid-term exams. He indulged in smoking and drinking and weeks later, regretted his decision of dropping out of school. Since it was middle of the year, it was difficult to get admission in any other school. As a result, he enrolled in a Hindi medium school and completed his 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Later on, he shifted to an English medium school and completed his 10<sup>th</sup> grade. At this point of time, he had spiritual insights and sought help from God. He prayed and became focused in life and regularly communicated with a priest. As his life was transforming, Akbar had a desire to help underprivileged children. The priest was a role model in his life, who directed him to an NGO in Pune. He accepted the job and migrated to Pune and started working for the NGO. He felt that his experience with the institute was transformative, as Akbar works with underprivileged children, orphans, children from red light areas, and victims of human trafficking. I wondered about the patience, courage, maturity, and strong will one needs to work with the underprivileged population, especially at the age of 22. Through the organization, he gets an opportunity to meet various kinds of people across the world. The founder of Victoria College is from Tiscon, a German MNC that has strong relationships with several NGOs and charitable institutions. Akbar got to know about Victoria College through his NGO and has enrolled for diploma in computer administration along with spoken English course. Among the various extra-curricular

activities, he relishes the cultural events. Victoria CC frequently gets volunteers from diverse countries that are involved in community service. The foreigners conduct activities and workshops on Spoken English, communication, and presentation skills. Akbar commented, “After the instructors finish their presentation, we are allowed to ask different questions to them. I feel talking to the foreigners enhances my communication skills.” The exposure of meeting diverse people at workplace and college helps him to be analytical and develop higher order thinking skills. Edha, the faculty member, explained that the extroverted students enjoy the cultural events the most. In addition, it helps the students to improve their listening skills and the interaction inspires and motivates them. Edha elaborated that students have extracurricular activities and field trips, where they get a chance to interact and mingle with each other.

At times, the students are taken for a field trip to Tiscon company to understand how an industry functions. The college teaches the difference between the blue-collar and white-collar jobs and the skills and qualifications required for the workplace. In addition, the institute organizes workshops on personality development, personal hygiene, behavior, and discipline. The college also organizes picnics for the students. Amaan shared that the college celebrates national and regional festivals like Diwali, Christmas, and *Raksha Bandhan*. Thus, several participants felt that the extracurricular activities and their experiences at the college were enhancing their existing skills and knowledge.

**The college’s philosophy.** Victoria College offers programs throughout the year, so the students can enroll anytime. An orientation is usually held for a new cohort with ten or more students, where the management, faculty and students gather on one platform

and interact with each other. It includes ice-breaking activities, a presentation on the CC, its purpose and mission. In Victoria CC, there are no fixed semesters and the enrollment is open throughout the year. As students enroll at different times for various durations, conducting an orientation frequently becomes a challenge. Among the participants I interviewed, two out of seven students had gone through an orientation. Amaan spoke about the significance of the orientation and mentioned that it is a platform to brief the students with the college's vision, mission, and philosophy. He explained,

Community college means this college is for community. The crust of the college is to serve and support people in the society. We want to provide opportunity to everyone exclusive of caste, race, and religion. We want people to live in one community. Whenever an individual comes to college, we converse with them honestly, openly, and with humbleness. Here in CC, we develop and build relationships. We don't look at students with strict authority figure; we treat them with care and love like family members. The founder desired to care and help people; with this aim he started the college. The meaning of the term 'community' means working and living together as one.

Amaan highlighted that all the members of the college believe and practice this philosophy. A vital criterion of the faculty selection is dependent on whether they believe and would be willing to practice the philosophy of the college. Krishna, Amaan, and Edha practice the foundation values of humanity, modesty, humbleness, and honesty and teach the same to the students.

**Support system.** Victoria College has eight CCs in India, but each of them works differently depending on the context. The staff is straightforward and clearly

communicates that the college can support the students in finding a job (no guaranteed employment), creating a resume, and offer a strong recommendation based on the students' performance. Amaan has a strong network with several companies and they often receive projects, which they assign to the students. If students perform well and are regular, then the college provides references and internship to the students, based on their interest, aptitude, and attitude.

In the past, the Ranchi campus offered internships to all students. The experience of the internship phase was not pleasant, as students took the practicum lightly and did not perform up to the mark. Furthermore, Krishna spoke about the challenges of internship and employment.

We have never ever guaranteed a job to anyone. In our first year of operation, our diploma students had a 10-month program and a month of internship. We had just started and I had arrived in Pune and we didn't have many connections with the companies. So it took a lot of hard work to find people who would employ the students and there was also a problem with the local tax body. In shopping malls, all the internships set up for other students were off. We then decided to keep a track record and we did not even speak of internship; as a result we have taken internship out of here.

Victoria College modifies and implements new services based on the students' needs. Krishna spoke about the plans to have a daycare facility for students' children. Since, most of the students at Ranchi campus are married women with young ones, it is difficult for them to leave the children and attend college. In remote areas of India, there are few day care centers and most of them cannot afford the cost of the services. Several students

in Ranchi and Tulsibaug campuses travel long distances to attend the college. When I inquired about the transportation services, Krishna responded,

Transportation is a huge issue here because the public transportation is limited; it may be an issue for the students but not for the staff. We have talked about it, what can we do, but the problem is there is a class and the students live in different areas, so it is not practical and it hasn't worked. If suppose, there are 5 students in one place and if they wanted to do the same program at the same time, we would do it, but if it's just one or two students, it is just not possible.

The cohort size at Ranchi and Tulsibaug is small, so it is difficult to arrange for transportation. The management is having discussions about having a hostel facility, but there is no concrete plan yet.

**Skills for life.** Like other CCs, Victoria College also offers life skills and mandatory spoken English course. The implementation and methodology of the program varies from other colleges. The director of the college decides on the topics that are included in the program. Krishna gave examples of few topics, including: study skills, writing, connecting with the language, communication skills, job skills, resume, anger management, team work, and health topics. Krishna elaborated on the program methodology,

We get people who are experts in the area and sometimes it includes a big three-hour session and we try to make it as practical as we can. We have improved the subject to a more practical basis, so the students do the assessment on a more active basis, subjective point of view. The students keep a journal and do specific exercises like personality instances with what they have learned and has it been

helpful or not. They are not judged by the quality of what they have written but what they have written as a whole.

The life skills program is conducted once in a week and each week the college invites an expert on the course content. In the past, the life skills program was focused on theory; however, the directors have modified the program and made it practical. Thus, the management spends extensive time on enhancing the policies and services of the college and tailors them according to the students' needs.

### **Smooth Sailing: Implementation of Services and Policies**

I met Edha, the faculty member of the spoken English class, at the Tulsibaug campus. She wore a simple cotton *salwar* suit without any makeup or jewelry. She was in her thirties, wore glasses and was extremely soft-spoken, humble, and modest about her work. I enjoyed interviewing her and we immediately connected and shared our observations about the students. Edha had completed her masters in environmental studies and worked as a researcher for some time. She and her husband were missionaries and travelled to different places for community service. Edha's husband serves the community in the capacity of an architect and she offers her service in the field of education. She believes that her purpose of life is to serve mankind in whatever way she can. Edha's friend played a vital role in setting up the Tulsibaug campus. During the preparation stage, the college was looking for an English faculty, but was unable to find an instructor who was dedicated and comprehended the vision and mission of the CC. Edha was asked to join the institute, she immediately agreed, as she was moved by the dire need of a teacher. She has been working since two years and shared her perspective about the profile of students, small size-cohort, safe learning environment, instructional



strategies, and teaching methodology. Krishna articulated that he is fortunate to have positive and warm faculty members on his team who effectively implement the academic services and policies.

**Varying backgrounds of the students.** Most of the students from the Tulsibaug campus are from broken homes, poorer families, or marginalized communities. There are students who live in low-income neighborhoods and join the college with a hope to learn. Edha stated that as a faculty member she offers hope to the students. After the completion of the program, the students are equipped to have an average job and improve their standard of living. Most of the students use public transportation to attend the college. There are students who come from nearby vicinity with a desire to learn the English language. Edha talked about a student who migrated from South India to Maharashtra and wanted to learn English to pursue higher studies. There was another student in her twenties who recently got married in a highly educated family. She wanted to learn English, so she could fit in the family environment. The experiences of individuals have been varied and each person's coping mechanism has been different.

Alternately, at the Ranchi campus most of the students belong to remote areas. Krishna spoke about the difference in the attitudes of the students between the two campuses. The students from Tulsibaug campus are from low-income neighborhoods in the city and have wider exposure and low determination. On the other hand, most of the students at Ranchi campus are simple, modest, have a desire, grit and fire to work hard and achieve their goals. Krishna remarked on the college's identity,

To me, I am not clear of its identity, and we are running the business of tuition under the banner of community college because that is what the society demands

and they expect us to help with English tuition to their kids. We said okay we have capacity here and the next thing we know is tutoring three-year olds with English tuitions. We have been going somewhere else and just because it is called community college it doesn't add anything to the community. It's meant to be responsive to the community and we are trying to do that and beyond that I am not so sure. We could have a welding program next week; so one hand has tuitions and other welding program.

The other CCs cater to adult population with diploma programs, while Victoria College specifically serves to the needs of various age groups in the neighborhood. For instance, English-speaking programs are offered for adults and coaching classes for school going children.

**Individual attention.** The students can enroll in college anytime during the year and hence the size of each class is varied. I was amazed to know that the cohort comprises of one/two/three with maximum of five students at the Tulsibaug campus. Edha elaborated on the rationale of having one student in the class, as she was from a vernacular background and required personal attention. The enrollment number at Ranchi campus is high with a maximum of 10 students per cohort. The faculty members assess the students' nature and background and devise the instructional strategies accordingly.

**Innovative strategies.** The faculty members at each CC devise instructional strategies according to the needs and backgrounds of the students. Similarly, the faculty members at Victoria CC create innovative strategies to cater to small cohort in the classroom.

When I worked as a teacher trainer in a NGO in India, every morning our workshop would begin with a devotion time. The devotion time could comprise of a song, saying, scripture, video clip, story, or any form that would help the students to connect with the creator or themselves. I observed that the devotion time made students calm and tranquil. The activity helped them to focus on the present moment, leaving other thoughts behind. Edha shared that the college has devotion time, where the staff, faculty members, and students read the scriptures, or share their thoughts and feelings. Krishna shared his teaching methodology. There were two international faculty members at the Ranchi campus and Krishna was one of them. The international faculty members did not speak the local and regional language and taught the content in English. Amaan was frequently present in the classroom for translation. I wondered how students understood the concepts. Krishna clarified that in India, students are usually taught how to speak, but he did the opposite. He conducted several activities, where students were actively involved in listening to the English language. Krishna added,

So just activities that involve things that are achievable for them and that involves lots of listening, lots of reading in the first stages initially, very little grammar. So I would just repeat lots and lots of things that I would do and act out; I am sitting, you are listening. You know, I am teaching, we are listening, and just go through many samples and act out different things. We would have number of different activities and we were reading an easier version of tense. Generally I read it but I make them do it, so that I can know their level of reading. But at this stage, I am generally reading a lot more than they are. Then I ask them to read the next page or find words that they cannot understand and we would talk about those words

and then we would read it or I would get them in pairs and let them read to each other, so in that way they would get more practice.

The method was unique, as several spoken English classes start teaching with basic grammar. At Victoria CC, the students are in an environment where they get accustomed to new language, they listen, watch, understand, and retain. Later, they act, explain, comprehend, and learn. Krishna employs role-play in the classroom. He frequently gives them small assignments to do at home. Krishna converts his language barrier into his strength, as the students have to communicate in English. He creates a low stress environment, as he believes that students don't learn in a high stress environment.

Siddarth, a student of the computer-designing program, shared his experience in the bi-linguistic classroom. He lives in a small rented room with his older brother in Pune city. While his family lives in a remote area and is going through financial hardship, he works as a sweeper in an MNC to support them. Krishna uses the attributes of grit and perseverance to describe Siddarth. He attends college from 9.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. and heads directly for work. He comes late in the night and completes his homework. I was moved with Siddarth's determination and will power. He shared that his strength is observing others and asking higher-order questions. In fact, after the interview, Siddarth asked me several questions about my PhD experience in a foreign country. He was keen to know what were the requirements of the program and the steps one needs to take to enroll in the program. Siddarth learned about the college through a pamphlet. He didn't have funds to pay the fees, but was keen to study. After talking to the director, his fees were subsidized and he was given a grace period to make the payments. He loves the program and enjoys learning in two languages. He explained

that the instructors are extremely patient and tolerant; frequently he is the one asking them several questions and requesting them to explain again. He is not scared or shy to ask questions, as the environment is extremely conducive to free expressions of thoughts and ideas.

Each faculty member has a different style of teaching; Edha shared that she assesses the students on listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. She uses British Council rubrics for assessment, which are dependent on different mental capabilities and skills and uses mixed methods to teach them. In smaller groups, Edha uses the techniques of individual exercises, pair and share, role-play, ex-tempo topics, and others. Amaan gave instances of the activities in the classroom,

We don't believe in lecture-based teaching wherein I lecture, students read at home and appear for exams. We teach students' basic computer skills, how to do a presentation, how to use Excel sheet, and technical and social skills. We teach them how to create banners, posters, and visiting cards digitally, how to crop photos and how to create a web design and use it. Additionally, how to create a building structure electronically and Tally, all these programs are imperative for life, as these are life skills, and it is not for sake for it. We don't believe in wasting students' time, we invest in quality teaching.

Meera is enrolled in the cosmetology class and enjoys learning the skills through practice. There are times when she struggles to learn a technique, but the faculty members give her adequate time and multiple opportunities to learn at her own pace. On the other hand, Tanvi loses her patience, when the instructor asks her to start everything from scratch in

the tailoring class. She added that the instructor is particular and aims for perfection, which helps her to be attentive and focused in the classroom.

**Faculty selection and development.** Amaan emphasized the selection of the faculty members. The team examines the individual's character and behavior rather than the educational qualification. He shared that candidates that apply for monetary purposes are not given preference, as they select members who believe in social responsibility. Amaan believes that the faculty members are role models, so it is essential that they are appropriately dressed and presentable. The members are sensitive and careful about what they say to the students, as the students come from marginalized community. The college is an advocate of working as one team and practices it religiously. Amaan explained,

We have orientation and training workshops for teachers, we focus on their behavior with other staff members and their interaction with the students. We emphasize on teamwork, no one works individually in this organization, and we all work as a team. There has to be no jealousy and no competition. If you get into conflict with any member, in that case, be open and have a discussion with them. If we want to progress as an institution then we have to work as a team, if we don't then many people will throw dirt on us.

The values of working as one team, growing together, and helping in each other's learning are ingrained from the beginning. When a new faculty joins, Amaan conducts formal and informal classroom observations. He observes them over a period of time and provides feedback. He does not expect the faculty members to deal with the challenges individually, in fact they sit and brainstorm on ideas and create solutions together. In the training workshop, the students are encouraged to do self-reflection for their classes.

Amaan ensures that the faculty members are experts in their subject and content, as there are several adult students at the Ranchi campus. The college has a firm environment and integrates the value of discipline. The college supports the faculty members inside and outside the classroom. The director of the institute conducts professional development workshops with the members once in two months. The management conducts formal staff meeting once in a month and meet each day informally. The team gets together frequently to brainstorm on new ideas, resolve challenges, and cater to students' needs.

**Warmhearted faculty members.** The participants discussed their faculty members and the mentors who played a vital role in transforming their lives. I recalled an incident with one of the mentors who touched my life. I remember my training for teacher educator workshop, where I was sitting with my group and discussing the lesson plan for the day. We had to pick a volunteer who would demonstrate a model lesson plan for our group. I volunteered but I think the group was not confident whether I would perform well, as I was an introvert. They blindly ignored me and went on, while a mentor stood there and watched us. She immediately came to take a stand for me and appeared to be more confident than I was. I always remember this incident, as she not only stood by me but also helped me to believe in myself. Her warm, caring, loving nature not only touched my heart, but I learnt how to be a good faculty from her. Akbar, the student at Tulsibaug campus adores Edha, his faculty. He shared that once he was deeply saddened because of an incident at his workplace. Akbar expressed,

The teacher provides us with counseling. Two weeks ago, I was depressed because someone talked to me harshly about my work. The teacher then asked me what had happened and I told her that I felt like leaving the college. The

teacher then handed me a spiritual pamphlet and talked to me. I felt very good after talking to her, initially I felt lonely and after this incident I felt like someone was there for me.

Akbar added that the faculty members' approach of dealing with problems was different from a regular college. The members were warmer and patient and cared deeply for the students. Edha shared that sometimes the students just need to vent, as they need a listening ear. Since the students came from a disturbed background, they tend to bring their worries and conflict to the classroom. On these days, Edha modifies the lesson plan for the day. She believes that the least she could do is to give them hope. She derives her source of energy from the students, as they have grit and perseverance to overcome the barriers in their lives. If a student is absent for more than a week and there is no mode of communication, the faculty/management visit the students' house.

Edha shared an example of an adult woman, a widow and mother of two children, who was enrolled in the spoken English program. The student belonged to a tribal community and her family in the village was apprehensive of her learning English. The coordinator visited her house and tried to talk to her family. The student had taken a break and was determined to join the class later. In these circumstances, the college is flexible with their policy and allows the students to come back later. The members and staff stretch themselves and take an extra step to support the students. Amaan spoke about his experience of teaching and dealing with students in the classroom. He always walks in the classroom with a positive mindset, as the energies are transmitted to the students. He ensures that the environment in the classroom is lively. Amaan added,



There is a language of touch; this touch is a sign of care and affection. We encourage and motivate students to study hard. I am not inferring that this is an easy task; at times students don't comprehend the technical language. We have to be patient with the students and explain one thing several times. There are times when I am frustrated, I am angry, in this case I recall the student's context and background and remind myself that the student has not been exposed to a conducive environment. So, it is not the student's fault, I have to be patient and sometimes explain one thing fifty times.

Amaan acknowledged that teaching is challenging, as the students were of different age groups with varied competency levels. Siddharth spoke about his thoughts and feelings about the faculty members. He said that there is no hierarchy between the members and students, as everyone at college is treated equally. He narrated an incident when water had spilled on the floor and it had become dirty. He noticed that Amaan did not ask the maid to do it and immediately wiped the floor himself. Siddharth believes that these small things make a difference and everyone is treated with respect and dignity. Amaan said "no task is big or small for any one of us, irrespective whether you are a CEO or director." Amaan, Krishna, and Edha all affirmed that they enjoy working at the CC. They are emotionally content with their work and strive hard to make the college a better place for the students.

### **Arrival at Port: Outcome and Future Course of Action**

When the ship sails smoothly, the passengers reach safely to their destination. Similarly, Victoria College ensures successful completion of the program, so the students can progress towards their dreams. In this section, the research question is address,

which deals with the students' perceived impact of their experiences at the CC. The students shared that the CC is like a stepping-stone towards success. The results revealed that the program at the CC would help in better job prospects and vertical mobility. The academic services and policies like mandatory computer and English skills and technical knowledge will help them in finding an employment and commencing a new venture in future. The extracurricular activities and cultural activities have enhanced the students' social and communication skills. The students noticed a positive change in them, as their confidence and self-esteem grew. In addition, with the life skills program, the students have acquired presentation, self-grooming, and interview skills, and learned how to create a resume, and speak fluent English, which would help them for life. The students' responses revealed the impact of the CC's experiences at the micro and macro level.

**Naïve Tanvi.** I met Tanvi at the Ranchi campus, an innocent 20-year-old student. She was extremely thin and wore a tight fitting *salwar kameez*. As I started the interview, Krishna requested Tanvi to swap the interview slot with someone else. I thanked her for agreeing to change the interview time, however she had a strange expression on her face. Later, I got an opportunity to listen to her story. Tanvi had completed the 12<sup>th</sup> grade and had chosen to be at home. She was not keen on further studies, but desired to work in a big company. Her family was extremely conservative and her father did not permit her to work outside the house. However, her father wanted her to acquire skills that would help her for life. She heard about Victoria CC from a neighbor and decided to join the tailoring program. Tanvi candidly shared that she was not really interested in tailoring but pursuing the program was a better option than sitting idly at home. She finally started enjoying the program after attending the college for two

months. The college learning environment inspired and motivated her to study. She was fascinated with computers and was curious to know what was being taught in the computer designing class. Each day as she passed, she peeped into the computer lab. She inquired about the computer-designing program and convinced her parents to enroll her in this program. Tanvi enjoyed group discussions, and learned by observing others and listening to their perspectives. She added,

I like coming to college every day. I feel inspired and motivated looking at people around me. I have the urge and curiosity to learn new things; I am not judged on what I don't know. The faculty members and classmates are open to accept me the way I am; there is no fear and pressure to study.

Tanvi's dream is to work for a MNC. If her father does not grant permission then she intends to start a tailoring venture at home.

**Analytical Siddarth.** For Siddarth, the computer designing and spoken English programs helped him to climb one step on the ladder of success. He believed that the program would help to support his family financially and attain a bachelor's degree. Siddarth was analytical, as he was curious to know how people gained knowledge and prospered in life. He enjoyed the cultural programs at the college, as he met and dialogued with the international exchange students and was motivated by their stories. His communication and presentation skills had improved, which boosted his self-esteem and self-confidence.

**Courageous Meera.** Last year, Meera completed her diploma in tailoring and currently is pursuing a program in cosmetology. She started her own venture, which is doing really well. Along with providing a steady source of income, the CC helped

develop her identity. People respect her and are proud of her accomplishments. The college has ignited the light of learning in her and she is keen to learn new skills and acquire more knowledge. She believes that education not only adds to an individual's vita, but also engages the mind. Additionally, the college experience has groomed her personality. Meera shared,

Change...I mean I feel enthusiastic and excited to learn new things; now there is an urge to learn. Initially, I was in my own bubble; I did not feel like doing anything. I had a routine, do household chores, take care of the girls, cook and sleep. But now I feel apart from the normal routine, I want to do something else. I feel like learning several new skills. Yes, my confidence level has increased. Initially, I used to be hesitant to do things, but now I am open to new things and ideas.

The CC has opened new avenues for Meera and she is a role model to her children. Meera's children are excited to see her learning at this age, which motivates and inspires them. Along with the children, Meera has been able to stimulate curiosity in her neighborhood. She spreads the good word about the college to her customers and the people around her. Seeing Meera studying, balancing the household chores, and running the business has inspired her neighbor to study ahead. Meera interacts and encourages her to study, but she does not receive any support from her family. Meera expressed that she is fortunate to have a supportive and liberal husband who not only supports her, but also encourages her to keep learning new skills and knowledge. There is a positive change in her identity, as she has become independent, confident, and open-minded.

Meera's journey of learning does not end here, as she aspires to speak fluent English, which she intends to learn in near future.

**Gutsy Akbar.** I was amazed to hear Akbar's future plans. He revealed that his final destination is USA and Victoria CC is a juncture in the journey. He aspires to pursue a program in mountain trekking at an American university. He has a plan and is determined to follow it. He believes that computer designing skills and English would help him in his journey. Akbar feels that he has derived infinite values from this college, particularly the element of hope. The positive and caring environment has empowered and made him stronger. He believes that he has grown in all domains of life, emotional, mental, and spiritual. Akbar believes that he was privileged to have the support from the missionaries and wants to contribute back to the society. After completing his higher education, he plans to open an NGO for orphans. He wants to be the helping hand for the unprivileged community, as many hands had supported his family during the time of crises. I was moved by Akbar's plans for the future, as I could see the zeal and drive in his eyes to accomplish his goals. He could communicate fluently in English and spoke with great confidence. Akbar had a clear vision about his future plan and he strongly believes that the CC programs would help him to fulfill his dreams.

**Amicable Ruth.** For Ruth, the purpose of enrollment in CC was to fulfill a lifelong dream. Tall and skinny, Ruth was cordial and calm and smiled, as I briefed her about the interview. She spoke rapidly and giggled often. After 12<sup>th</sup> grade, she left college, as she got married and had a child. As her child grew up, she started working part time in the customer service department in an automobile company. She enjoyed working, as she felt that the work groomed her personality and each day she learned new

skills and knowledge. She realized that she was fascinated with computers and wanted to study ahead. Her dream was to commence a catering business combined with a cyber café. Ruth's husband was extremely supportive and encouraged her to accomplish her dreams. Her husband was aware of Victoria CC and told Ruth about the program. She enrolled in a diploma program in computer designing, which was combined with a spoken English program. She loves coming to college and adores the director, Krishna. She looks forward to the cultural events, as she is excited to learn about the diverse culture through other people's stories. She loves the methodology in the classroom and is surprised with her positive performance. Talking about the benefits of the program, Ruth expressed,

Of course, this program will help me in starting the venture. I can use all the knowledge, we can take orders for visiting cards, teach basic computer skills, design basic structure for the firms. In fact, I don't have to be around the cyber café all the time, my husband can run the place and I can work in a company.

Ruth has thought through the business plan and is excited about the new venture. I was surprised to hear that she was unaware of the college's philosophy. She was curious to know the concept, so she asked me to explain the philosophy and vision of the college.

Ruth remarked,

I wish there was a CC in my village. They should open one in each village.

There are several people in villages that are well educated, but sadly they don't have a job. In Ranchi, people are unaware of job opportunities, as they don't know how to find a good job. People who have money only those people are able to accumulate more wealth. People who have knowledge but not money they are

unable to move ahead in life. It is important that we do something for these people.

It was fascinating to listen to Ruth's comment, as she spoke about establishing a CC in each village. I shared Ruth's thought with Krishna during the interview. He smiled at me and said that hopefully in the future, when there are adequate resources and infrastructure, the college would definitely open new campuses. As the students spoke about their thoughts, feelings, and learning, so did the faculty members. Amaan, the coordinator of the center spoke about the essential moral values that he acquired from the college. He shared,

Respect is the most imperative element in this organization, when you give respect to other people, it not essential that you would receive respect. At some point the other person does realize their mistakes. There have been many incidents where individuals have realized their mistakes without us telling them. I reiterate the concept that no work is big or small. I have got to learn several important lessons of my life from this place. I have learnt how to be affectionate and caring towards people, and whatever work you do, you should do it wholly.

Amaan shared the above quote with modesty and humbleness, as there was no trace of pride and arrogance. He not only practices but also teaches these concepts to the students through action. He is extremely positive and carries this positivity in the classroom.

Amaan stated that salary does not matter to him, as he derives immense satisfaction and happiness working at this place. He counsels and guides the students continuously and builds a strong relationship with them. This college means a lot to him and he is extremely reflective about his behavior, actions, and consequences of his actions.

**Pure Edha.** Like Amaan, Edha too spoke about contentment and immense satisfaction she derives from her work. She shared that learning is two way process, as the students and Edha learn from each other. Over a period of time, she has improved as a teacher and creates innovative strategies for the students, as each one of them is at a different pace and competence. The job is challenging, but the rewards are greater than the investments. She expressed that the positive results augment her hope and give her strength to do better. She narrated,

I know of a brother and sister, the brother failed in 10th grade and he wasn't willing to attend. He did the diploma program and got through and now he works for a BPO. He is working and is an earning member of the family who contributes towards the family. He is on his feet, which is good. Along with him, there were students and once they know one has done it, they feel that it is possible to do it. The others get influenced in some way and they keep in touch.

They continue to do their work seriously and realize that yes it is in me to do it.

The students are a strong support system for each other. The college gives them an opportunity to study in a conducive environment and perform well. Edha uses the attribute of hope to describe a CC, as the college gives them confidence that they can succeed. The college supports the students with services and policies and the faculty members put their soul and energy for effective implementation. Edha added that apart from financial subsidy and visiting the students' house, at times the director or coordinator has helped the students with medical or physical aid. She expressed that the ethos of the institute is not just academics, but also a holistic development of the student. When the problems are not resolved within the capacity of the college, the director or



staff attempts to resolve it on personal basis. The college works towards development of the students and the members are genuinely concerned and love them selflessly. Edha joined the organization, as there was a need of a teacher, which she thought she could fulfill. She shared what CC means to her,

I trust that in this world, there is enough of work to do and work that could bless lives and work that would give hope to individuals be it through education. At this point of time, the role that it plays, it gives me satisfaction that I am contributing in the life of someone who probably would not have hope.

She feels that if she could touch the lives of few people on the earth, then her purpose of life is accomplished. She believes in serving humanity and would continue doing the good work in one or another organization.

**Charming captain.** Krishna, the captain of the ship, spoke about his experiences, learning, challenges, and future plan for the CC. He enjoys teaching and acknowledges that the students are appreciative of any effort the faculty members make. Krishna added that when the students are dedicated and sincere, it uplifts the learning environment. The college is currently not optimized to the fullest, as its present capacity is around 20%. In the past, there has been a high dropout rate, so after research and analysis, the college is working to deal with attrition. The reasons for attrition are marriage, engagement, pregnancy, family problems, jobs, and no guaranteed employment, among others. The coordinator frequently conducts need analysis to assess the demand for the programs. Krishna elaborated that negotiations for internships with the companies are in the pipeline, but it is taking time for concrete results. The strengths of the college are good atmosphere, strong relationships, and a solid team. However, the college needs to reach

out to more students and the work is in progress. Krishna spoke about the aspects they are working on to improve the academic services and policies for the college. A day care facility for the students at Ranchi center is needed, as several students are adult women with children. The college is also working on transportation and hostel facility to strengthen the services for the marginalized population. The team has learnt lessons from the past and is improvising its services. Amaan and Krishna both commented that the rationale for a high attrition was a mismatch between the expectations of the students and college. The students thought that the methodology of the college was theoretical, which is not the case. The college started assessing the students' interests, aptitude, and attitude during enrollment and briefed them about the practical aspect of the program. The assessment process helps the college to enroll those students who are interested and committed to the program. The management is continuously working and striving to make the college a better place for the students, so they get a quality education and a chance to fulfill their dreams.

### **Reflection**

To settle and adapt in a new culture and country is a fascinating yet challenging experience. I state this with my own experience, as I am studying in a foreign culture, which has its advantages and disadvantages. These diverse experiences helped me to connect with the experiences of students at the Victoria CC. Responding to RQ2, which deals with management's perspectives of academic services and policies on students' experiences, the management shared that each faculty member was diverse and brought their expertise to the CC. The implementation of the services and policies was highly dependent on the management's prior experiences and background. Krishna had

completed his doctorate in Neuroscience and worked as a faculty in a four-year university in Australia for several years. The director brought his research skills and cultural experiences to Victoria CC. Edha spoke about Krishna's efficient leadership skills, commitment, and the innovative ideas that he employs in the implementation of the services and policies at the CC. I saw Krishna's passion and drive for the marginalized community, when he spoke about his experiences at the CC. Prior to working as the director of the Ranchi center, he spent adequate time at the Chennai campus to comprehend the working of a CC. Despite the language barrier, Krishna was able to connect and communicate with the staff, students, and faculty members. Krishna, Edha, and Vinod have been working at the institution since the commencement and therefore, were able to converse about the changes that occurred over a period of time. I was fortunate to gather rich data from all three of them, as they worked at a different hierarchical level. It was enriching to look at the CC from three different lenses of Krishna, the director/faculty, Amaan, the coordinator/faculty, and Edha, a faculty member. While their roles varied, they worked together as one team to serve the marginalized community. All of them were Christians and joined the institution with the desire to serve the community.

As mentioned earlier, the programs at Victoria CC are short-term courses that range from three to nine months, which is relatively shorter as compared to the programs at other field sites. In reference to RQ1a and RQ1b, which pertains to students' experiences with academic services and policies, the results pointed that four out of seven participants had limited experiences with academic services and policies at Victoria CC, as they were enrolled in a three-month course. Talking about the perceived impact on

students' experiences with academic services and policies, which pertain to RQ1c, the participants observed an improvement in their communication and social skills. Since the students' exposure in Victoria CC was limited to three months as compared to one to two years at Bosco and Britto CC, the students rarely spoke about holistic development of skills, attributes, and values.

The forms of cultural capital guided RQ1a, RQ1b and RQ1c, which relates to the academic services and policies and its impact on the students' experiences. The administrative and faculty members believed that the aspirational, linguistic, social, and spiritual capital created a foundation for the implementation of academic services and policies. Victoria CC contributes to aspirational capital, which refers to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers (Yosso, 2005). Edha shared that most of the students at Victoria were from broken families, lower socio economic status (SES), or troubled environments. Rajashree and Siddarth both came from lower SES and had financial difficulties. Both the students were optimistic and determined that the program at the CC would help them to improve their standard of living. Siddarth lives away from his family and is pursuing the program with a full time job. He added that the CC environment and faculty members augment his strength to maintain his hopes and dreams for the future. The positive environment at the CC motivates the students, as they learn through interactive and innovative strategies.

Linguistic capital is an essential feature of Victoria CC, as it contributed in student's integration process. Linguistic capital is defined as intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style (Yosso, 2005). Linguistic capital provided the students with the language, which they

needed to communicate with each other and survive in the industry. Straubhaar (2013) conducted a qualitative study in an urban immigrant-centered English immersion high school and expanded on the community cultural wealth. The author pointed out that the students employed aspirational, linguistic, and social capital to comprehend the academics. The students frequently used Spanish language for academic and moral support, as the students were comfortable speaking in their native language. Similarly, at Victoria CC, the faculty members of the computer-designing program taught the content in English and Hindi. Amaan, the coordinator, was present in the classroom for translation and helped the students with the language, as the primary instructional language was English. In the classroom, the students frequently conversed with the peers and the faculty members in Hindi, which was their native language. Krishna shared that he uses role-play to explain the concepts and then conducts activities in small groups followed by discussions. The students communicate in English and Hindi during these activities, which lead to academic and social integration. This also contributes in social capital, which is defined as networks of people and community resources (Yosso, 2005). The peers are a strong support system for each other and this was especially evident at the Ranchi campus, where a group of ten students worked and studied together inside and outside the classroom. At the Tulsibaug campus, the cohort size is significantly small varying from one to four students. In this case, the faculty members provide the academic support. In addition, the director, coordinator, and administrative members are part of the social capital. Another element that contributes to the social capital is the cultural events and workshops, which were frequently organized. The international exchange students attend and conduct the workshops and these events provide an

opportunity to network and build resources for the future. The stories of the young and diverse volunteers empower and inspire the students. Meera and Akbar spoke about the positive impact of these events. Meera spoke about the positive transformation in her identity and Akbar talked about building networks with the volunteers. The platform to interact with people from diverse ethnicities boosts their self-confidence and self-esteem.

Spiritual capital contributed to the cultural capital and augmented students' will and courage, which helped them to complete their course at the CC. Spiritual capital can be referred as recognition of and reliance on a higher power for guidance (Aragon, 2008). Since Victoria CC is affiliated with a Christian organization, the faculty members spoke about the recognition and reliance on a higher power for guidance. Amaan accepted the position at the Ranchi campus, as the church members requested him to join the organization. Edha joined the institute, as she believed it was the Almighty's call to work at this place. Both Edha and Akbar consider their work as a spiritual experience. Akbar directed and relied on a higher power for guidance when he dropped out of school in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. In Akbar's life, spiritual capital plays a vital role, as his life's purpose, dreams, and ambitions revolve around the desire to serve humanity. He reads the bible every day and considers Jesus as his role model, who directs him to the right path. At times, Akbar shared discussed about the scriptures and teachings of the Bible with Edha. Thus, the different forms of cultural capital along with spiritual capital are a part of the support system at Victoria CC.

Tinto's institutional departure model provided the framework to comprehend RQ1 and RQ2, which dealt with the management and students' perspectives of how academic services and policies affected students' experiences. Further, Tinto's model contributed

in cultural capital of the students, which led to social and academic integration in college. The pre-entry attributes of the participants were family background, skills and attributes, and prior schooling. Most of the participants came from lower SES with weaker foundation in schooling. The participants used their existing skills and abilities. For instance, Siddarth uses his questioning skills to comprehend the technical concepts in the classroom. He uses his observation skills to learn and adapt to the situations. Sagar enhances his communication and networking skills through interacting with diverse people. Krishna employs his researcher skills, while formulating the lesson plans and academic services and policies for the CC. Each student entered the college with varied goals, intentions, and commitment and the institute helps to refine them. The low-stress college environment aids the students to focus on academic performance. The instructional strategies, innovative methodology, and hands-on experience techniques support the students' comprehension and retention skills. Various cultural and orientation events are held to inspire and motivate the students and provide exposure to new ideas and perceptions. As mentioned earlier, the students strongly rely on their peers for academic and moral support. All these factors lead towards strong academic and social integration. Tinto's institutional departure model (1993) is a longitudinal model, so it is unclear whether the students enrolled in a short three-month diploma program are integrated in the college. For instance, Dishta and Kajal were enrolled in a three-month spoken English program and attended the college for an hour each day. The integration or the impact of institutional experiences of these students is uncertain, due to a short span of time in college and brief one-sentence responses during the interview. On the contrary, Tanvi did not have any goal when she enrolled in the college, but with time she

developed a keen interest in computer designing and discovered her goals, interest, and aptitude. Meera another student, came with the goal to enhance her skills to commence a business venture. She completed the tailoring program and is successfully running her venture. Victoria College has ignited the light of learning in Meera and she is currently pursuing a cosmetology program and intends to enroll in the spoken English course in the near future. Like Meera, Ruth intends to establish a cyber café after completion of the program. She feels that computer designing along with spoken English would equip her with the knowledge and skills to commence the venture. Among all the participants, I felt that Siddarth and Akbar were strongly integrated in the college. Both of them were extrovert and communicated well socially with the staff, visitors, peers, and faculty members. Krishna spoke highly of Siddarth who has a strong will and determination to make sacrifices to attend the college. Edha spoke highly of Akbar who he is extremely dedicated and uses spiritual and social capital for academic success.

Krishna, Amaan, and Edha play a significant role in the successful integration of the students in the college. The students revealed that they love Krishna's teaching style and his positive personality. He creates a loving and caring environment for the students to learn and retain. Amaan ensures the sound implementation of the academic policies and services at the college. The students talked about his modest and humble nature, which contributes towards the institutional experiences. Lastly, the students spoke highly of Edha; her humble, caring, and soft-spoken nature helps the students to overcome their fears. She gives them hope to move ahead in life and contributes towards a strong academic and social integration. Thus, the ship of Victoria CC effectively transports its student passengers from one port to another, as they continue to travel.



## Summary of Within-Case Results

Overall, this chapter provides answers to RQ1 and RQ2, which are: what are the students' perceptions of their experiences with academic policies and services in their CC in India along with its perceived impact, and what are the administrative and faculty members' perceptions of how academic policies and services affect the students' experiences.

The findings indicate that the students' perceptions about their experiences with the academic services and policies were positive. Each CC had varied academic services and policies (see Table 6), which were enhancing the students' skills and abilities, that are essential for completion of the program. In addition, the services and policies presented some of the best practices for retention. The students felt that the experiences helped them to integrate socially and academically in college. In all, academic services and policies of internship, assured jobs, mandatory life skills and spoken English programs, extracurricular activities, orientation, field trips, attendance policy, financial subsidy, grace period, yoga, community service, parents meeting, and alumni meet are offered. The students' responses revealed that the financial policy gives them flexibility to pay the cost in installments, the attendance policy instills discipline, the mandatory life skills and spoken English programs and internships help to develop the skills for life and employment, and the grace period increases their self-confidence and contributes to aspirational and social capital. In addition, the extracurricular and cultural activities contribute in building social capital, yoga helps them to strengthen physically and deal with their emotions, and community service activities make them empathetic and sensitive towards others. The services of CCs, like a transportation pass and mid-day

meal coupons, help students to reduce their financial expenses and reliance on part-time jobs aid them to support their families. The students perceived that alumni meets, parents' involvement, and faculty members create a strong support system, contributing to cultural capital (Yosso, 2005). All these factors led to the students' positive institutional experiences in college, and strengthened their goals, intentions, and commitments in college (Tinto, 1993).

RQ1c inquires into the perceived impact of the academic services and policies on the students. The students perceived that the life skills program developed their personality, made them responsible and disciplined, and inculcated moral values in them. The students learned about personal hygiene and grooming, which they believe have inculcated good habits in them. They have observed a positive difference in their public speaking, English language, critical thinking skills, time management, confidence, and self-esteem. The students have learnt to deal with their fears, anger, and emotions. The experiences at the CC are positively enhancing the students' personality and outlook towards life. The students believe that these services and policies are leading them to complete the program successfully and equipping them with essential skills for life.

The interviews with the administrators and faculty members helped to understand RQ2, which deals their perceptions of how the academic services and policies affect the students' experiences. The faculty members played a vital role in implementation of the services and policies and closely monitored and observed its impact. Each student and every cohort was unique and came with its' strengths and challenges, requiring a dynamic approach. Each CC had a varied method of implementing their services and policies and was constantly attempting to tailor according to the students' needs. The faculty

members perceived that the current policies and services were beneficial and preparing the students for employment and life. The faculty members' personality, teaching methodology, conducive environment, and their approach to deal with the students contribute in efficient implementation of the services and policies. The faculty members believed that the management's attitude, values, beliefs, and behavior were also important and impacted the students' experiences. The implementation of the services and policies were critically essential, as they aid in integration of the student in college leading towards retention.

## V – CROSS-CASE RESULTS

In the previous chapter, the within-case results of the four field sites are reported. During the analysis of the data, I observed similarities and differences between the field sites. Certain services and policies of the colleges were similar, while some were designed to cater to students' needs according to the local social and economic factors. In this chapter, I have consolidated the data of the academic services and policies of the four field sites in Table 6. The table provides a glimpse of the diverse policies and services that are offered to create a strong support system at the CCs. I have also performed a cross-case analysis of the four field sites and tied it to the theoretical framework and literature. Further, I respond to RQ1 and RQ2, which deal with the students and management's perspectives of how academic services and policies affect students' experiences.

The philosophy of the CCs includes working for marginalized communities and equipping students with the skills and knowledge to be successful in life. In reference to RQ1a and RQ1b, which deal with students' experiences with academic services and policies at a CC, I have consolidated the services and policies of the four field sites in Table 6. While there are similarities in regards to the services and policies, I recognize that the sites vary in terms of implementation. The degree and the level of execution differ, which impacts the outcome and learning of the students. The execution level varies due to the difference in the practitioners' perceptions, efficient and effective leadership, and management. The experiences of the management and staff members help to modify and strengthen the retention policies for the students.

The college doors are open to everyone, but most Indian CCs specifically cater to marginalized populations. Most of the students in the CCs belong to lower socioeconomic status (SES). The groups may have different names such as Adivasi, Scheduled Tribes (ST), Scheduled Castes (SC) and Backward Classes (BC), but they share similar economic and social problems. Most of the families from these communities live in an impoverished environment and struggle with housing, food, and sanitation (Alphonse, 2010). The demographic questionnaire disclosed that the monthly family income of 15 out of the 19 students I interviewed was approximately Rs.1000-10000 (\$17-170), the income for only two students was between Rs.10000-20000 (\$170-340) and the remaining two students' families had a negligible income (See Table 3 in Methods Chapter). The head of the household of these students were unemployed and the family survived on donations from relatives or help from non-profit organizations (NGOs). The income was inadequate for basic amenities, so other essential elements like health and education took a backseat. In these conditions, the CC is a ray of hope for the students who deserve a chance to prove their skills and potential. The management at the four field sites are well versed with the profile of the students and have sought help from the Indian Center for Research and Development of Community Education (ICRDCE) for setting up the CC. The students are disheartened, frustrated, and have a low self-confidence and esteem when they enter college. The preliminary analysis of the CC indicated that the college plans the curriculum and program, as per the students' skills, aptitude, and attitude. In the beginning of the program, the faculty members assess and build upon the students' skills, aptitude, and attitude for a stronger integration in college, which is in alignment with the Terenzini and Wright theory (1987) of early integration

that aids in student retention. It is evident from the administrative and faculty members' interviews that each and every factor associated with the students is considered while designing the programs for the students. This is in alignment with fitting in and cultural theory (Thomas, 2002; Yorke, 1999).

The social and cultural practices are part of the college environment, which augment the students' persistence and probability of retention in college. It is critical to look at the factors that lead to departure, as several students at the CCs have a disturbed home environment, poor school foundation, and lower self-esteem and confidence, so the probability of dropping out is high. In reference to RQ1a and RQ1b, the academic services and policies are formulated to retain students in college and help them complete the program successfully. The faculty members' responses revealed that environment plays a vital role in students' success, which was similar to Meeuwisse et al. (2010) study who examined the role of environment in retention of the students. Through this research, six reasons for dropping out of the program emerged: problems in the home or personal situation, disappointing future job prospects, poor quality of education, a lack of ability, negative college culture, and unsatisfying program content (Meeuwisse et al., 2010). All these factors (Meeuwisse et al., 2010) were in alignment with the findings of this research study. The Indian CCs create the academic services and policies to cater to students' needs, so they don't drop out of college. According to the administrative and faculty members' perspectives on the impact of academic services and policies on students' experiences, which pertain to RQ2, retention is one of the perceived outcomes of the academic services and policies and therefore, it is essential to examine it. The management at the field sites disclosed that since most of the students come from weak

school foundation, lower self-esteem, and lower confidence, it is essential to provide services and policies that help the students to complete the program successfully. The CCs, through their academic services and policies, seek to ensure and cater to elements like supporting students with home or personal situations, finding a blue-collar job, teaching the soft skills and basic English, an optimistic and strong environment, and learning through hands-on experiences along with internships. Thus, the CCs devise services and policies that would help the students to successfully complete their course at the CC leading towards retention.

All the colleges except Victoria CC are affiliated with the Open University or University Grants Commission (UGC). This is a critical element for the CCs, as the recognition and acceptance of the programs are dependent on this affiliation. After graduating from the affiliated CC, the students have an option to enroll in distance learning education and obtain a bachelor's degree, leading to vertical mobility. I have minimal information about the path the students choose once they complete their program at the CCs. Nitya, the principal of Bosco CC, mentioned that a handful of students study ahead, most of them take up blue-collar jobs, while a few students start a business venture. At Bosco CC, Aalya, the principal, remarked that most of the students work to support their families. In case of Victoria College, the short-term vocational and certificate programs enhance the students' skills and abilities, providing them better job opportunities. The programs at CCs strengthen the students' profile and increase their knowledge. The model of Kostka CC is different from other colleges, as the institute offers second and third year diploma programs that lead to Bachelors in Vocational courses (BVoc). This was the only institute among the field sites that offers a degree

program. Since it was the first year of Kostka CC, there are no data on the pathways the students would select in the future.

Table 6

*Cross Analysis of the Field Sites*

	<b>Kostka CC</b>	<b>Britto CC</b>	<b>Bosco CC</b>	<b>Victoria CC</b>
<b>Services &amp; Policies</b>	Internship Guaranteed jobs Life skills Spoken English Extracurricular activities Field trips Attendance policy Financial subsidy <i>Transportation Pass</i> <i>Mid-day meals</i>	Internship Guaranteed jobs Life skills Spoken English Extracurricular activities Field trips Attendance policy Financial subsidy Attendance policy <i>Activities for Mind, Soul &amp; Body (Library, Yoga, indoor &amp; outdoor games)</i> <i>Community service</i> <i>Grace period to pay fees after completion of the program</i> <i>Alumni Meet</i> <i>Parents engagement</i>	Internship Guaranteed jobs Life skills Spoken English Extracurricular activities Field trips Financial subsidy <i>Yoga</i> <i>Community service</i> <i>Prayer time</i> <i>Reading course</i> <i>Good citizen and moral values</i>	Spoken English Cultural Events Field trips Financial subsidy Life skills Outdoor Sports Attendance policy
<b>Profile of the students</b>	Slums (unemployed fathers)	Fisherman and Farmer	<i>Adivasi</i>	<i>Adivasi</i>
<b>Strength of the Students</b>	25	250	280	90
<b>Environment</b>	Loving and caring, disciplined, environment, full day college for one year	Loving and caring, disciplined, environment, full day college for one year	Strict and disciplined environment, residential college for two years	Loving and disciplined environment, Half day college for six /three months
<b>Affiliation</b>	Affiliated with Government	Affiliated with Tamil Open University	Affiliated with Open University	Not Affiliated
<b>Established Since</b>	6 months	8 years	16 years	3 years



Table 6, Continued

*Cross Analysis of the Field Sites*

<b>Marketing</b>	Field work	Word of mouth, alumni	Word of mouth, alumni	Field work, advertisement, pamphlets, presentation in schools & colleges, newspaper
<b>Difference in implementation of services and policies...</b>	Initial stages (Reforming the services and policies)	Coordination, team work, passion, enthusiasm, drive, one family	Team work, strict environment and religious preaching	Team work, passion (reforming the services and policies)
<b>Income (per month)</b>	Rs. 1000-10,000 (\$17-170)	Rs.1000-10000 (\$17-170)	Rs.1000-10000 (\$17-170)	Rs.1000-10000 (\$17-170)
		Rs. 10000-20,000 (\$170-333)		

*Note.* A consolidated table of cross-analysis of Kostka, Britto, Bosco, and Victoria Community College.

**Cross Analysis**

The cross-analysis helped me to answer RQ1 and RQ2, which deal with the students and management’s perspectives of how academic services and policies affect the students’ experiences. The findings of the students at Kostka CC revealed that the services of mid-day meals, transportation pass, and subsidized fees reduce their financial expenses per month and they can focus on academics and attend college regularly. While at Britto CC, the policy of mandatory community service instilled the seed of empathy and sensitivity in students. The students were sensitive to their environment and wanted to serve the community in any form they can. At Bosco CC, the service of mandatory reading time enhanced students’ reading and comprehension skills. The findings revealed that the comprehension and reading skills helped to improve spoken English skills and these skills were extremely useful during the internship phase. On the other hand, the students at Victoria CC disclosed that service of frequent cultural activities

were beneficial to them, as they were inspired and motivated with the stories of international students. The interactions and dialogues with diverse students give the participants the confidence to accomplish their goals and enhanced their spoken English skills. Similar to these, in the forthcoming section, I have discussed about the other academic services and policies of the CCs that have enhanced the students' social and soft skills, linguistic skills, and augmented their self-confidence and self-esteem.

In reference to the academic services and policies that affected students' experiences at a CC, which pertain to RQ1a and RQ1b, the key elements of the CC model that were prevalent at all field sites were life skills, spoken English program, extracurricular activities, financial subsidy, and attendance policies, which created a support system for the students. Two vital elements of the CCs were three-month internships and assured employment. All these elements contributed to building the cultural capital of the college, particularly aspirational and social capital. Morrow (1999) defines the term social capital as "sociability, social networks and social support, trust, reciprocity, and community and civic engagement" (Fuller, 2014, p. 744). Fuller (2014) spoke about the significance of the social relationships between the individuals, institutions, and communities. Social relationships are important, as they encourage trust, reciprocity, and community engagement among the communities. I observed that the social relationships were developed and created among the students, institutions, and communities at all four sites at varied levels. These levels varied due to differences in the implementation of the services and policies and this impacted the students' experiences. In the forthcoming sections, I analyze and discuss each field site, their

similarities and differences, and students' experiences with academic services and policies, which refers to RQ1a and RQ1b.

### **Kostka CC**

The students at this CC had completed six months of their program work and were adapting to the new environment and method of learning at the time of interview. The college addresses the participants' basic amenities like food and travel, so they can focus on academics. Kostka is the only college among the field sites that provides a transportation pass, as the college is located in the middle of the city and the students commute from far rural areas. Most of the students commute for three hours and do not have the means to spend money on transportation and meals. The students shared their concerns with the management who in turn are formulating new services and policies to cater to their needs. In addition, this is the only college that offers mid-day meals. Amaan, the coordinator of the college, spoke about the importance of mental health, as numerous students come from a disturbed and troubled environment. In order to support the students, a professional counselor was hired for the CC. This was a new piece of information for me, as during my time as a student and faculty in India, and in general, a student's mental health was rarely considered. The college attempts to cater to the students' needs for a strong academic and social integration in the college. Seidman, (2005) discusses the formal and informal structures of a college that contribute in student retention and Kostka College is extensively investing in these structures. The difference between Kostka and other colleges is that the University Grant Commission (UGC) recognizes Kostka CC. The Indian union government has set up a statutory body, called UGC, and this agency is responsible for coordination, determination, and maintenance of

standards of higher education in India. UGC not only recognizes the universities, but also disburses funds for functioning of the college. When the UGC approves an institute, the other educational institutes in India automatically accept the college. As mentioned in the previous chapters, Kostka CC is among the few colleges whose model is accepted and recognized and had received a large grant for its inception. Another feature is that Kostka CC is a part of a prestigious four-year university (Kostka University), which augments its acceptance and recognition. The college enjoys the privileges of adequate funds and passes the benefits to the students. With the grant money, the institute is able to offer supplementary services and policies to the students such as transportation, mid-day meals, and counseling, which is not the case at the other field sites. Since the other CCs have minimal funds and are dependent on donations and support from multinational companies (MNCs), only the essential services are offered. Since Kostka CC bears a prestigious name, the pathway for collaboration with MNCs and other colleges becomes easier. I recalled that the assistant director of the college mentioned that it received a grant of 50 lakhs (\$80000), which is beyond what the college requires. Additionally, the government limits the number of students in each cohort to 50, so the allocation of funds would be around Rs.100000 (\$1600) for each student. As compared to a regular college/CC, this is a huge amount of funding for each student. As a result, the students enjoy the benefits of a computer lab, field trips, transportation passes, mid-day meals, training workshops by experts, and additional services.

In reference to RQ1a and RQ1b, which deal with academic services and policies that affect students' experiences, the CC formulates diverse academic services and policies as they play an important role in the students' success. Another service of

Kostka CC that is in the pipeline is to offer part-time jobs to the students during the academic year. This is in alignment with Tinto's theory of institutional departure (Tinto, 1993), where the CCs support the students in fulfilling the external commitments. The part time jobs would definitely support the students financially, however, I wonder how this would impact the academic integration of the students. The leadership at this institute gives immense importance to life skills and spoken English, which would help them for life and is thus strongly integrated in the coursework throughout the week. This is in relevance to Yosso's (2005) forms of cultural capital that are navigational and linguistic, which would help the students for life. The coordinator has immense experience in teaching the life skills program and setting up a CC, since he has been working in this field for over eight years. The coordinator is in the process of adding new services and policies for the students. The model of Kostka College has a direct route to vertical mobility, as it gives an option to pursue a Bachelor of vocation degree course. This is a privilege for the students of Kostka College, as compared to the other CCs, where they have to transfer to another college or Open University. Vertical mobility is one of the elements that are not part of Tinto's theory (Tinto, 1993), as it is one of the objectives of Indian CC. The programs at the Indian CCs are structured to develop the students' skills and abilities, which would prepare them for higher education. Kostka College, a new model of CC, is still in its inception, so a prolonged study is required to analyze the pro and cons of this model.

The cultural capital provided the context to understand RQ1 and RQ2, which deal with management and students' perspectives of how academic services and policies affect the students' experiences, as the cultural capital strongly augments the trust

between the communities and individuals, which has positive benefits in terms of educational outcomes (Fuller, 2014). The coursework, curriculum, environment, staff, faculty members, and peers contribute to the aspirational, linguistic, navigational, and social capital (Yosso, 2005). All four types of capital are essential to reinforce positive attitude and to promote a sense of individual autonomy. At Kostka CC, the current educational outcomes of the students include the ability to speak in English, high self-confidence and self-esteem, strong will, and determination to complete the college coursework. All these attributes aid the students to succeed in college. In reference to the research questions, the participants' experiences with the academic services and policies have been positive and they perceive that the services and policies are preparing them towards a strong integration in the college.

Tinto's theory of institutional model (1993) provided a framework for RQ1 and RQ2, which deal with the perceived impact of academic services and policies on students' experiences from the perspectives of the students and management and helped me to understand the students' integration process in a CC. Elements of Tinto's model of departure (1993) are applicable to Kostka College. The elements of pre-entry attributes such as prior schooling are considered during the preliminary stage. The goals and commitments are formed in college and reiterated from time to time. In fact, the results indicate that the college offers additional elements in the institutional experiences for a stronger social and academic integration. For Kostka CC, the additional elements are services and policies like counseling, mentoring, grace period to pay fees, transportation pass, mid-day meals, and life skills course. The institute intends to support the students with part-time jobs that would help in fulfilling external commitments. The college

enrolls the students at the grass root level and then engages them through diverse services and policies. Kostka CC's results are in relevance to Karp's (2011) study of examining students' persistence and association between institutional experiences and progress toward a degree. The findings of Kostka CC demonstrated a positive relationship between students' experiences and persistence, which is aiding them towards the completion of the program. The management stated that this engagement is leading to higher retention of the students. The efforts of Kostka CC are directed towards the positive experiences for the students with a strong support system (see Figure 5). Since this is the first year of the college, I am unaware of the positives and challenges that the students would encounter in the future and the pathways that they would take.

### **Britto CC**

The founders of this college strongly believe in the students' capabilities and skills, which are evident in the educational outcomes. The entire staff works together for the students' success. I saw and felt a high level of synergy, passion, and drive in the members and management that they have towards the students' goals. I distinctively remember Nitya's (principal) statement about the vision of the CC, "*To transform the useless students to useful students.*" The college accomplishes this goal by offering diverse academic services and policies that help students to succeed in college. Britto CC has come a long way, as it was begun eight years ago under a shed and currently has a two-floored campus. The college is formulated under a trust and it functions with the help of donations and multinational Companies (MNCs). The director of Britto CC stated that the college does not accept any political funding and emphasize that the institute works on ethical values and beliefs. He is extremely particular about their

industrial collaboration, as the institute seeks companies with a social conscience. The institution is an excellent example of what they practice and preach. It practices ethical values, integrates them into the curriculum, and teaches the students through its policies and activities.

In response to RQ1a and RQ1b, which deal with the academic services and policies that impact the students' experiences at a CC, Britto CC's academic services and policies that distinguish the institute from other colleges are community service, teaching methodology, yoga, a grace period (after completion of the program), and parents' engagement. The college invests a tremendous amount of time in life skills and parents' engagement, as compared to other CCs. The life skills program helps the students to deal with their emotions of anxiety, fear, frustration, negative attitude, aggression, loneliness, and addiction. These emotions arise from the troubled environment that they come from and are brought into the classroom. It is not easy to deal with the students' behavior, attitude, and aptitude, but the first step for the transformation is to accept the students the way they are. This is related to Terenzini and Wright's (1987) theory of early integration combined with active participation and commitment of students at the initial stages. The members welcome the students wholeheartedly without any judgment or labeling. Then, the faculty members work on each element slowly and steadily, starting from personal hygiene to comprehension to technical understanding of the concepts. I have not encountered any school or college that teaches the students how to be hygienic. These factors are in alignment with the pre-entry attributes of Tinto model of departure (Tinto, 1993). Britto CC assesses the existing skills and abilities, family background, and prior schooling of the students and tailors the life skills program according to their needs.



Several faculty members and participants used the metaphor *home* for Britto CC. At this sweet home, the students receive their nourishment of love, support, and trust, as the faculty members' facilitate and teach them how to navigate their way in life.

The strength of Britto CC is its conducive and loving environment. The management and staff shower the students with love, care, affection, and trust. The staff of Britto College perceives that the student can succeed irrespective of their competence and pace. Apart from believing in them, the faculty members invest their time and energy in the students' development. The faculty members are committed towards the students and ensure that the students are committed towards the academic goals. Seidman (2005) noted that the higher the commitment to the institution, the stronger the integration in college. This was evident in the responses of the faculty members of Britto CC, as they believe that the college provides the necessary support and resources, so the students are committed and dedicated to the program.

In reference to RQ2, which deals with management's perspective about students' experiences with academic services and policies, the management and staff spend extensive time with the students inside and outside the classroom along with outdoor activities during lunch, yoga, and extra-curricular activities. The prolonged engagement creates strong relationships and trust with the students, which promotes social capital (Yosso, 2005). Community service plays an extremely vital role in formulation of the students' value system. Britto and Kostka CC are the only institutions that integrate community service as a part of their curriculum. The activities associated with community service are insightful and impactful. In the process of serving others and perceiving their living conditions, the students realize that their circumstances are better

than several others in terms of education, family, basic amenities, and others. These insightful moments change the students' perceptions, attitude, and behavior. The three students I interviewed expressed their desire to serve humanity. In addition, the community service creates civic engagement with the families, institutions, schools, and communities (Fuller, 2014). Through this, the students create their own social capital and become autonomous (Yosso, 2005). It was fascinating to hear the students' narratives about how they have integrated their skills and values from the college into their daily lives. The students learn to navigate their way in the outside world. The college provides a strong support for the students with services and policies, alumni, and faculty members, which increases their persistence level.

Two important characteristics that distinguish Britto College from other institutes are a grace period and parents' engagement. The college trusts the students and grants them a grace period to pay the fees after the completion of the program. Nitya affirmed that the students have rarely broken the trust of the management by not paying their fees. Fuller (2014) examined the role of social capital in the students' aspirations for higher education and pointed out that trust within the family promoted self-confidence and strengthened the aspirational capital of the participants. Similarly, the management trusts the students with regard to deferred payment of fees and past experiences have indicated that students take ownership of their pending fees and fulfill their commitment after completion of the programs without any reminders. Each student aspires to contribute to the college beyond monetary terms in various ways. In the past, the alumni have contributed through monetary or resource donations, internship for current students, mentoring, and marketing. Another significant element of Britto CC is the involvement

of parents, as they engage them to become partners in the academic endeavors of the students. The active involvement of the parents helps to build bridges between the parents/college and students/parents. Two out of three participants shared that their relationship with their parents had transformed. The parents were cognizant of the students' performance, which led to a change in their perception towards education. The investment and engagement with the parents lead to familial capital (Yosso, 2005). Yosso (2005) explained that the consciousness can be fostered within and between families and they were aware of the concerns and realized they were not alone in dealing with the problems (p.79). Britto CC spends huge amount of time in meeting the parents and students individually and together, and these interactions help to strengthen the students' bonding with their parents. The college illuminates the students' soul with care and love, teaches them to use their intellect and strengthens them physically, while working towards holistic development of the students.

Nitya shared that the attrition rate of Britto CC is around two percent; in the past 750 students have successfully completed their program at the CC. The management is familiar with the factors that could result in attrition and consciously work towards overcoming the barriers. One of the challenges for the college has been low enrollment of females. The college is working and engaging with the parents and community to encourage them to send their daughters to the college. The self-help groups play a fundamental role in communicating at the grass root level. They talk to the head of the family, so they would allow the women to study and attend college. In addition, the alumni are motivating the young married women to get back to education, as it could empower and support them financially. The number of married women in the CC is

increasing at a slow pace. The college attests to understanding the external commitment of the adult population and tailors the programs accordingly.

In reference to RQ2, which deals with management's perspectives of how academic services and policies impact students' experiences, Nitya, the principal affirmed that that the college experiences affect the students positively. In the past, the graduates have either started a venture or found a blue-collar job or pursued higher studies. The distinguishing feature of the college is that they extensively involve the alumni to motivate and inspire the current cohort. The college does not have a marketing technique; however, the alumni spread the good word about the college. Tinto's theory of institutional model (1993) provided a framework for RQ1 and RQ2, which deal with the perceived impact of academic services and policies on students' experiences from the perspectives of the students and management and helped me to understand the students' integration process in a CC. The elements of Tinto' model, like pre-entry attributes, prior schooling, family backgrounds, and skills (Tinto, 1993), are considered while formulating the curriculum at Britto CC. The college places a high emphasis on the life skills programs, where the students formulate and work on their goals and intentions. The results portrayed that the life skills program helps the students to work on their foundational values and deal with their fears, anxiety, stress, and addictions. Britto is the only college that puts such a high emphasis on life skills and its implementation, as this course is taught for an hour each day using innovative strategies. The outcome of this investment was evident in the students' voices, when they spoke about their experiences at the college. In response to RQ1c, which deals with the students perceived impact of their experiences at the CC, the participants not only observed a difference in their

personality with regards to dressing, hygiene, confidence, and self-esteem, but they also noticed a change in their perception towards life. The students perceived life positively and felt equipped to face the challenges of life instead of feeling helpless and victimized. These factors are in alliance with the investment theory (Rusbult, 1980). Barry and Okun (2012) discussed three determinants of the investment theory in the educational setting, which include satisfaction level, investment size, and quality of alternatives. Applying these determinants to the students' experiences in a CC, the participants' responses suggest that they have had positive experiences with academic services and policies; they have built new and strong relationships in college, and perceive that the doors of opportunities have opened for them. Britto CC was the only institute where the impact of the services and policies was explicitly evident at both the micro and macro level. It was fascinating to observe that most of the students were youths between 18 to 20 who spoke about building an orphanage, starting a canteen for the college, establishing a business venture, and providing training and employment to the students who need them. The students were inspired and motivated with the director of the college and believed that they have the capability to accomplish their dreams. The director often interacts and dialogues with the students both individually and in larger groups to talk about ethics and moral values. He narrates numerous life stories of successful individuals who selflessly serve the society. His candid and humble personality ignites the light of learning in the hearts of young ones, guiding them to be good citizens of society. All these elements promote cultural capital and lead to integration in college (Tinto, 1993; Yosso, 2005). The past performances of the alumni have demonstrated a high academic and social integration in college that led to a successful completion of the program. ICRDCE has

recognized the policies and services of Britto CC and has awarded them the best CC in India. Today, management from various institutions visit Britto CC to study and observe its functioning.

The principal and faculty members stated that they face mountainous challenges each day. The students come from a disturbed environment and bring their aggression, frustration, anger, and negativity to the classroom. The faculty members sometimes struggle to deal with the students' circumstances. The principal and director create a strong support system for the faculty members to ensure that they remain determined, firm, and positive. They create opportunities for faculty members with resources such as informal meetings, discussions, and professional development that lead to social capital (Yosso, 2005). The approach and perception of the management at the college is optimistic and they strongly believe that each student has the potential to succeed in life and transmit these thoughts to the students. The members at Britto CC don't work solely for monetary benefits, as they are emotionally content and are passionate about their work. The institute is empowering the students and the community and continues to have a profound impact on the society.

### **Bosco CC**

I noticed several similarities between Bosco and Britto CC; however, there was a difference in the environment and implementation of the services. While Britto College approaches the students with love, care and firmness, Bosco College believes in creating a disciplined and strict environment. The biggest difference between Bosco and other colleges is that it is a residential female college. Bosco CC reminded me of a strict boarding school, where the students aren't allowed to go outside the campus and use of

mobile phones is prohibited. They are confined to the college campus, so they could focus on academics. The college follows the Terenzini and Wright (1987) theory of student involvement, as students' participation can influence their social and academic integration in college. The students are involved in a rigorous schedule and participate in daily activities like yoga, cleaning, gardening, studying, and praying. In the beginning, it was difficult for the participants to adjust to the strict environment, but over time they settled with the help of the college's support system. It was intriguing to observe the difference of the impact of a strict and disciplined environment at Bosco as compared to Britto's loving and firm atmosphere. The students at both institutes perform well academically, but there is a difference in their outlook towards life. The students at Britto are excited, enthusiastic, and optimistic and spoke about their overall positive perception towards life. In my interviews, these students were reflective, as their ideas and thoughts were deeper and they spoke about creating a change in the society. On the other hand, the students at Bosco were serious, spoke specifically about the internship, teachings of Christ, and discussed the changes that occurred at an interpersonal level. The students rarely spoke about overall outlook towards life.

Britto and Bosco CC differ in structure of the program and teaching methodology, both of which affect the students' experiences. Since Britto is a day college, the students are in contact with the outside environment. They integrate and practice the skills they learn at Britto CC in the outside world on daily basis. At Bosco CC, the students practice the skills in a safe environment for a long time, until they are exposed to the outside world. Another feature that differentiates Bosco College from other sites is the duration of the diploma programs, as they are for two years as compared to one year in other CCs.

The prolonged exposure to academic environment inculcates new skills, knowledge, habits, and practices that lead to cultural capital (Yosso, 2005). In response to RQ1a and RQ1b, which deal with students' perspectives of how academic services and policies affect their experiences at the CC, the participants' revealed that the college created services and policies that strengthen their will and persistence. Further, the participants' responses indicated strong positive association between persistence and institutional experiences that lead them towards the completion of their program, which was similar to the findings of Karp et al. (2011) study. The findings of Karp et al. (2011) study showed that the CCs offer opportunities to create social and academic integration through information networks, which enabled students to navigate the campus environment, access knowledge about college, and develop a sense of belonging (Karp et al., 2011). The results of the dissertation indicated similar outcomes where the Indian CCs offered social and academic integration through academic services and policies, so the students adapt and are comfortable in a college environment. The students had to break their traditional method of learning of memorization of the materials and familiarize themselves with the techniques of listening, comprehending, and learning. The breaking of old patterns was not easy for the students, as they struggled to fit in the environment and adapt to the new approach of learning. When I interviewed them, the participants were in the last week of the program and enjoyed the two-year journey. In the process, they became cognizant of the importance of a disciplined and strict environment.

In response to RQ2, which deals with management's perspectives of the impact on students' experiences with their academic services and policies, the management shared that Bosco CC provides a strong support system for positive institutional



experiences in college. The academic services, policies, and curriculum like yoga, field trips, extracurricular activities, innovative assignments, mandatory life skills and spoken English programs, and computer skills at Bosco CC promote social capital. Peers and faculty members are a moral support for the students. Learning and living together with students from various ethnicities adds to the social capital. In an academic year, the students are allowed to visit home three times. The students are given innovative summer assignments, where they engage with leaders of the village, which lead to civic engagements. The students apply their skills at the grass root level and learn from the field experiences. In response to RQ1c, which deals with students' perceived impact with the academic services and policies at the CC, the students stated that at the micro level, the students employ their skills during internship and could recognize the positive changes in themselves. They could perform in a work environment and were able to communicate with the peers in English. They used their social, communication, and presentation skills at the workplace and in daily life. The students expressed that they enjoyed and benefited the most from the internship experience, as it helped to practice and inculcate the skills and knowledge and learn from their mistakes. At the macro-level, the students took initiatives to resolve the challenges of the community in collaboration with the leaders of the villages. A handful of the participants felt empowered and intend to contribute in creating a positive change for people around them and the community. The various innovative techniques such as role-play to learn technical concepts, watching news and reading one hour daily with the instructors that is rooted in Bosco's curriculum, adds to the linguistic capital (Yosso, 2005). The linguistic capital is one of the strongest features of Bosco CC, which was evident when some of the students spoke fluently in

English during the interview. The results indicate an improvement in the students' reading, writing, and comprehension skills.

Since the institute is affiliated with the church, the schedule integrates daily prayer and meditation time. Praying and learning about the creator and the preaching of Jesus led to the spiritual capital. Aragon (2008) defines spiritual capital as “recognition of and reliance on a higher power for guidance.” One of the participants spoke about the preaching of Jesus and the work he did for humanity. She shared her desire to dedicate her life for the betterment of the humanity and intends to work for the society's welfare. The students considered Jesus as a role model and relied on him for strength. The prayer and meditation time each day contributed to the spiritual capital (Aragon, 2008). Bosco CC is the only field site that has mandatory inclusion of prayer and meditation time. Victoria CC is affiliated with the Church, but they did not practice the meditation time daily. I was surprised when all the participants at Bosco spoke about the preaching of Jesus, as the students were not Christian. In fact, the students spoke of similar ideas and thoughts about Jesus and quotes from the Bible. The students were reminded that there was a higher power for guidance that they could rely on for their support. Only later, I became aware that the college had a fixed prayer time and meditation time each evening.

Bosco is one of the oldest CCs in India, established 16 years ago. The services and policies are firmly established and are modified according to the changing times. One of the fascinating elements that the results indicated was that most faculty members were alumni of the college. The advantage is that the faculty members have been through the journey of a student at the same institute and are well versed with their challenges. The principal and senior nuns offer continual guidance and support to the new faculty

members creating social capital (Yosso, 2005) for them. Even though the faculty members have a strong support system, at times their limited exposure is a drawback. At other CCs, the faculty members are highly qualified and belong to various disciplines, which brings diversity to the table. The college does a great job in keeping the students' aspirations high, so they believe that they can accomplish their goals. The aspirational capital increases the self-confidence and persistence level of the students (Yosso, 2005). Over a period of time, the students become a close-knit community. Tinto's theory of institutional model (1993) provided a framework for RQ1 and RQ2, which deal with the perceived impact of academic services and policies on the students' experiences from the perspectives of the students and management and helped me to understand the students' integration process in a CC. At Bosco CC, the components of Tinto's integration model (1993), along with additional factors, promotes a strong integration into the college. The college is well versed with the tribal community and the schooling environment the students come from. The college assesses the students' attributes and skills during the first week of college and works on them accordingly. This institute has a unique approach of dividing the students into average and clever students. The students are taught in these groups and each group has different teaching methods. During the life skills program, the students formulate and work upon their goals and commitments. Through a strict and disciplined environment and schedule, the institute ensures that the students are committed to the college course work. The college has expectations from the students and they support the students to fulfill these expectations. The faculty members spend adequate time with the students inside and outside the classroom. Additionally, the institute offers several extracurricular activities for the students and

supports them financially through grants and scholarships. All these elements contribute to a greater social and academic integration in college (Tinto, 1993). The past performance of the alumni has demonstrated successful completion of the college. Aalya, the principal and her team are constantly working on improvising the academic services and policies to cater to students' needs.

### **Victoria CC**

This CC is relatively new, as it was established three years ago and is still developing their academic policies and services. The purpose and essence of Victoria CC is similar to other colleges, which includes working for disadvantaged communities. The college formulates tailor-made programs based on the needs of the population and its location. As compared to other CCs, Victoria CC offers limited services and policies like mandatory spoken English, cultural events, life skills (once a week), marketing policy, as compared to other CC (see Figure 5). The institute varies from other CCs, as it offers only short-term vocational programs. Unlike the other CCs, it is not affiliated with government, does not guarantee employment, or offer internship. Furthermore, this is the only CC that invests in numerous marketing strategies such as pamphlets, newspapers, banners, school and college visits, and door-to-door marketing. Upon closer examination of the features of Victoria CC, there is possibility that the college maybe perceived as another vocational institute in India that offer short-term programs without internship or employment. Another difference is that the curriculum of the vocational institute does not integrate the life skills program and most of them are distance-learning institutions.

Another vital factor that impacted the enrollment is that the college does not have a fixed academic year, so the time of orientation and graduation differs for each student.

The college struggles to conduct the orientation for every student and engage the alumni in the college. To have all the alumni on the same platform was difficult, due to variation in the graduation time. The results pointed out that the students were not cognizant of the concept and objectives of a CC. At the time of the enrollment process, most of the participants had an individual meeting with the director and the coordinator, in which they were briefed about the working of the college. In addition, the institute has minimal engagement with the students' parents. The director/coordinator meets with the parents at the time of the enrollment process, but the institute does not engage the parents extensively. The results of Britto CC demonstrate that an orientation program, engagement of alumni, and involvement of parents aids in strong integration of the students in the college, which was not evident at Victoria CC. Another element, which was different as compared to the other field sites, was the college timings. At other field sites, the students spend at least seven hours each day in the college, while at Victoria the students stay for three to four hours a day. The college hours impact the curriculum of the program, methodology, and the students' experiences at the campus. Victoria CC have limited services and policies such as the technical skills and spoken English course each day, while the life skills course is taught once a week. The methodology of teaching life skills varies, as it is dependent on the faculty members who teach the course. The institution is in the process of revamping the life skills program. In reference to RQ2, which deals with management's perspective about how academic services and policies affect the students' experiences, I recognized that the management's perception and attitude towards the importance of life skills is one of the biggest differences between Victoria and other CCs. Britto and Bosco CCs have developed and invested in the

campus infrastructure and offer a structured environment with various resources. On the other hand, since Kostka College is located in a big university, it adds value to the campus environment. In contrast, both the campuses of Victoria CC are smaller in size with limited resources and services. So the funds, resources, and enrollment numbers are lower than other colleges. The college is still working on policies and services to improve them.

Tinto's theory of institutional model (1993) provided a framework for RQ1 and RQ2, which deal with the perceived impact of academic services and policies on students' experiences from the perspectives of the students and management and helped me to understand the students' integration process in a CC. The strength of Victoria College is the preliminary analysis, as the coordinator and director spend adequate time on accumulating information about the pre-entry attributes of Tinto's model of departure (1993), which is prior schooling, skills and abilities, and family background along with the industry demand of skills. The director of Victoria CC is acquainted with the students' environment, their needs, and struggles. Each year, the college adds new programs to suit the students' needs, but the enrollment numbers vary. The varied enrollment is due to the fluctuation in the demand for the programs and migrating population. In general, spoken English program is in demand and usually has high enrollment numbers. In addition, tailoring and cosmetology have high enrollment numbers at the Tulsibaug and Ranchi campuses, respectively. The three-programs that I mentioned above are skill-based, where the students receive a certificate upon the completion of the program. Like stepping stones, these programs assist in equipping the students with skills and knowledge. These programs are not affiliated with the

government or university and do not result in vertical mobility explicitly. In contrast, since Britto, Kostka, and Bosco are affiliated either with government or Open University, the prospects of vertical mobility are higher.

The college promotes aspirational and social capital (Yosso, 2005) through its activities and coursework. Since the founder of Victoria CC, Tiscon, is a well-established international company, it has collaborations with numerous foreign institutions. International faculty members and students attend the college and conduct training workshops for the students on spoken English, communication, social, computer, technical, and presentation skills. The students share their stories, struggles, dreams and their experiences in diverse cultures. This is a privilege, which Victoria CC enjoys, as the students get a chance to meet and interact with people of different ethnicities and backgrounds. The students enjoy these cultural and educational events and are highly motivated to work hard and accomplish their dreams. These activities form a support structure for the students and contribute towards aspirational and social capital (Yosso, 2005). The results revealed that these cultural events help the students to change their perception towards life and boost their self-confidence and esteem. In all, they are empowered and determined to accomplish their goals. Additionally, the team's personality and positive approach augment the aspirational, social and spiritual capital (Yosso, 2005). Most of the staff members joined the institute with an intention to serve mankind. They love, care, and value students and believe in each one of them. The members have strong ethical values, which they integrate in the students through practice. They stretch themselves and go out of their way to support the students financially and

emotionally. The faculty members and the coordinators are role models and mentors who guide and facilitate the students from time to time.

With regards to Tinto's integration model (1993), the pre-entry attributes such as prior schooling, skills and attributes, and family background are considered during the preliminary analysis (Tinto, 1993). The students formulate short-term goals and work on them. Since the exposure in the college is for a shorter duration and varies for a diploma and certificate course, the institutional experience differs for each one of them. One of the participants shared that at the end of the program she started a home-based tailoring venture. Several elderly women enroll at Victoria CC with an aim to start a venture in either tailoring or cosmetology. It would be fascinating to monitor and track the students that have completed the program and assess how the program helps them economically and personally. In the past, the institute has faced a high attrition rate, so the college has modified some of the academic policies and services. Certain programs were removed due to a high number of dropouts, as they had become redundant. The management is in the process of creating strategies to increase the enrollment numbers by offering transportation, guaranteed employment, hostel facilities, internships, and day-care facilities. A huge amount of space is vacant at the institute, which they plan to put to optimum use. The team is optimistic and confident that they will be able to serve a higher population in the near future.



## **VI - DISCUSSION**

As I sat to write the discussion section for my research study, the image of a spider's web came to my mind. The discussion is like a consolidated web of the analysis of results; similarities and differences among the Community Colleges (CCs), its impact at micro and macro levels, and interpretation of the meanings derived by the participants. The research study explored, questioned, and answered several vital elements in the Indian education system. In response to RQ1 and RQ2, the findings of the study indicated that the services and policies of the CCs have positively impacted the students' experiences. Furthermore, the services and policies offer adequate and essential resources, which lead to strong social and academic integration into the college. The college experiences result in higher retention and stronger persistence among students to complete their program. The CCs serves multiple purposes, as they provide opportunities for the individuals to get back to education and break through the barriers of poverty and unemployment.

### **Igniting the Light in the Community**

This section responds to RQ1c that deals with the students' perceived impact of their experiences in CCs. The findings of the four field sites revealed the impact at the micro and macro level. At the micro level, the experiences at the CCs have enhanced the students' personality, linguistic, social and soft skills. While at the macro level, the students revealed that their perception towards life has changed. The students believed that they are morally grounded and want to serve the community through employment opportunities, financial support, or community service. The students revealed that they were equipped with life skills that would aid them to survive in life.

## **Movement of Change**

The results from the study indicate that the students have enhanced their personality with regards to communication, social, and presentation skills, increased their self-esteem and self-acceptance, and improved their English language proficiency through their experiences at the CCs. The students deal with their fears, loneliness, addictions, shyness, anger, failure, criticism, conflict, and change. Furthermore, the students develop their skills such as leadership, teamwork, time management, stress management, and work on goals, career, and work environment. Another important factor is that the students integrate moral values and community service into their lives. The outcome of the coursework and environment of CC is that the students feel they are able to restructure their own life story, transform negative thoughts to positive thoughts, and change their attitude towards life. In addition, a CC provides career-oriented, ethical value based quality education that combines high technical standards, conceptual clarity, practical approach, and affordable cost.

The CC has a profound impact on the individual and the society at a micro and macro level. Earlier, I spoke about the benefits the students derive from the college, while these benefits are also passed on to the families, societies, and communities. The students accept the circumstances; they are tolerant and calm with themselves and their family. Students observe a change in their attitude and behavior, which alters their relationships with their family members. The students become strong, emphatic, liberal, and sensitive to the environment and have a positive approach towards life. In addition, the students aspire to serve the society and want to help in any capacity they can. For instance, the alumni of Britto College who have started their own venture hire student

interns from their college. These graduates contribute to college in the form of industrial collaboration and monetary funds. The CC creates citizens, which support the community and contribute to the society. The college instills the seed of charity and community service in the young minds, where some of the participants desire to contribute to the society in ways such as starting an orphanage or establishing a canteen for the CCs. As the director of Britto CC remarked in his interview, the mission of the CC is to provide career-oriented skills and ethical values. It was mesmerizing to see the determination these students had about their dreams and aspirations, which would positively impact several lives. The CCs invest in aspirational, social, and navigational forms of cultural capital (Yosso, 2005), which augments the students' aspiration and persistence levels to complete the program successfully. This strong determination is also in alliance with the goals and commitments of Tinto's model of departure (Tinto, 1993). The participants' responses pointed out that they work and rework their goals and intentions in the life skills program. Another interesting factor is that the management and the staff of Britto College support the alumni to fulfill their dreams. The bond is not limited to the college academic year, as it believes in building long-term relationships with their students and supports them in monetary and non-monetary ways to accomplish their dreams. The social capital continues after the completion of college, as the students are in contact with the faculty members and management. Adam, the director of ICRDCE, shared the impact of the CCs; the CCs programs are employed at nine central prisons of Tamil Nadu with the Department of Prisons, where 900 prisoners have been trained. These programs are educating and empowering the prisoners. So, slowly and

steadily the CCs are reaching out to diverse groups of people, which in turn is benefitting the society.

### **Meanings of the Experiences**

Creswell (2013) defines social constructivism as individuals who seek understanding of their experiences in which they live and work and develop subjective meaning of their experiences. In this section, I attempt to explain the meaning the participants derive from their college experiences. Additionally, I have spoken about the meaning that I derive from my experience as a researcher and educator.

If I have to describe my experiences of this research study in one word, it would be a treasure box, as I had numerous insights about the educational system and myself and gained new knowledge. At times, I felt like an outsider in my own country due to the different languages and cultures that I came across during the study. Since I did not speak several of the regional languages, this became a barrier when attempting to connect with the local people and few participants at a deeper level. If I knew the regional languages of South India, the process of connecting and getting access in the system could have been easier, which was the case at the other CCs. Since I had experience in teacher training in remote areas of India, I was cognizant of certain elements like clothes and approach of introduction that subconsciously made a difference while talking to the participants. I was extremely cautious and mindful about the clothes I wore in all the setting, as I wanted the students to be comfortable in sharing their stories with me. I wore cotton *salwar kameez* without jewelry, make-up, or fancy hairstyle. Formal western attire would have impacted my relationship with the students. There is a possibility that the students would have perceived me as an outsider.

Another new experience for me was travelling extensively to remote places using public transport. The travel in buses and trains helped me to perceive the norms in the Indian culture, which otherwise are taken for granted. During my commute, I had conversations with people about their life stories and ended up talking about the CCs, although very few were aware of the concept of a CC. I am aware of my privileges as a female educator and a student in the Indian education system and this assisted me to build trust and rapport with the students, faculty members, and management. I would never forget this journey, the people, faculty members, and students that I encountered on my way, as each one of them has contributed in creating a positive perspective towards life, education, and human survival.

### **Participants' Interpretation of their Experiences**

The process of researching, locating the CCs, and interviewing the participants in different regions of India was an enriching experience. I realized that people in the CCs have the same essence, as they want to serve and help the marginalized communities. Even if their language and approach of working in each college is different, their moral values are similar. The students' stories were moving, as they unfold their hardships in a joyful way and have a strong determination to overcome them. For each and every student, the meaning of the CC experience was unique and exquisite. When I asked the students about their feelings when they thought of CC, they came up with some unique metaphors and description. One metaphor that struck me the most was of the sun; a student compared the CC to the sun that provides energy. It was stimulating to hear that a CC rejuvenates the energy level of the students and empowers them. Most of the participants used the words happiness, joy, peace, calm, and patience to describe CC.

The students felt comfortable and content at their CC, as they discovered, explored, and modified their habits and patterns. Several students spoke about spiritual upliftment, as they derive their source of energy from the people and the place. The students revealed that they had grown emotionally, mentally, and spiritually and were open to other people's perspectives. Since most of the students live in an environment where the support system was not strong, they were open and willing to receive support, love, and affection from the CCs. In fact, the students had the perseverance to overcome their barriers and seek support when they needed it. The students perceived college as home and faculty members and management as their family members. In this home, students cared, bonded, communicated, shared, and learned from each other. For other students, the CC opened doors of opportunities in terms of jobs, higher studies, and business ventures, so it was like a ladder that helped them to climb the steps of success. For some students, the CC experience led to identity development, as it empowered them and made them independent. The college experiences brought positive change and transformation that altered the direction of their lives. The students loved the college, as it helped them to discover and formulate their goals and intentions and assisted them in building a plan of action for the future. The students felt privileged and blessed to be a part of a CC. As they got back to education and started working, they earned respect in the society and community. This was an insightful phase in the students' lives that aided them in changing the world's perception towards them.

Most of the faculty members joined the CCs with an intention to serve the community. Several faculty members belonged to the corporate world from different disciplines such as finance, science, math, or medicine. These members brought their

skills, experiences, and expertise to the CCs. The combination of expert skills, knowledge, and desire to serve resulted in dedicated, committed, passionate, and enthusiastic members. Krishna, the director of Victoria CC commented that in his previous job he made a small difference in the lives of hundreds of students, whereas at the CC, he is making a relatively huge difference in the lives of a smaller group of people. This was the belief for most of the faculty members and their work gave them emotional satisfaction and immense happiness. Each member had the zeal, as they spoke about the students' and their experiences at the CC. They treated the students as their children and nurtured them with love, care, skills, and knowledge. At times, the students gave the members a hard time in the classroom, but like loving and caring parents, the faculty members never gave up on them. They toiled selflessly for each child without expecting a reward. The instructors played the role of a role model, mentor, parent, friend, and sibling; it was a complete package. The faculty members were cognizant of the students' background and environment, so they were emphatic, sensitive, and dealt with the situations cautiously. The rewards for the faculty members were the alumni's success stories. They enjoyed listening to the students' experiences, as they felt that they were contributing substantially in improving their lives. Adam, the director of ICRDCE, used the metaphor of a banyan tree to describe the CCs, as several people are enjoying its fruits. He added that the students are miracles of hope and the educators believe in them completely. This attitude of the management is the strength of a CC, as the management and staff are optimistic irrespective of the students' prior schooling, skills, and abilities. Nitya, the principal of Britto CC, employed the metaphor of a temple for a CC, where the students are Gods. She does not perform the traditional rituals in a temple, but perceives

that by serving the students, she is serving God. The CC uplifted her spiritually and emotionally. In the true sense, Nitya was a mother to all the students, who nurtured, loved, scolded, and taught them. All the faculty members affirmed that the college was more than an institute; it was a home for them. The faculty members shared that they learned important lessons in the classroom each day, which was like a battlefield full of emotional, mental, and physical struggles. The members derived their source of energy from the students and were empowered in the process, as they perceived the students as gritty, determined, and courageous. The teaching methodology became better each year, as the students came with varied challenges. The teaching experience has been a journey of self-discovery and self-exploration, as they have gained new skills, knowledge, ideas, thoughts, and feelings. For all the faculty members, the CC played a vital role in their lives. Apart from technical skills, the teachers practiced, preached, and integrated moral values in the students' lives. Through a CC, the faculty members were making a difference in the students' lives, which in turn impacted the communities and eventually the society at a greater level.

### **Educating the Masses**

Today CCs are accepted, recognized, and valued in several states of India. Yet, there are many more states when there is a need for CCs and ICDRCE is in process of reaching out to small remote places (Alphonse, 2010). As mentioned earlier, there are cultural, social and economic factors tied to a CC's recognition. The recognition of CCs in India took almost ten years, as people needed time to understand the concept, objectives and the model. The founders had to figure out how the concept could be tailored according to the Indian socio-cultural context and conceptualize in the languages



to explain to the members of the society. People had questions like whether the program would provide employment or if the industries would recognize the certification from a CC. It took many years' effort and investment to break the old method of studying theory and memorizing the material and accept the concept of skill-based education. Another myth that had to be broken was that only government programs are recognized, accepted, and valuable in the industry. A vital element that helped in breaking the myth was the industrial partnerships. Having multinational companies (MNCs) on board was not an easy task; it took a while to collaborate with the industries that were interested in social responsibility. The imperative elements for the CC model are internships and employments, which distinguish them from vocational colleges. The journey of recognition has been strenuous, but the founder and his team have had the indomitable spirit that has led them so far. They have a strong conviction that the model of CC will uplift the lives of marginalized population. The performance of the alumni and their employment stories cleared the misconception of CC as an alternative route of education and has contributed to the recognition process. In the field of education, India's capacity to cater to a huge population with its existing resources is limited. The creation of the CC is an attempt to reach to a wider population of students, especially those who don't have access to higher education. The CC is carving a path to education at an affordable cost, which leads to vertical mobility and is helping to lessen the burden on higher education system. Further, it is promoting strong industrial partnerships with multinational companies (MNCs). In the Indian MNCs, there is a high demand for skilled manpower and the CC is attempting to fill this gap by providing holistic training. The CC is aiming to train individuals in a profession, trade or vocation that is in demand, which would

provide them with livelihood. Thus, it is an evolving system, which is making a difference in the lives of thousands of people through skills and knowledge.

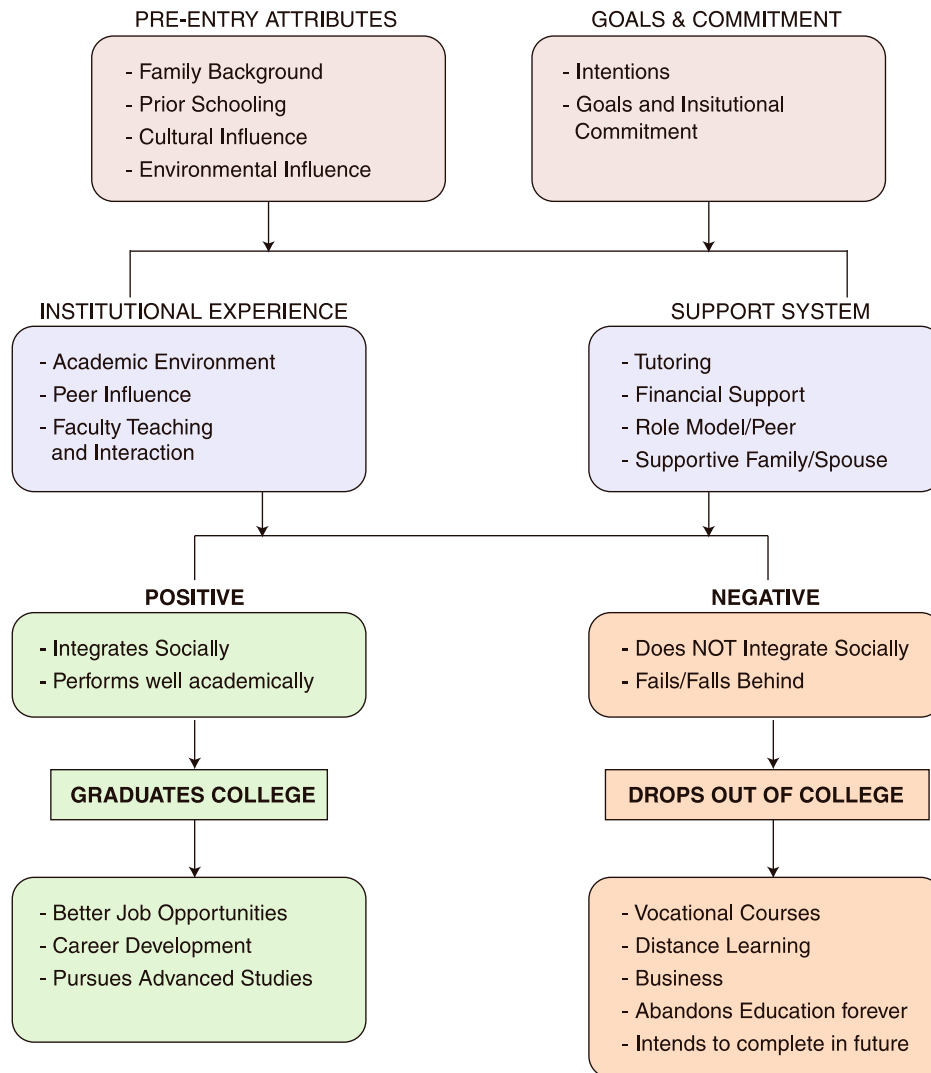
Adam stated that the CCs started with issuing their own certificates and today the CC model is included in the 12<sup>th</sup> five-year plan of the government, which is huge accomplishment for its acceptance. This entire process took almost 14 years. Pednekar (2015) discussed the inclusion of a CC model in the five-year plan, where special emphasis is on expanding skill-based programs in higher education. The CC model serves multiple needs of society, first it is open to all age groups, second it provides employment, and third it improves their standard of living. It works as an alternate route of education for several students who aspire to study further. In addition, the CC is built on low cost, convenient location, flexible schedule, and easy admission policy. The CCs cater to marginalized populations that have various social and academic barriers to post-secondary education. During the interviews, the management and faculty members spoke about different practices at their CCs, which they perceived are valuable for the students' success. I have compiled the practices of the four field sites. The findings disclosed that these practices are contributing towards the students' success and therefore I have termed them as best practices of the CCs in India, which are also its strengths:

- Strong communication between faculty and students
- Strong rapport with the students
- Safe environment in the classroom
- Love, care and affectionate environment for students
- Motivation of the students
- Counseling students frequently
- Individual discussions and dialogues with students
- Reflecting on their actions
- Hands-on experience activities
- Mandatory life skills program
- Mandatory spoken English
- Innovative strategies

- Step-by-step teaching
- Low stress environment
- Strong collaboration between the management and faculty members

The results indicated that all the above attributes are present in the CCs that were the focus of this study. The faculty members' responses indicated that the students are able to complete the program successfully with the help of the above attributes. The outcomes of the positive characteristics have increased the retention, persistence, determination, and confidence among the students that they could complete their college successfully. I created an attrition model in 2013 based on a pilot study on the students who dropped out of college in India (see Figure 5). Based on the outcomes of the current research study, I have built on this attrition model. The institutional experiences and support system play a critical role in student's departure/retention. In the previous research study, I discussed several components, which were essential for the students' success, such as tutoring, financial support, role models, support systems, academic environment, peer influence, and faculty teaching interaction (Amlani & Paulson, 2013). The CC creates a strong support system in regards to financial aid, role model, academic environment, peer influence, faculty teaching interaction, and positive institutional experiences, which leads to strong academic and social integration in college (see Figure 5). The impact of CCs leads to vertical mobility, as students can transition from vocational to degree programs. The college empowers students from social backward classes and opens the doors of opportunities for them. The University Grant Commission (UGC) is currently working on extending the number of CCs in India (Pednekar, 2015). The selection of the college is based on its proximity to the local industry partners, job requirements, youth aspirations, curriculum design, evaluation system and proper

infrastructure (Pednekar, 2015). The CC model is expanding and several proposals are in the pipeline.



**Figure 5. Flow chart explaining the college experience in India.** Based on semi-structured interviews with 30 participants about their college dropout experience.

## VII – CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE

In India, two-third of the population lives below the poverty line. Along with the poor, the lower middle class struggles to fulfill the basic amenities of clothing, shelter, and food (Alphonse, 2010). By building capacity through skilled manpower for the industry, the community colleges (CCs) is addressing the broader needs of the Indian society, including finding solutions to deal with poverty and unemployment. The philosophy, vision, and mission of the CCs aim to empower India's young population with skills and knowledge. Consider a family of five people with parents and three children with a total monthly income of Rs.10000 (\$200). Even if two children attend a CC, which provides a high probability of employment, their average monthly salary would be Rs.20000 (\$400). So the family's monthly income augments from Rs.10000 (\$200) to Rs.30000 (\$600), inflating the family's total income by 300%, which can significantly improve their standard of living. Thus, a CC could help elevate the family out of poverty. Adam, the director of Indian Center for Research and Development of Community Education (ICRDCE), added that high levels of unemployment and poverty could result in social violence with Indian youth. Therefore, it is vital to engage the youth, give them a direction, and teach them life skills. The CCs contribute to the economic growth of the country, as it is attempting to fill the shortage of skilled workers for the multinational companies (MNCs). The CCs are reaching out to the students who have been rejected by the formal education system and helping people to break the webs of poverty and unemployment. Further, the CCs are creating opportunities for students in their hometown and cities, so the students don't have to migrate to big metropolitan cities in search of a livelihood. Santosh, the director of Britto CC, strongly emphasized the

need for an education system that combines capability with character. The CCs builds on character and personality of the students, which is required in Indian society. Thus, the CCs are contributing towards the growth of the nation. Currently, there are limited initiatives and schemes for students who have dropped out and have minimal means to get back to higher education. The CCs reaches out to these people and reduces the burden of higher education.

### **Contribution to Knowledge**

There is limited qualitative literature on the subject of CCs in India. The CCs are still in the process of recognition and acceptance in the Indian education system. This research study is an attempt to fill in the gap in the research literature, as few empirical research studies have been conducted in India. The study was an attempt to gather new knowledge on academic services and policies of the CCs and its perceived impact from the perspective of students, administrators, and faculty. The findings could help to expand the literature and open new doors which may be beneficial to other CCs and higher education. The students' stories of their experiences shed light on the effective practices for retention that are helping them to complete the program successfully. A detailed examination of these practices could provide insights to look at best practices of services and policies in higher education. The findings could be beneficial to educators and policymakers of CCs and could help them to continue to serve and make necessary changes if needed. Furthermore, the findings from an in-depth study of faculty members and students of CCs in India could be beneficial for other developing nations, which have similar characteristics with regard to education system, population, poverty, economy, development, and political structure.

The results indicate that the CCs' academic services and policies positively help in retention of the students. The CC builds a strong support system that leads the students towards successful completion of the program. I do not infer that the attrition has ended, but the management shared that the percentage of dropouts has declined. The colleges are cognizant of the plausible causes that could lead to attrition, so they rigorously focus on the enrollment, pre-assessment, and engagement process. To deal with attrition, the staff works closely among themselves as a knitted community. The team works like a joint family, where the individual put their differences aside and focus on the students. As one of the faculty members commented, they think, eat, breathe, and feel the students at all times. The faculty members have a high level of energy, passion, and drive to teach and connect to the students. In my experience, I have rarely come across institutions that work so closely towards the students' success. In a regular institute, most of the faculty members have an individualistic approach, as they lecture and go away. There are few platforms where the students and members can bond together. The culture and practices of a CC varies from a regular college. After examining the services and policies of the CCs in India, I wonder whether its services and policies would work in a regular college environment and aid to resolve the attrition problem in India. I understand that it might be difficult to create a CC culture in a regular college, as the objectives of these institutes vary greatly. The objectives dictate its practices, curriculum, outcomes, services, and policies. The philosophy of the CC is to offer the students skills, knowledge, moral development, and employment that would help them to prosper in life. The teaching methodology in a CC is upside down with a focus on hands-on experience, as it intends to equip the students with an array of



comprehensive skills. In most regular colleges, the focus is on memorization and grades, which results in higher grades, but sometimes there is lack of skills and practical knowledge. Regular colleges rarely engage with parents, whereas CCs consider parents as partners in the academic endeavor. It is important to consider the impact of the partnerships with the parents, as the students live with them. The Indian culture and the norms impact the educational decisions of the students. The parents form a critical element of the students' support system, so it is essential to involve them in the academic endeavors. This is evident in Figure 5, where family is one the important components of the students' support system that affects the students' integration in college.

Thus far, the CCs are set up to cater to dropouts and marginalized communities. The CC has a balance of academic and non-academic components that are required for the holistic development of students. Regular colleges could adopt the practices of a CC, however, it is essential to determine the purpose of education. Most of the regular universities in India are inclined towards academic scores, which rely on memorization skills rather than comprehension. When I visited Britto CC, I saw glimpses of a different philosophy of education, which is integrated in Krishnamurti's schools. Krishnamurti was an educator and a philosopher who described education as a process of self-knowing and self-discovery (Vedaparayana, 2002). Britto CC implicitly follows Krishnamurti's education model and helps the students to learn about prejudices, likes, fears, and dislikes and comprehend with sensitivity, which includes relationships, fears, and loneliness among other things. These elements are integrated in the CC through the life skills program. Britto CC teaches the students in a caring, loving, and affectionate environment, giving them freedom, and instilling the seed of responsibility. The

educators and management believe in the students' success and direct them towards it. I saw traces of Krishnamurti's philosophy at all field sites, but it was strongly evident at Britto CC. Though a CC is perceived as an alternate route of education, it prepares the students holistically and the outcomes are profound. On the other hand, there are handful of regular colleges in India that integrate the process of self-discovery and exploration, moral development, and community service in their curriculum. Therefore, it would be interesting to examine the integration and impact of the academic services and policies of CCs in a regular college.

### **Strategies to Strengthen Community Colleges in India**

In order to strengthen the academic services and policies of the CCs (RQ1a and RQ1b) and to ensure the continuity in positive student experiences (RQ1c), the CCs require resources to continue doing the impactful work. Government support is extremely essential to spread the work of CCs throughout India. In response to RQ2, which deals with administrative and faculty members' perspectives of impact of academic services and policies on students' experiences, Adam, the director of ICRDCE, stressed on the need for a strong collaboration with the government. He suggested certain strategies that could be employed to strengthen CC as a system in India. They are

1. Uniform curriculum
2. Need analysis
3. Placement-employment
4. Ongoing dynamic relationship with industrial partners
5. Workshop for propagation of concept throughout the world

The founders of the CCs strongly believe that the core of the model is their curriculum. So it is extremely vital that every CC follows and integrates the curriculum, especially the life skills program. The life skills program is designed to assist the

individuals to become better human beings, to realize and discover their potential and make best use of these skills. Adam articulated that the college coursework and curriculum leads to comprehensive development of individuals. The second element is the needs analysis; it is essential that each CC consistently conduct an analysis to identify demand for the programs and needs of the population. The third and fourth elements are employment and ongoing industrial relationships, which go hand in hand. Strong partnerships with multinational MNCs would aid in finding employment for the students. The fifth element is to create workshops to propagate the word about the CCs. Visiting the existing CCs could be beneficial to comprehend how they work. Britto CC was awarded the best CC in India by ICRDCE, due to its excellent implementation of the services and policies. The management from several CCs often visits Britto CC to understand their working and learn about their best practices. To examine the operation of the college at the grass root level is an enriching experience. It is vital for a new venture to visit other CCs for thorough understanding of the CC model.

### **Implications for Future Research**

Although the concept of CCs is growing and expanding, the questions that arose in my mind are: what is the probability of the students at Kostka CC completing their three-year program? Would the students of a CC transfer to a four-year university for higher studies? Would the students of CC start working or commence a new venture? How many students will continue speaking English or would continue enhancing their skills and knowledge after the completion of the program? These are the research areas for future implication. The results of the current study indicated that students enter blue-collar industry, pursue higher studies, or start a new venture, which is the perceived

outcome of the students' experiences at the CCs. I wonder if this will continue with the current cohort and future graduates of the CCs. Among the four field sites, Nitya, the principal of Britto CC, was the only one who spoke about the graduates' performance and their struggles. Even after the completion of the program, the college is in touch with the graduates and consistently supports the students in their endeavors. As mentioned before, my cousin Shamsha, who is a soft-skills trainer at a MNC, shared her experience of working with the blue-collar employees. In the last year, she has conducted several training workshops for blue-collar employees who completed their program at a CC and have been working in the company for a while. While the employment has improved their standard of living, technology and knowledge in the market is constantly changing. So there is a continuous need to enhance the employees' skills and knowledge and think of approaches that could help them to grow further. Shamsha's experience working as a trainer made me realize that the growth and transition from a blue-collar to white-collar job is challenging. At times, the blue-collar employees have to fight for their rights to opportunities for advancement through trainings and professional development. Shamsha shared that the students' proficiency and competence level varied. In few cohorts, several students had minimal spoken English skills, since they did not practice the language after the completion of the program. She spoke about a recent cohort, where the students' comprehension level was extremely low. She struggled to teach them basic presentation and social skills, as their fluency in English were below average. Shamsha shared that the training workshop turned into a teaching session. In this case, she was uncertain about the benefits the training session would provide. On the contrary, she had another cohort with higher level of proficiency and competency. The members had the

required skills to quickly move to the next level. The students were open to feedback, new knowledge, and ideas. These trainings helped in personality development and enhanced the skills for transition to white-collar jobs. Shamsha mentioned that she rarely came across a group with stronger communication skills and higher competency level. After listening to her experiences, several thoughts crossed my mind. So what is the structure of the transition from blue-collar to white-collar jobs? What is the percentage of students that actually enter the white-collar industry? How do students enhance their skills and knowledge and what happens to the employees whose employers do not invest in them? All these questions are possibilities of future research studies. I would be interested to study the journey of the CC graduates. It would be fascinating to monitor and track the students from different cohorts, so we could comprehend the long-term impact of CC on an individual's life. This study could be ethnography, like a prolonged exposure in the field.

### **Recommendations from the Research**

The numbers of CCs in India are increasing and to ensure that several students can attain positive educational experiences at CCs, I recommend the following. First, periodic continuous education programs should be conducted for the alumni of the CCs, so their skills and competencies do not become obsolete. These refreshers could be conducted once in three or six months, so they are continuously motivated. A long gap might result in demotivation or lack of interest. Second, the management of the CCs should be in touch with all the alumni, so they are aware of the students' progress. There might be circumstances where the students may be in need of resources or could become a resource to another person. So it is essential to be abreast with the alumni's

performances and create a support system for them. Third, Victoria CC is the only one that spoke about having partnerships with schools, where they market the college programs through a ten-minute presentation. The management of the CCs could build bridges with the public schools, which could be a strategy of spreading the word about the college directly to the students. Apart from presentations, the CC students can perform a role-play on the curriculum and the programs that they offer, so the students have a rough idea of what they are getting into. The alumni or the current cohort can also perform a role-play in their villages or communities, so the parents and the community are informed about the CC. Lastly, the CCs need to create stronger partnerships with four-year college/universities. Building bridges with the universities can help in the transition and integration of the students in a regular college.

Overall, the participants' experiences in the research study have been positive, as they discover their niche areas in the college. This sample size of the participants was small, but I have presented the students' experiences in India at four field sites. Each field site is unique, as it differs in structure, design, and implementation. The lessons of this study could be valuable to other CCs with best practices and services that aid in students' retention. Attrition in India is a big problem in schools and four-year universities (Chakrabarti et. al., 2010). The academic services and policies from the CC setting can be adopted in the Indian education system. The experiences of CC are changing and empowering students, which in turn inspire and change the lives of their family. The moral based education is integrating the values, good habits, and positive thinking among the students. Looking at the growing inflation and increasing poverty, it is important that additional CCs are created to serve the marginalized population. It is

essential that the students from these communities get an opportunity to study and move ahead in life. The best approach to deal with poverty and unemployment led me to think of the proverb, “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day, teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime” (Maimonides, n. d.). In a true sense, the CCs are teaching numerous students to fish, so they can succeed in life.

## APPENDIX SECTION

### *Educating the masses: Community Colleges in India*

#### Interview Protocol

Interviewee:

Interviewer:

Date:

Start Time:

End Time:

Location:

Notes:

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#### **Introductory Narrative:**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this important study on Community Colleges in India. Our interview should take no more than an hour. Please let me know if you have any questions as we proceed through the interview. To facilitate documentation of your affirmation may I digitally record this interview?

My name is Salma Amlani. I am a doctoral student at Texas State University.

Our interview should not exceed 60 minutes. During the interview, we will cover your experiences as a student in community colleges. While there are several aspects of the university, my focus will be on the institutions role in retaining the students in community colleges.

**Introduction:** Thank you so much for agreeing to this interview. It is very helpful to me and my research. I will be asking you some general questions about your experiences as a student that I think will lead to some helpful conversations between us, but first I would just like to ask about you, okay?

#### **Pre-Interview Questionnaire:**

**Full Name:**

**Sex:**

Female

Male

**Name of the school:**

**Last School Class Attended:**

5<sup>th</sup> grade

6<sup>th</sup> grade



- 7<sup>th</sup> grade
- 8<sup>th</sup> grade
- 9<sup>th</sup> grade
- 10<sup>th</sup> grade
- 12<sup>th</sup> grade
- Any other

**Community College and Name of the course:**

- Associate degree
- Certification
- Diploma
- Degree
- Any other

**Age:**

- Under 18
- 18-19
- 20-21
- 22-24
- 25 and above

**How many hours do you work per week?**

- 0-5
- 5-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- 21-30
- 31-35
- Any other
- None of the above

**Family Income per month:**

- 1000-10,000 rupees
- 10,000-20,000 rupees
- 10,000-20,000 rupees
- 20,000-30,000 rupees
- 30,000-40,000 rupees
- 40,000 above
- None of the above

**What is the highest level of education your mother has completed?**

- 5<sup>th</sup> grade
- 6<sup>th</sup> grade
- 7<sup>th</sup> grade
- 8<sup>th</sup> grade

- 9<sup>th</sup> grade
- Any other

**What is the highest level of education your father has completed?**

- 5<sup>th</sup> grade
- 6<sup>th</sup> grade
- 7<sup>th</sup> grade
- 8<sup>th</sup> grade
- 9<sup>th</sup> grade
- Any other

**How many people are there in your family?**

- 1-3
- 4-6
- 7-9
- None of the above

**Family Information:**

- What is your father's occupation?
- What is your mother's occupation?
- Do you have siblings? **Yes No**
- Siblings' employment:

**On average how much percentage did you score in school?**

- 40-50%
- 51-60%
- 61-70%
- above 70%
- None of the above

**Topic Domain 1: Education**

1. How would you define yourself?
2. Can you tell me your experience at school?
3. How did you hear about community colleges?
4. Can you tell me more about your decision of getting back to education \*(community college)?

**Topic Domain 2: College Experience**

1. How is your semester going? Can you tell me what course are you pursuing and which year are you in?
2. When do you plan to graduate?

3. Can you tell me your experience in community college? (with the institution, management, faculty, and students)
4. Can you describe one day in college?
5. Can you elaborate on your degree plan?
6. Can you elaborate on your internship of the course?
7. Tell me your experience in the classroom?
8. If you are having a difficulty with homework? What do you do? Is there someone who helps you?
9. Who else do you interact apart from faculty?
10. What motivates you to come to college every day?
11. What academic services are offered at your institution?
12. Do you know anyone who dropped out of college? How do you feel? What could have been done? If you were in place of your friend, what would you need?
13. What challenges, if any, have you experienced in college? How do you deal with them?
14. Do the institutions support you to address challenges you face? How, can you give an example?
15. Do you have extracurricular activities in college? Do you participate in them?
16. What role institution plays to enhance your skills and knowledge?
17. What are your expectations from faculties to help you to accomplish your goals?
18. What practices do you recommend to improve retention practices at your college?
19. What are your future plans?
20. Will your college help you to find job opportunities?
21. How do you feel coming to college every day?
22. What caste system do you belong to? What are your thoughts about caste and education? What experiences have you had in the educational setting based on the caste system?
23. How do you define marginalized section of the society? What are your thoughts about how academic services and policies are catered to the marginalized section of the society?
24. What can be done to support the marginalized sections of the society?

### **Topic Domain 3: Meaning of their Experiences**

1. Given, what you have said about your educational experiences, how do you understand the college experience in your life? What sense does it make to you?
  2. Where do you see yourself in future?
  3. How does studying in community colleges make a difference in your life? How does it influence your status in marginalized section of society?
- 

### **Faculty**

### **Topic Domain I: Warm up & Demographic Information.**

1. What is your name? Can you provide some information about your family?
2. What is your education qualification?
3. How long have you worked in this institution? Can you tell me about your previous work experience?

### **Topic Domain 2: Institutional Experience**

1. What courses do you teach? Can you explain me your class course?
2. What is community college, how is different is community college from a regular college?
3. Can you tell me your experience working at the community college?
4. Can you tell me about your teaching experience in classroom?
5. What support systems are offered to retain students in college? Can you give me an example?
6. Are there any best retention practices that are placed at your institution? Do you know how effective these strategies are?
7. Who creates the institutional policies? Has there been any changes in policies since last few years? Can you give me an example?
8. How is the curriculum designed?
9. What strategies do you use in the classroom apart from the textbook?
10. Do faculty members engage in professional development activity during the year? If yes, can you give me an example?
11. How is the semester going? How are the students performing? Are the students focused? Do they have external struggles? How do you support them?
12. How do students in community college engage with their institutions and unique challenges they face?
13. What are some of the best practices to improve retention? / What is the institution doing to encourage students to return to CC's?
14. How do institutional policies and services impact students' persistence and graduation?
15. What is the scope of community colleges in future?
16. What support do you require from institutions in supporting the students?
17. What challenges, if any, have you experienced in college?
18. What are your thoughts about caste and education? What are your perceptions of marginalized students' experiences at CC's?
19. How do you define marginalized section of the society? What are your thoughts about how academic services and policies are catered to the marginalized section of the society?
20. What can be done to support the marginalized students of the society?

### **Topic Domain 3: Meaning of their Experiences**

1. Given, what you have said about your educational experiences, how do you understand teaching marginalized students in your life? What sense does it make to you?
2. Where do you see yourself in future?

3. How does teaching in community colleges make a difference in your life? How does it influence your status in marginalized section of society?

**Conclusions:**

Thank you for your time and for your honest responses to the question. Before we conclude this interview, is there anything else you would like to share

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