

**DRAFT REPORT OF THE PEER TEAM ON INSTITUTIONAL
ASSESSMENT AND ACCREDITATION OF
ST. BEDE'S COLLEGE, SHIMLA, HIMACHAL PRADESH**

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

St. Bede's College, a girl's college located in a scenic terrain at Shimla, Himachal Pradesh, has a long and distinguished history. It has just crossed a century of its existence. It was founded in 1904 as a Teachers' Training College by Mother Clare. The components of a general college were added to it after Independence, and its affiliation was transferred to Himachal Pradesh University in 1970. It is recognized by the University Grants Commission under 2f (07-1970). Its management was taken over by the newly formed St. Bede's Educational Society in 1974 from Chelsea Community that had been running it earlier.

St. Bede's Community is now a large network including a Teachers' Training College, a 10+2 School and a college of general education for girls. The last of these three runs undergraduate programmes in Science and Arts and offers pass B.A. courses, as well as Honours B.A. courses in Economics, English and Geography.

The College was residential to begin with and had evolved for long as such. Later, however, it has accommodated day scholars as well. Now it provides hostel residence for about 200 students. The roll strength of its teachers amounts to 37 in all. It is a grant-in-aid College, which receives 95% of the salary component for its staff from the State Government. Of the 26 non-teaching staff, 17 are technical and 9 administrative. The College presently has 846 students, the unit cost being Rs. 13,050 per year. It follows an annual system of teaching and evaluation.

St. Bede's College enjoys its own reputation as a premier institution that has imparted quality education to girls. It is a Christian minority college and has also contributed richly to the development of the quality of life of girls of other communities. One is impressed by the wholesome personality development that takes place in its students and the self-confidence as well as skills of articulation in English that they come to acquire.

Its mission statement, "Not for Ourselves Alone" with its objective of forming "well-integrated individuals who are assets to contemporary society", is sought to be realized in its products across the decades.

The Peer Team consisting of Dr. Pabitra Sarkar, former Vice-Chairman, West Bengal State Council for Higher Education as Chairman, Dr. Mrs. Moni Mathur, Professor and Head,



Dept. of Botany and Bio-technology, Sarojini Naidu Govt. Girls PG College (Autonomous), Bhopal, M.P. as Member and Dr. C. Thangamuthu, Professor and Head, Dept. of Economics, Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirapally, Tamil Nadu as Member Co-ordinator, visited the college on 8-10 March, 2004. The Team visited all the constituents of the College, interacted with the Principal, management, faculty, staff, students, alumni and parents, and also verified/validated all the relevant records/documents. Based on these observations/perceptions, the Peer Team is giving below its report on the College, in accordance with the criteria as prescribed by the NAAC.

SECTION II: CRITERION-WISE ANALYSIS

Criterion I: Curricular Aspects

The College offers two streams of U.G. programmes, one being pass course and the other Honours. Under B.A. (Pass course) the College offers as many as eleven subjects categorized into three alternative groups. Choosing not more than one subject from these groups, the student has to opt for two elective subjects, besides the language courses English (or French) and Hindi. The three groups of elective subjects are as follows: (i) Hindi or French or Psychology or Mathematics or Elective English (ii) History or Economics or Music (Instrumental and Vocal) and (iii) Political Science or Home Science or Geography. Thus, there is a fairly good flexibility in the choice of subjects. It is appreciable that electives include subjects like Music (Instrumental and Vocal) and Home Science which are of special interest to the girl students. The B.Sc. (Pass Course) has two streams - medical and non-medical (the nomenclature is perhaps drawn from the respective subject groups under Plus Two): (i) Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics and (ii) Chemistry, Botany and Zoology. Besides these, under UGC-sponsored vocational courses, Computer Applications is offered as one of the elective subjects to a limited number of students in the Arts and non-medical groups who are selected through a written test.

In addition to the pass courses, B.A. Honours stream is offered in three branches: English, Geography and Economics. These Honours programmes involve an addition of one subsidiary subject in lieu of one of the elective subjects and two more language courses. Of course there is specialization in the select elective subject by additional courses. But ironically enough, B.A. Pass course has an academic advantage over that of the Honours. The Pass Course graduate has option to pursue P.G. in any one of the electives whereas the Honours graduate has the restricted vertical mobility of doing P.G. in the only elective subject which she had opted for Honours. Though, generally an Honours graduate is preferred in the admission to respective PG programme, there are not many takers for the Honours programmes. In fact, the college offered B. Sc. (Honours) in Chemistry but had to wind it up because of lack of student patronage for the programme.

The College deserves commendations for the initiative it has taken in offering the five-year integrated MCA programme, which is affiliated to Guru Jambheshwar University, Hissar, Haryana under its Distance Education mode. But, for all practical purposes, the programme is an intensive full-time programme with adequate practical input. The programme is run on self-supporting basis under which the student fees are shared between the College and the University. This is a good curricular as well as managerial innovation. Many such ventures on self-financing basis in the thrust areas may be considered for introduction.

Some of the teachers of the college have contributed to curriculum making through their membership in Boards of Studies and subject textbook committees. Some teachers (English) have participated in the compilation and editing of the textbooks prescribed by the University.

Criterion II: Teaching, Learning and Evaluation

It is also commendable that the college has chosen to offer value education as formal additional input. One hour is earmarked in the weekly timetable for this purpose during which the respective teacher-mentor would offer value education to the group of students under her mentorship. At present, a textbook prepared by AIACHE is covered over a period of three-year UG programme. Efforts may also be undertaken to re-conceptualise the spectrum of value education to include inculcation of scientific temper, secular and rational attitude, and gender sensitization with a view to face emerging socio-economic challenges. In short, the girl students may be attitudinally nurtured to become the harbingers of modernization and social change. It would be appreciable if some special award is instituted for the over-all proficiency in value education which might further strengthen and sharpen their motivation learning.

While appreciating the curricular initiatives of the college, it is suggested that the College may explore the possibility of offering, in its own label, a short-term certificate course in computer applications. This may be offered to almost every student of the College, as an additional enrichment input, in order to make them computer literate. It is heartening to note that the college made some initiatives in this regard, in collaboration with some computer companies and that the student response was not so encouraging, partly because most of the students (from the elite sections) had been familiar with the basics of computer. In such context, the course content may be suitably planned.

Such certificate/diploma courses can be offered on concurrent basis to the college students and also the women community around, with adequate curricular flexibility in designing and delivery. At present the College Women Cell is organising training in sewing and knitting to the women in the neighbourhood. The College can think of evolving a structure of 'Community College' under whose umbrella, such skill-based short-term courses, with specific target groups, can be organised leading to women empowerment.

The students/parents, if necessary, may need to be properly counselled and motivated on the utility of such skill-based and career-oriented short-term courses. This would eventually improve the clientele for the courses to make them viable.

That the College has already completed 100 years of its service may signify the need for revisiting its academic thrust in tune with the emerging trends. Programmes with career orientation rather than the liberal education may be the need of the hour. Service sector segments such as Tourism, Marketing, Insurance, Finance and Management, and cutting-edge fields such as Bio-technology, Information Technology, Mass Media and Visual Communications etc. can be considered as agenda for the prospective plan of the College.

Criterion II: Teaching, Learning and Evaluation

The teaching-learning process is quite rigorous and systematic. It is evident from the consistently high percentage of pass in the University examinations and also a good number of University ranks/gold medals secured by the college students. The conventional chalk and talk method of classroom teaching is supplemented by assignments, seminars, group discussions and field visits. There is occasional use of audio-visuals and e-learning techniques. The use of these may be made more frequent and almost a regular component of teaching-learning process. The e-learning resources could be strengthened accordingly.

The teachers are recruited based on their academic qualification and their demonstration of classroom teaching. The U.G.C. norms of 180 teaching days are adhered to. There is a practice of student evaluation of teachers but done on a voluntary basis. A well-structured questionnaire is administered for the purpose. It is suggested that the practice could be quite systematically adopted, not necessarily leaving to the discretion of the individual teachers. The outcome of such evaluation could also be appropriately followed up.

The admissions are based on the academic merit subject to reservation norms of the government. Of course, Christian and poor Catholic students are given some preference in the admission, the College being a minority institution.

The University conducts annual examinations. The college has the distinction of conducting class tests and house exams quite regularly and also returning the valued answer scripts then and there. There is also a system of maintaining annual progress report for every student which gives a comprehensive record of all the student-information pertaining to not only marks in class tests/assignments/house examination etc. but also on regularity of attendance, fines imposed and over-all impression about the students from each mentor-teacher. The good conduct certificate is issued based on the progress report. This practice

ensures a rigorous regularity and accountability on the part of the students. The parental pro-active involvement in the progress of their wards could also be enlisted by periodical parent-teacher meetings.

The college can also provide remedial teaching in order to enable the weaker students cope with the demands of the system, particularly in subjects like compulsory English and others. Similarly, the potentials of the better performers could be brought out through giving opportunities for doing Project works, though they are not envisaged under the curriculum. Such enrichment avenues could enhance the profiles of teaching-learning proficiency.

Criterion III: Research, Consultancy and Extension

Most of the teachers have acquired research qualifications. Out of 37 teachers, 15 are Ph.D. and 15 are M.Phil. There are a few recognized research guides who guide Ph.D. on a part-time basis. One teacher (History) has produced a Ph.D. and another (Psychology) is guiding two candidates one of whom is a JRF awardee. Working in a UG Department, the motivation of these select teachers to guide Ph.D. deserves appreciation.

A few teachers (Psychology and English) have research publications to their credit. There are some creative writings by some faculty (French and Hindi). But most of the teachers, despite their research qualifications and some of them (Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry) with a good record of publications during their Ph.D. period, have almost lost track of their research. There seems to be a general mindset that the U.G. teachers are not expected to be active in research. This needs to be corrected. After all, the academic reputation and the visibility of an institution can be improved by the publications of the faculty. Even if they are popular writings of regional relevance, they would serve the needs of the society.

The teachers can be encouraged and also facilitated (with some seed money support) to apply for minor research projects to the funding agencies. These projects can culminate in some publications. The College, as part of the centenary celebrations, has brought out a research journal with a plan of making it a regular annual number. This may be sustained and the standard raised to higher professional levels. An international seminar on women and environment was also conducted.

The consultancy service can be initiated in an informal way on an honorary basis. The faculty expertise can be applied to practical issues pertaining to the local community and its resources used towards socio-economic issues. This consultancy can be offered by establishing linkages with the various agencies including GOs and NGOs.

The extension services are offered under the structures of N.S.S., Women's Cell and Nature Club. Besides these, there is a Ford Foundation-sponsored Campus Diversity Initiative (C.D.I.) which serves as a wide canvas to organise programmes of counselling, career guidance, and other extra-curricular tasks. The N.S.S. activities include tree planting, blood donation and other community oriented agenda. The Women's Cell organises a programme to impart training in sewing and knitting to women in the neighborhood. The Cell also sensitises the students on the gender issues. The Nature Club organizes programmes for emphasizing the need for preserving the bio-diversity and protecting environment. Some students in the College hostel are conducting remedial classes for the poor school children from the neighbourhood who regularly attend these classes organised for one hour in the evenings. These children are also provided with some clothes and other reading materials at the initiative of the college students.

Some of the teachers, in their individual capacities are associated with and working voluntarily for some NGO's such as Gyan Vigyan Kendra, All-India Women's Cell, Red Cross, DOST (a de-addiction centre), State Science Technology and Environment Department and the Y.M.C.A. The College is also a member of the AIACHE, Xavier Board and the International Federation of Catholic Universities. The Principal of the college has secured awards and honours for her special services rendered to improve the learning of poor school children.

While commending the various initiatives on extension services, it is suggested that the extension services may also be made discipline-related so that such community inter-facing would facilitate better teaching-learning and research perceptions as well.

Criterion IV: Infrastructure and Learning Resources

The College has good and well maintained infra-structural facilities. The campus extending to an area of over two acres in the center of the city of Shimla, also accommodates a Teacher Training Institute (at the post plus-two level) which is the oldest one and a post secondary school offering Plus Two courses. The pressure on the physical facilities has been tactfully managed through appropriate scheduling of working hours. Such an 'educational complex' provides for optimal or maximal utilization of some central facilities, including the science laboratories.

The classrooms are spacious and well maintained. They are adequate for the programmes on hand. Offering of new programmes may involve expansion of physical facilities.

There is a multipurpose auditorium used for morning student assembly, college functions, conduct of examination, and also as indoor games hall by removing seats for playing

badminton and table tennis etc. The auditorium is also thrown open for external agencies. These arrangements are quite imaginative as well as beneficial to the institution.

The College library has a stock of 20,000 volumes and some periodicals and magazines. For a 100-year-old campus, the stock in the library needs to be improved. The library has been recently providing with a multi-media facility. The Internet and reprographic facilities need to be provided in the library. The college can go in for more e-learning resources as part of the library upgradation. The library catalogue may be computerized. The reference hours may be extended beyond 4 p.m. for the benefit of the hostellers and the day-scholars who could stay on for reference work.

The College has a computer center with 25 terminals and some systems are also available for administrative purpose. The office automation can be improved. The administrative staff may be provided with training in computer applications and also in basics of professional management. The individual departments can also be provided computers with Internet facilities, which can help modernise teaching methods.

The College takes appreciable efforts to promote leadership qualities among the students. The sports infrastructure includes a gymnasium, a basketball court and a hall for indoor games. The sports facilities and proficiency of the students could be improved further.

There is a hostel facility catering to around 200 students (including the Plus Two and TTC), some of whom are drawn from far away places. This is a special strength of the institution. The canteen, PCO, an internet café, bookshop, medical facility (through visiting doctor), a bank counter (operating three days a week) are the other strong points of the infrastructure.

Cubicles for individual teachers and a non-resident student center with all facilities may be provided to improve academic ambience of the campus.

Criterion V: Student Support and Progression

The student support services include some of the management-sponsored fee concessions and hostel concessions, in addition to the regular government schemes of the scholarships. The management offers fee concessions to the students from the low-income groups just on the basis of their self-declaration (without insisting on any other certificate of evidence). Similarly, to those who cannot afford, the management collects a nominal hostel fee, which is substantially lower than the usual fees. Though the number of beneficiaries under these concessional supports is not many, the gesture of the management is appreciable. The spirit of service may be sustained and improved in order to attract the meritorious students from the underprivileged sections of the region. This would go a long way in arresting the possible image of an elite bias, if any, in such reputed institutions.

By way of information dissemination, the College prospectus is updated annually and it is comprehensive enough in giving details on the programmes on the campus. The College has also created a web-site, which needs to be updated constantly.

The student admission procedure is fairly transparent. The dropout ratio is just about one percent. In some programmes (especially Science and languages like French etc.), however, the student intake is rather low. Many girl students, as responded by the Principal, do not seem to show much interest in taking enrichment courses. Necessary counselling and guidance may need to be provided to the students/parents to improve their motivation.

Among the other support services, mention should be made of the mentor system (details already explained) and the CDI through which career guidance and counselling services are provided. It may be desirable to have a separate career guidance and placement cell with some secretarial support.

The College takes appreciable efforts to promote leadership qualities among the students. The Student Council is organised through keenly contested elections. Each student is assigned to a group called 'ship', at the time of her joining the College. Most of the co-curricular and extra-curricular activities are organised according to the ship system. The over-all incharge of the fleet is the Admiral assisted by Vice-Admiral. A ship Captain followed by Vice-Captain heads the ship. A number of student societies/clubs such as Nature Club, Debates and Dramatics Society, Magazine Society and Cultural Society provide fora for extra-curricular activities. These societies organise annual inter-ship competitions and encourage student participation. Every student is expected to participate in one or the other activities which go on record in the annual progress report of the students. These are appreciable efforts.

The alumni association has been just launched which needs to be better organised and structured. Feedback sessions from the alumni on the campus profiles may be organized periodically. The distinguished alumni placed in responsible positions would be of immense help towards College development; their support could also be harnessed towards career guidance and placement of the outgoing students. In the emerging scenario of global cutting-edge competition, one has to get rid of complacency and venture into quite innovative methods of student support services, in the interest of institutional sustenance.

Criterion VI: Organisation and Management

The College, being run by the sisters of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary, has a disciplined and well-structured management. The Congregation runs two other colleges in India and the sisters are transferable among them. The international headquarters for the congregation is located at Rome, whose head makes a visitation to the college once in six years. Thus, the organisational structure with its religious interfacing provides for a natural commitment and full devotion to running of the institution.

The management has the rich experience in managing several educational institutions, the nuances of the art of maintaining discipline, a good working ambience and conducive learning atmosphere as they are quite evident on the College campus. The resource management in the context of a multi-institutional "educational complex " as the present one provides ample scope for frugal and efficient fund management through maximal use of several central facilities by various constituents of the campus and also transfer of surplus to the deficit pockets. These would give a broad cushion for smooth and efficient resource management.

The Management deserves appreciation for venturing into a tie-up with a University located in Haryana in offering a five year integrated MCA programme on self-supporting basis. More such collaborative ventures may be required for offering programmes in the thrust areas. These would, of course, involve some trial and error and also certain amount of risk management. The Management, generally characterized by a tradition of a steady and cautious approach in campus management, may have to break new grounds of entrepreneurship in order to survive and surpass in the competitive world of market paradigm.

The administration of the College activities by the Principal is helped by the Staff Council consisting of teachers of all the constituents (College, TTC and the School). There is a Staff Association. Various faculty level committees enable participation in decision making. They include Budget Committee, Examination Committee, Library Committee, and various extra-curricular committees.

The management, though a minority institution, accommodates a government representative to sit on the selection Committees. This avoids unnecessary friction and possible litigation.

The system of election to form the student council is free from campus politics. The management deserves appreciation for democratising the student body, of course, under its over-all supervision and guidance. Grievance Redressal mechanism may be established

for the various sections of the college community; these would largely obviate any lurking grievances affecting the work ethics.

Criterion VII: Healthy Practices

The College has several healthy practices nurtured over a period, some of which are indicated below:

- Provision of fee concession and hostel concession to the poor students, just on their self-declaration.
- A good blending of discipline and participatory style (allowing election to the student council, faculty level committee for budget allocations).
- Organising tutorial classes on a regular basis to the poor school children in the neighbourhood, through the hostel inmates taking the role of tutors.
- Venturing into tie-up with outside University for a self-supporting programme.
- Recruitment of faculty purely on merit without religious and other discriminations (the management also recruits additional teaching and non-teaching staff for efficient functioning).
- Some of the teachers are engaged in research guidance for Ph.D. notwithstanding their teaching at the UG level.
- Organising one-week Orientation for the teachers at the beginning of every academic year.
- The concern for maintaining the heritage (the 100 year old structure is maintained intact).
- Compassion for the class IV staff by supporting their children's education and also providing employment wherever possible; interest-free loan is also provided.
- Fairly imaginative pooling and sharing of campus facilities (there is a logic behind spacing and location of the Departments in the campus); library, laboratories are used as common facilities by students of college/TTC/school.
- A modest and more of a businesslike culture of managing the College functions (without getting involved in big fanfare and extravaganza).
- An award instituted for the best user of the library.
- A comprehensive record card of progress of every student in various dimensions (academic, attendance, extra and co-curricular performance) being sent to the parents at the end of every academic session.
- Faculty in music (Vocal and Instrumental) giving public/popular performance (TV/AIR; some are 'B High' grade artists of AIR).
- Ingenious use of some facilities for multipurpose; basketball court also used as tennis court, open-air stadium, street-play venue etc.; the spacious and elegant multipurpose auditorium used as indoor game hall (table tennis and badminton) and

also for conduct of examinations.

- Mentor system functioning quite effectively for the last four years.
- Concept of "educational complex" permeating to the student level also (under mentor system, the group is so mixed that students from school, TTC and college sit together in the same class for value education; this helps inter-group interaction).
- Roll of honours giving the names of the University gold medallists, sports champions, Admirals prominently displayed in the Auditorium; this mechanism acts as a potential incentive towards excellence.
- Administrative economies of scale, since the same office personnel/Principal administers all the constituents; Staff Council also consists of teachers of all the constituents (School/TTC/College) participating in collective/consensual decision making.

SECTION III: OVER-ALL ANALYSIS

The Peer Team, *inter alia*, has observed the following commendable features in the college:

- Making the best of the multi-institutional educational complex by resource pooling and optimal utilization strategies.
- Qualified and committed faculty with good rapport with the students.
- Consistently good record of success and ranks in the University examinations.
- Special thrust on value education through mentoring system.
- Venturing into five year integrated MCA with a tie-up and affiliation of a University outside the state.
- Good and well maintained physical infrastructural facilities and a conducive academic ambience, with good hostel accommodation for the students.
- Ensuring holistic development of student personality through a mechanism of comprehensive recording/monitoring of student profiles every year.
- Compassion for the poor and underprivileged (fee and hostel concession; free remedial classes for the school children around).

The Peer Team, based on its perception of the college, makes the following recommendations for its consideration:

- The College can prepare a perspective plan with a futuristic vision in order to sustain its reputation earned over the period.
- Planning for and starting of career-oriented programmes in the emerging disciplines

such as Mass and Visual Communications, Management, Insurance and Finance, Global Marketing, Event Management; and Bio-technology, Information and Communication Technology and so on; in the given conditions, these may have to be offered on self-supporting basis.

- The College can explore the possibility of starting PG programmes in the disciplines in which they have strong record of UG programmes; for instance Home Science, Psychology and English may be considered to start with.
- The teachers may be encouraged for more research orientation and being productive in publishing materials ranging from popular articles, textbooks as well as research papers.
- Departments with Honours should have departmental libraries.
- The library may be provided with Internet facilities for students. There may be a fee for its use, hour wise.
- The departments deserve computers of their own, with internet connections.
- The College can organize more academic seminars, departmental and national; guest faculty may be invited to familiarize the teachers and students with the emerging horizons in the subjects.
- Creation and strengthening of separate structures for Career Guidance and Counselling, and a Placement Cell (at present the CDI is used as an over-all structure to cover these activities which might tend to diffuse the focus and thrust).
- A Health Centre, with the service of a medical doctor and a nurse available in fixed hours may be added to the features of the College. The sports facilities may be improved further.
- The library needs expansion (the management is already committed to this), modernization and also strengthening of e-learning resources.
- The concept of community college could be explored and tried as an umbrella for short-term skill-based courses aiming at women empowerment.
- More interactive sessions between parents and management and the students/staff council members could be organized so that the felt needs and aspirations of the latter could be eventually reflected in the campus programmes/actions (this is no reflection on the current position but only by way of proactive suggestion).
- Grievance Redressal Cell may be established for various constituents of the college community.
- Some special be made to attract to attract overseas students by providing the relevant facilities.
- A Consultancy Cell be created to publicise, channelise and link up with the potential users.
- More intensive and frequent use of e-learning techniques to the classrooms be encouraged.
- Bridge courses and remedial teaching be adopted more systematically; better

- performers may be encouraged to do project works.
- Office automation and professional training of administrative staff be an ongoing process (the college has made a good beginning in office automation).
 - Alumni Association be strengthened and organizationally better structured; Alumni web-site may be launched for enlisting more members.
 - Student feedback (both from current and past students) on the campus profiles be obtained on a regular basis.
 - Better thrust be given on outreach community activities, logically linking them with the respective disciplines (not necessarily confined to NSS alone).

The St. Bede's College has earned its reputation over the period as one of the best centres of higher education for the girls in the region. The college community can be legitimately proud of their accomplishments. But the college may have to revisit its agenda, work out new strategies and strive hard to sustain and improve upon its reputation/visibility, particularly in the context of the unfolding challenges associated with the highly competitive world of higher education. The college has the necessary potentials and inclinations to emerge as an autonomous college.

C. Thangamuthu

Dr. C. Thangamuthu
(Member Co-ordinator)

Moni Mathur 10/3/04

Dr. (Mrs.) Moni Mathur
(Member)

Pabitra Sarkar

Dr. Pabitra Sarkar 10.3.04
(Chairman)

I read the Report and agree with the contents.

Melba Rodrigues 10-3-04

Dr. (Sr.) Melba Rodrigues
(Principal)

Principal
St. Bede's College
Shimla - 2



