

**External Academic Audit Report of the  
Department of Social Work**

**29.01.2007**

**Sacred Heart College  
Tirupattur,  
Vellore District, 635 601**



# **EXTERNAL ACADEMIC AUDIT REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK**

**SACRED HEART COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS),  
THIRUPATTUR, VELLORE DT. 635601**

## **1. Introduction**

At the request of the Principal of the Sacred Heart College (Autonomous), Thirupattur, Fr. V. Joseph Xavier S.J. (Convenor), Dr. D. Varadarajan (Member) and Dr. A. Thomas William (Member) visited the department of Social Work, to conduct a review of the functioning of the department. This review was conducted as part of the attempt of the management to improve the quality of the Institution. A similar exercise was conducted in all the departments of the college under the IQAC Cell. The team visited the college and the department on 29<sup>th</sup> of January, 2007.

In the morning the Principal, along with the members of the IQAC cell and the departmental faculty briefed the team on the purpose of this review which was followed by a presentation of the departmental profile. The team decided to meet the faculty as a group and individually, if necessary and the students according to the years of their study. The team was also provided with all the necessary documents of the department. A member of the team met the faculty and the other two members met the students and scrutinized the documents.

At the end of the day, the team presented its findings and suggestions to the IQAC cell members and the departmental faculty. The report of the team is presented with its recommendations

## **2. History of the Department**

Sacred Heart College (Autonomous) is an affiliated First Grade College of the Thiruvalluvar University. It is a Catholic Christian Institution of Higher Education established and administered by the Religious Congregation of Salesians of Don Bosco. In 1951, the college was founded and the college became autonomous in 1987. In 1993, it became a coeducation department, with the admission of girls.



Keeping in mind the need to develop a socially relevant educational system and wanting to create a cadre of leaders in North Arcot district, one of the backward districts of Tamil Nadu, in which the college is located, the college started the department of Social Work in July 1979. It was the first Post Graduate department of the college. Along with the academic programme, the department also initiated a number of community service projects as out reach programmes of the department. These projects aimed for the upliftment of the poor and as a laboratory for the students of the department. The department also undertook a major research project on "Indian Youth in Perspective" in 1979.

Autonomy was granted to the department in 1987, the first department to become autonomous, in the college. In 1988, the department was relocated in a new spacious building named as "Bosco Institute of Social Work", with a separate campus of its own. The department became a research department in 2000 and began to offer full time Doctoral Degree and M.Phil programme.

The department aims at

- Developing intellectual capacity of the students to search for knowledge, truth, justice, development, peace and harmony
- Fostering in them the freedom of thought for assuming personal responsibility for their own lives
- Forming in them the social consciousness and social responsibility to foster good relationship with others, to be open to other religions and cultures, to possess an attitude of solidarity and dialogue to insert themselves into the society with a sense of co-responsibility and participation and to be the agents of social change expediting priority care to the poor, the oppressed and the vulnerable.

### **3. Profile of the Department**

The department has six full time aided faculty. Three of them are readers and the other three are Lecturers (SG). There are also three management faculty. Three of the aided faculty have Ph.D. as the minimum qualification and one has M.Phil. Six members of the faculty have registered for Ph.D. Two members of the faculty have acquired additional qualifications related to their field of specialisation after joining the department.



The department offers three specialisations namely, Community Development, Human Resource Management and Youth Development, besides M.Phil. and Ph.D. in Social Work.

#### **4. Curriculum**

The department follows the choice based credit system. Besides the core curriculum, the department offers a course on Computer Application for Social Workers as required optional. In addition, it offers a number of optional courses to the respective specialisations. It also offers a number of electives to the students. It may be worth noting that it was the first department of social work that started offering electives to their students.

The curriculum is revised every three years, as per the requirement of the college. The department has introduced compulsory Library study for 45 hours per semester. In the first semester, the students are taken for observation visits. Laboratory sessions are arranged for the first year students before they go for their field placement. The department has introduced block field placement instead of concurrent field work as an innovation. It encourages the first year students to go for summer field work placement for a month during the summer holidays.

In addition, the students are given skill training programmes like street play and folk arts. They are also introduced to life coping skills. The students are trained in organisational skills by arranging seminars. Different methods are used as teaching methods. The students also have an Association of Social Workers.

Special coaching classes are arranged for slow learners and personal attention is given to them. They are encouraged to attend seminars and conferences organised by other institutions.

#### **5. Other Facilities**

The students are encouraged to use the internet facility that is available in the campus. They are given academic guidance and counselling. There is a separate placement cell in the department besides the placement cell that is available in the college.



## **6. Research and Training**

The department has been engaged in research from the very first of its existence. The department has carried out more than 20 minor and major research projects funded by NGOs, Corporate Sectors and UGC. In addition the department offers consultancy services to NGOs and Corporate institutions. Some of the faculty members are in demand to conduct training programmes for the various groups. The faculty of the department have published some articles in journals and other publications. One of the faculty members has published two books. Some of the faculty members have attended some seminars and conferences at the national and regional level.

## **7. Assessment of the Department**

The team assessed the working of the department on the basis of the materials presented to them of the curriculum, projects undertaken, and publications. The team also met the members of the faculty as a group and met four of the members who came to meet the team individually. The team also met the students in groups.

## **8. Strength of the Faculty and the department**

The following strengths were present in the faculty.

- The faculty work as a team.
- The members of the faculty possess skills that are unique and helpful to the department and they make unique contribution to the growth of the department.
- The faculty enjoy a lot of freedom in academic matters and they use this freedom responsibly.
- There is a sense of commitment on the part of the faculty towards the profession of social work and to the students.
- There is healthy respect for the differences among the faculty members.
- Fifty per cent of the faculty members possess Ph.D. and one member has an M.Phil.
- The relationship between the faculty and the students is healthy. Each member of the faculty takes responsibility for the development of a fixed number of students.



- Two members of the faculty contribute to the development of social work as members in the academic body of the university.

### **9. The following strengths were present in the department**

- Autonomy has permitted experimentation and the department has experimented with the academic programme in a responsible manner.
- The department has innovated with field work which has been recognised and followed by other institutions as well.
- The curriculum is made to be flexible and adaptable to the needs of the time.
- The department maintains cordial relationship with the departments of other institutions.
- The department offers consultancy to the NGOs and makes its expertise available to them, thus fulfilling their social responsibility.
- The department is available to the industries to conduct training programmes for all the levels of the workers.
- The department maintains a certain level of standard and ensures that cent per cent of the students are placed within six months of their completing the course. It also ensures cent per cent of passes.
- The department caters to the needs of students from rural areas and especially the marginalised and the first generation learners.
- There is a healthy mix of students coming from various geographical areas and backgrounds.
- The students are highly motivated and pursue the course very seriously and are committed to their studies.
- The social consciousness of the students is high. They are keen to contribute their share for the development of the villages, in and around the college.

### **10. Updating of the Faculty and the Faculty development**

The department and the college encourage the members of the faculty to attend the UGC Sponsored refresher courses and several members have taken advantage of the same. Two members of the faculty have updated their qualification in the field of their specialisation after joining the department. Some the faculty members have attended courses, seminars and conferences at the national level.



However, no serious thought has been given to the updating of the faculty in a systematic way. There is a feeling among the faculty that there is no long term planning for the development of the faculty. Some of them felt that very little encouragement is given to them to update themselves by the management especially when it involved money. One of the reasons cited by the faculty for not updating themselves is that they are overburdened by academic work.

### **11. Research, Publication and Training**

As stated earlier, some of the members of the faculty are involved in research. They take up research projects offered by NGOs and others. Their works are considered to be of quality and the sponsoring agencies have expressed satisfaction with the work of the department. Two members of the faculty are in demand for conducting training programmes for the industries. The department has a few publications.

It was observed that only very few members of the faculty have taken up research projects. The total number of projects undertaken in the last five years is only eleven and they were minor projects. In publications too, the same members of the faculty have shown interest and the publications are few. The department has adequate facilities for conducting research projects like computers, internet facilities and individual rooms for the faculty members. The motivation of the faculty appears to be less when it came to research and publications.

### **12. Felt Needs of the Students**

The students, when they were met by the team, expressed the following as their needs.

- There is a feeling among the students that their proficiency in English is limited and it stood in the way of their securing jobs easily. They suggested that the department could organise English classes for them in the line of business English course which is offered by the British Council.
- The skills laboratory organised by the department is inadequate. They felt the need for many more skills to be given them in these laboratories. They also said that they would like to have a deeper knowledge of counselling skills and the opportunity to put this skill into practice.
- To reduce their stress, the students felt the need for training in yoga, meditation and relaxation methods.



- The academic assignments given them could be pointed and specific with the view to improving their learning and skills rather than vague and general.
- The curriculum updating has to be taken more frequently so that the gap between the expectation of the industry and what is being taught could be narrowed.
- The block placement would be more beneficial if it is done in one spell rather than in two spells. This will benefit the students to plan their work more usefully and at the same time the industry where they go would also benefit.
- The department could adapt a rural area for at least five years rather than changing every year. This will benefit the villages and the students will have the satisfaction of having done something concrete in the area.
- The five marks awarded to the students for the library work should be given in full if the student had fulfilled the requirement.
- The students feel the need for additional courses, outside the regular class, like AIDS counselling which would enhance their professional skills in securing a job.

### **13. General Observations**

Apart from the specific issues presented by the team, the following general observations could be considered by the department and the college.

- Though the faculty members work as a team there is a feeling of discontentment among some members of the faculty. They feel that the management is neither encouraging nor recognising their merit.
- There is little thinking given to the long term development of the department. Though the department has existed over twenty eight years, it has almost stagnated and it has not developed sufficiently.
- Most the members of the faculty would be retiring from the department in the next few years. There is very little attention paid to the manpower development of the faculty.
- Various activities are conducted and some of them are disconnected. Efforts made to integrate teaching, field practice and research is inadequate.
- There appears to be some hesitation on the part of the faculty to come forward and take up responsibilities. One of the reasons could be their lack of confidence in language and communication



skills. This is an important area that needs serious consideration.

- The relations between the department and the rest of the college appear to be limited. The consequence is that some of the helps the departmental faculty could give to the students of the college are hampered.
- The mini project done by the students, preparing them to take up a meaningful final research project, is commendable.

## **14. Suggestions**

### **a. Policy Issues**

- Though infrastructural facilities like computers and multimedia projector are available in the department, the accessibility to them appears to be limited. Accessibility to these facilities by the students, especially to the computers and multimedia projector by all sections of the students would enhance the skill development of the students.
- The continuous assessments could be increased to two. The evaluated papers could be handed over to the students so that the students will have an opportunity to learn where they need to improve their performance. This will also give certain sense of objectivity to the evaluation of the faculty.
- Providing 'Pre admission counselling' before a student joins the course would help the student to make a more informed decision. This will make it clear to the student the requirements of the course and the girl students especially need not regret the choice later.
- Representation could be given to one student representative, in the board of studies so that the views of the students regarding the curriculum can be presented by them.
- For the future of the department, the management should think in terms of introducing a few more specialisations under the self financing mode. This could be need based like industrial social work or medical social work.
- The management could think of devising some way of sharing the action taken of the evaluation of the faculty by the students.

### **b. General Suggestions**

- In view of the fact that the research out put of the members of the faculty are limited, it is suggested that encouragement could be given to the members of the faculty to take up at least minor



projects and write papers for publications. To aid towards this, the faculty could be asked to present book reviews and/or present seminars on specific themes to the entire department twice a semester. This will motivate them to do creative work and at the same time encourage the students to do the same.

- The department has a counselling centre which is unique to the department. The facilities of the centre could be put at the disposal of the students so that the students make use of the facilities to learn the skills of counselling under supervision. This will enhance their skills and help them to secure jobs.
- The department could think of ways and means of integrating the teaching, field practice and research so that these are used to contribute to knowledge in the field of social work.
- The members of the faculty could be helped to upgrade their knowledge in the relevant area of their specialisation, improve their communication skills and their research skills. The management could come forward to set aside some financial resource towards this.
- Man power development is an important issue that the management may take seriously and urgently as many of the senior faculty would be retiring in the near future.
- Ladies are admitted to the department. It would be good to have at least one lady member of the faculty so that the lady students will have some one to go to when they are in need of help, either physically or mentally.
- The college could think of ways of integrating the department of social work with the activities of the rest of the college. This will help the students of youth development to practice their skills in the college itself. At the same time the expertise of the faculty of the department could be used for helping the growth of the students.
- In view of the fact that the entire evaluation process is internal, it is suggested that the department invites an external expert at least for the viva of fourth semester for the research project and for the field work.

## **15. Conclusion**

Education is a learning process. The learner must be taught to learn on his/her own through a critical process of self learning and creativity. Learning is to be a joyous and exciting experience. The master helps the disciple to learn rather than teaches him of his wisdom. He is to take the disciple to the door of his own experience and leave him to search. The department must make such an effort so that the



teaching-learning experience could be mutually beneficial for the teacher and the taught.

The team congratulates the management and the IQAC members for undertaking this internal audit and admires the commitment of the college towards quality education. The team thanks the college for inviting us to be part of this process which has been mutually enriching. The head of the department and the members the department of social work have been open, trusting and generous in sharing with us their experiences and aspirations. The team wishes them all the best in their undertakings as a team and thanks them for their acceptance of the members of the team.

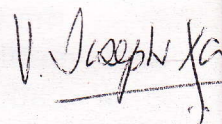
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Tirupattur

**Panel of External Audit**

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