

# PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR IN HOLY CROSS EDUCATION IN THE BANGLADESH: A CASE STUDY ON NOTRE DAME COLLEGE

**Dr. Md Shaikh Farid\***

## **Abstract**

*This article examines how the Congregation of Holy Cross responds to Vatican II's recommendations on the preferential option for the poor in education and implements those recommendations at Notre Dame College. It is argued that the preferential option for the poor should be the core of the rationale of Catholic education. This paper is based on document analysis and interviews of Holy Cross personnel. The study reveals that, as recommended by the Catholic Church, Holy Cross educators have taken different educational programs and social projects – both formal and non-formal – to serve the poor and underprivileged at Notre Dame College. Among all social projects conducted at NDC, particularly the night school and Martin Hall program seem to have noteworthy impacts on education and its students. However, the college mostly fails to serve the poor because the poor students who get financial support or get admitted under the Martin Hall program belong to their Catholic community, therefore, the poor and underprivileged belonging to other religions are excluded from the program. Moreover, as the admission policy of the college is based on meritocracy, there is very little scope for the poor to get admitted in the college.*

**Key words:** Holy Cross, Vatican II, Missionary Education, Catholic Education, Bangladesh.

## **Introduction**

The Congregation of Holy Cross, a Catholic religious congregation, has been working on evangelization and education in Bangladesh since 1853. Over the years, there have been many significant changes to Holy Cross education in Bangladesh because of internal and external events. One such notable event is the Second Vatican Council (1962-65). This paper addresses how Holy Cross missionaries in Bangladesh have interpreted the Catholic Church's teachings on education and guidelines on

---

\* Associate Professor, Department of World Religions and Culture, University of Dhaka

educational objectives and have implemented its recommendations on the preferential option for the poor in their elite educational institutions, such as Notre Dame College. The Catholic Church's documents on education provide direction, purpose, and rationale for school administrators, principals, teachers, and leaders in different countries across the globe. The documents also provide authoritative guidance on the nature and purpose of the Catholic education worldwide, and how the Catholic education is or ought to be. The Vatican's documents on education provide an overview of how Catholic educational institutions can care for the poor in educational settings. Hence, the paper aims to examine how Notre Dame College, a Holy Cross elite institution, has addressed the Vatican's recommendations on the preferential option for the poor in education.

### **Methodology and methods**

The research was based primarily on a combination of examination of written documents and fieldwork involving oral history interviews. A qualitative case study research method was chosen. The broad methodological framework for this qualitative case study is interpretive which is also compatible with both historical and post-modern frameworks for analysis. The study included Notre Dame College, the first Holy Cross college founded in 1949 in Dhaka, as a case study institution.

The available published and unpublished documents, especially in Bangladesh regarding Holy Cross education were critically and objectively examined. The researcher got access to published and unpublished sources in Holy Cross Provincial Archives of Priests and Notre Dame College Archive.

Oral history interviews were one of the forms of data collection. Interviews, with Holy Cross personnel who are/were directly involved either in teaching at their educational institutions or in the management of the college, were conducted. Eighteen participants were interviewed using a semi-structured interview guide during the period from November 2015 to March 2016. Complete information was provided to them about the research. Participants' anonymity, privacy, and confidentiality were ensured, but almost all participants expressed their willingness to disclose their identity as they find it non-problematic.

Data derived from different sources were analyzed together, to identify similarities and themes. After the transcription of the interviews,

the transcriptions were examined thoroughly, and the key points of each interview from those transcripts, together with data from documents, were sorted out into key themes, patterns, and categories. The data analysis was guided by Miles and Huberman's (1994) technique of data analysis.

### **The Church's documents on education and the preferential option for the poor**

The Catholic Church's involvement in education is firmly rooted in Christ's command 'Go teach all nations' (Matthew 28:19). Thus, the Church's involvement in education started before the advent of formal schooling and the state provision of schools, and it was mainly associated with the schooling and preparation for the clerical life (McKinney & Sullivan 2013; Miller 2006). After the Protestant Reformation, however, the founding of Catholic schools became one of the important strategies to counter the Protestant Reformation (Elias 2002). Most importantly, the emergence of Catholic schools was a result of interconnectedness between missionary activities and education in mission territories and countries (Whittle 2015). The Church understood that founding educational institutions were very effective means of missionary works (Morris 2012b).

Over the past centuries, the Vatican had issued several documents on Catholic schooling and education. Among those documents, *Divina Illius Magistri* (1929), and *Gravissimum Educationis* (1965) are the most authoritative documents. After the Second Vatican Council, the Vatican also formed a commission called the Congregation for Catholic Education, which has issued several documents dealing with issues that have not dealt with enough in the previous documents. Of these documents, *The Catholic School* (1977), and *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (1988), *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (1997), *Consecrated Persons and Their Mission in Schools: Reflections and Guidelines* (2002), *Educating Together in Catholic Schools*, and *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools* (2013) are the recent ones. All these documents provide the Vatican's teachings on Catholic education and give direction on how to provide and defend the Catholic Church's involvement in education.

*Divini Illius Magistri* (1929), is an important document on the official Church's teaching on education which argues the Church's right to involve

in education across the globe. Firstly, it holds that the Church has the right to be involved in education. Whittle (2015) argues that the Church justifies its educational involvement by juridical claims not by theological arguments. By using natural law arguments, it holds that parents have a right to bring their children within their religion. Secondly, it advocates the theological anthropology which is interconnected between the goal of human life and educational theory. It emphasizes the concept of original sin and the formation of young children for the life hereafter. There is very little scope for religious freedom, autonomy, and individual conscience. Thirdly, the document upholds the Church's right and control over the curriculum in schools. Sullivan (2001) argues the Church wants to protect the children from errors since it has the God-given authority to act like a mother who wants to teach her children right and wrong. This is a theological justification for the Catholic Church to be engaged in educational activities and control of schooling and education.

The document holds that education and training received at schools played an important part in communicating the Church's truth to youths and guide and protect them from immoral activities. Therefore, defending the truth claim by the Catholic Church was the priority, and schooling and education were seen as an essential tool for the Church. It claims that proper education is one in which Christianity is focal. Catholic schools are to install the Catholic faith to students.

The authoritative and conservative approach of the Catholic Church on education was not revised until Vatican II. Thus, in 1965, the Council issued the document *Gravissimum Educationis* (Declaration on Christian Education), which has great importance on Catholic education. Although the document attempted to reaffirm the fundamental principles formulated in *Divini Illius Magistri* (1929), the emphasis has been shifted to some extent in response to the time, and the social conditions. One of the major shifts from the earlier document was that there is no strong emphasis that Catholic education should prepare students for death and the life hereafter (Morris 1998; Whittle 2015).

Although the declaration reaffirms the right to education for all, particularly the primacy of children and parents, it justifies the Church's involvement in education. The declaration also asserts the dignity of the human person which ensures the right to education for all. The focus on human dignity, which was an important priority of the Council, underscored

that every person has a right to education, in the same way, every Christian has a right to Christian education. It also refers to the right of a child to religious and moral education that could include love and knowledge of God. The declaration mentions that Christians have a right to Christian education. Although the declaration acknowledges the need for secular education, it strongly believes in the explicit need for faith formation and helping students to be believers and able to help them to participate in prayers and worship (Pope Paul VI 1965)

However, Whittle (2015) argues that the Catholic Church's teaching on education unveils both a theoretical looseness around the meaning of Catholic education and an obscure relationship between educational theory and Catholic theology. It can also be argued that the theory of Catholic education is a confessional one and fostering the Catholic faith is its principal goal. Moreover, the main purpose of Catholic schools is the transmission of Catholic truths and values, and all other educational goals are secondary. Morris (2012a) argues for the Catholic Church, education is fundamentally a religious act, the social and economic purposes come subsequently. Therefore, the distinctiveness of Catholic education derives from this Catholic religious point of view.

However, Vatican II initiated some significant shifts in theology and religious life of the Catholic Church. It is mentioned that the Vatican II aimed to underscore the Church's pastoral and apostolic mission and represent the Catholic faith in a more accessible way both to the believers and the world in general (Ahmed 2018; Morris 2008). Sullivan (2001) argues that after Vatican II, it becomes more fluid of what is meant to be a Catholic. It is not so essential to practice external Catholic rites and rituals. McDonough (2012) adds that a defining feature of being a Catholic is to be committed to the needy and poor. As such, section 9 of *Gravissimum Educationis* (1965) states:

This Sacred Council of the Church earnestly entreats pastors and all the faithful to spare no sacrifice in helping Catholic schools fulfill their function in a continually more perfect way, and especially in caring for the needs of those who are poor in the goods of this world or who are deprived of the assistance and affection of a family or who are strangers to the gift of faith.

This paradigm shift posed a problem in defining Catholic identity and educational practices in Catholic schools. However, it also acknowledged the importance of Catholic schools as an institutional witness for the

Church and its values in society (Sullivan 2001). The Church's document entitled *Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World* (1965) also explained the importance of serving humanity, particularly the needy and poor. The Church also acknowledges the concern that it needs to play in helping humankind (Declaration on Christian Education 1965).

*The Catholic Schools* (1977) asserts that the importance of Catholic schools is much more significant in foreign missions, because Catholic schools work as a saving mission of the Church, and a means to proclaim the Gospel to the world. The Church also expresses the need for Catholic schools to bear institutional witness for the Church and its values, especially in the face of declining values and debilitating influences in society, including materialism and secularism. It also emphasizes that the effectiveness of the Catholic school depends on its ability to adapt and meet the local needs and ensures the true reflection of the local and national Catholic community. In the document, there is a renewed and strong emphasis on the service to the poor, particularly emotionally poor, poor in the faith, and materially poor.

Similarly, other documents of the Church such as *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (1997), recognized the need for social justice and addressed the effects of the economic gap between the poor and the rich, and acknowledges the importance of services of the Catholic schools to the material and spiritual development of less fortunate people. The document also discusses the historical and contemporary role of the Catholic school for all, particularly for the weakest. It also asserts that the Catholic school educates the poor. Thus, it manifests Christ's love for the poor. It also describes that one of the features of the Catholic school is being a school for all.

*The Consecrated Persons and their Mission to Schools* (2002) gives more attention to the preferential option for the poor in education. The document points out the poverty of Christ and the challenges of poverty and its impacts on poor people. The Church's people who work in schools have chosen freely the poverty and help the poor and marginalized by creating solidarity with them. Although the document reiterates that the Church offers its educational services to the poor in the first place, it admits that Catholic educational institutions have sometimes stayed from the preferential option for the poor.

*Educating Together in Catholic Schools* (2007), *Educating to*

*Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools* (2013), and *Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion, Instrumentum Laboris* (2014) also highlight poverty, the economic gap between the rich and poor countries, and the impact of poverty on the society. Therefore, the Catholic school must address the unequal distribution of resources and various forms of poverty and its causes. For the Catholic school, the poor and needy students should not be considered as a burden rather they should be treated as the most important students and should be given special attention in education. However, the document entitled *Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion, Instrumentum Laboris* (2014) acknowledges that Catholic schools that get no state financial support face challenges in serving the poor. The document also admits that the Catholic school is being perceived as aiming at establishing elitist meritocracy that must be overcome.

It is stated that the preferential option for the poor was an integral part of Jesus's teaching, and was manifested through Christ's love for the poor. Therefore, the preferential option for the poor is included in the Church's teaching on social justice (Hession 2015; McKinney 2018). However, this principle has got its emphasis only after the post-Vatican II periods. It is also argued that Post-Vatican II prioritized the educational service to the poor as a policy as there was an impression that Catholic schools provide education only to the rich (McKinney 2018). Moreover, the concept has become problematic as issues surrounding the concepts 'poor' and 'preferential option' and how this principle is being practiced in Catholic schools around the world that charges tuitions and educates wealthy students (Grace & O'Keefe 2007).

There is also a concern between the mission of Catholic schools and the educational marketplace that has been taking place in recent years. Grace (2002) argued that Catholic schools are in a difficult position as the government policies of the market economy in education sectors. Therefore, there is a deep tension between the educational market place and the mission of Catholic education that has been taking place. As a result of this market economy, he also argued that in this situation, the leaders of Catholic schools have had to make some accommodations and compromises, and Catholic education is adopting a policy of giving more priority to academic achievement sacrificing the education missions, such as the preferential option for the poor.



Arthur and Grace (2002) argued that the primary purpose of Catholic education is unclear. The question of whether the purpose of Catholic education is the formation of Catholic faith or academic progress. As Catholics believe in God's unconditional love for all, they will confirm that belief by a mission of preferential love for anyone poor and oppressed, excluded, or voiceless. Because of this commitment, one would not only expect to find more Catholic schools in areas of poverty and educational disadvantage but that within all Catholic schools, children who are on the margins will be given particular attention and care.

To avoid the impression of the contemporary Catholic Church's documents emphasize on providing formal and non-formal education to the poor, asking the Church's people to listen to the poor and commit themselves within the sphere of non-formal education and bring the poor and underprivileged to education. Catholic educational institutions are asked to arrange educational activities suitable for them.

### **Vatican II and its implication on Holy Cross education in Bangladesh**

Since Vatican II brought some shifts in Catholic religious congregations and their educational activities across the world, it brought some significant changes to Holy Cross educational missions, educational structure, and the meaning of mission in Bangladesh. Holy Cross missionaries working in Bangladesh find it hard to accept the changes brought by Vatican II because before Vatican II everything was defined and according to rules (Interview with Robi Purification, January 18, 2016). Although the Bible's command on preaching the gospel to the whole world and creation was the missionaries' motivation, Vatican II changed the understanding of the meaning of mission and missionaries. Previously missionaries would have gone to proselytize, but Vatican II asked people to find God as God is present everywhere. Missionaries cannot bring God as God is already there, and they cannot bring salvation. Rather they were asked to make people aware of who they are, and live accordingly (Interview with Benjamin Costa, January 23, 2016).

Many changes took place in Holy Cross academic institutions and the academic and professional life of missionary-teachers. As Vatican II declared that there is no need to practice celibacy, many veteran missionaries working on education couldn't accept lay people's involvement in educational activities as they believed that their involvement would be detrimental to the nature and purpose of Holy Cross education in



Bangladesh. As a result, half of the foreign missionaries who had been working in Bangladesh and their educational institutions left the country. Thus, the local Holy Cross people had to take the challenges gradually of running the Congregation and its educational institutions (Interview with Purification, January 18, 2016).

One of the important changes that happened after Vatican II was the involvement of lay people in the decision-making process. Both the hierarchy of the Church and lay people started collaborating and working together as a communion in the activities of the Church. Therefore, there has been a sharp rise in the appointment of lay teachers in their educational institutions after Vatican II (Interview with Hemanto Pius Rozario, January 13, 2016).

Besides, after Vatican II, the issue of inculturation also became a very important issue in education and educational philosophy because the Church realized and recognized that there are truths in other cultures and religions and asked people to search for them (Interview with Purification, January 18, 2016). Thus, the inculturation became a dominant mission model after Vatican II. And as a process, inculturation involves the proclamation of the gospel to the people (Bwangatto 2014). Another major contribution of Vatican II was the development of the local priesthood as Vatican II emphasized the formation of local priesthoods and the development of the local Church. Therefore, the Congregation trained local priests. Along with the development of the local priesthood, another important aspect that Vatican II brought to Holy Cross education was the involvement of lay people in education, information, and activities of the Church which were very effective in terms of the establishment of their educational institutions (Interview with Rozario, January 13, 2016). Although Vatican II brought substantial changes to the Holy Cross Congregation both in its structure and religious and educational mission in Bangladesh, there was a major concern over the issue of the relationship between Holy Cross education and Bangladesh education system, particularly the Catholic identity of Holy Cross institutions, the decline of missionary-teachers and appointment of local clergies and lay teachers at Holy Cross institutions. Moreover, there are some questions and concerns on how the Vatican Council's recommendations, particularly on the preferential option for the poor, have been received and implemented at Holy Cross educational institutions.

### **Preferential option for the poor at Notre Dame College**

The Second Vatican Council mandated that each religious institution reevaluate its unique character and mission. Following two decades of consideration, in 1986, the General Chapter of Holy Cross made a deliberate effort to go back closer to the ideal of their founder Moreau. The Constitutions were promulgated in 1988, and this is the one that is still in use today (“Constitution of the Congregation”, 1988). The Constitutions offer direction, motivation, and understanding of the congregation. The two areas of ministry that Holy Cross have accepted as their own are the teaching of the Christian faith in schools, especially for the benefit of underprivileged and abandoned children, and the preaching of the Word of God, especially in remote areas and foreign missions (Farid, 2020: Beiting, 2005).

Since Christ was sent to bring good news to the poor, freedom for captives, sight for the blind, and healing for every shattered victim, education of the poor is one of the key areas of attention. His efforts reach out to the suffering, giving the underprivileged and oppressed priority. Holy Cross come to be among them and of them, not merely as their servants but also as their neighbors. The teaching of young in schools, colleges, and universities is one way for many of them at Holy Cross to express their sense of mission. Their role as educators is carried out in parishes and other ministries for others. Wherever they are employed, Holy Cross missionaries help people not just uncover and nurture their own gifts but also unearth their deepest yearnings. They also discover, as with every aspect of our profession, that Holy Cross have much to learn from the people they are supposed to be teaching (“Constitution of the Congregation”, 1988).

As recommended by the Catholic Church, Holy Cross educators have taken different educational programs – both formal and non-formal – to serve the poor and underprivileged in Bangladesh. Such as Dziekan (2002) mentions that Holy Cross schools and colleges find ways to provide educational opportunities for the poor and disadvantaged even at the cost of considerable sacrifice that requires the provision of financial assistance to the students who cannot afford full tuition and provision of educational support programs for those who require special assistance with learning.

Peixotto (1992) claims that the Catholic Church of Bangladesh is very small only with 2,000,000 members, but it is very active. In the context of a third world country with a population of 150 million, it is a missionary

Church. Thus, one of the primary goals of the Church is to serve the poor and oppressed. For example, the Caritas, a church social organization, is an integral part of that effort. Morin (1994) argued that as Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries in the world and is confronted by the poverty they want to have solidarity with the poor of the country. Therefore, they commit themselves to the preferential option for the poor and this commitment calls them to adopt a simple lifestyle.

Richard Timm, former principal of Notre Dame College, mentions that they are trying to bring up the good citizens, and the people who are well-formed in relationship to the poor (Interview with Timm, January 23, 2016). Similarly, David Burrell argues that they give importance to the formation of human values, respect for persons, and dignity of the human person, and attention to the poor and underprivileged (Interview with Burrell, January 20, 2016). Similarly, Hemanto Pius Rozario argues that they give importance to the formation of human values, respect for persons, and dignity of the human person, feeling attention to the poor and underprivileged. He claims that there are many institutions in Dhaka but no institutions are helping the poor. They do it; others don't do it. They have many slum children in their college. He said, 'We do it because my faith tells me; my faith compels me to that' (Interview with Costa, January 13, 2016). Timm (2002) claims that education for the poor is a basic concern of Holy Cross. Similarly, the Church in Asia Holy Cross has made a preferential option for the poor in Bangladesh, which includes trying to give them the advantages at least in primary education. From the time of the foundation of Bangladesh, the college has made a determined effort to operate for the poor.

Hemanto Pius Rozario, the principal of Notre Dame College, claims that Notre Dame College was founded specially to give attention to the minorities, poor, tribal, and those who are underprivileged groups to educate them and provide service to them (Interview with Rozario, January 13, 2016)). Joseph Peixotto, former principal of Notre Dame College, also mentions that although Notre Dame College was founded to serve the Christian community and the country, after the independence of Bangladesh the college authority reflected on how the college can attach more to the preferential option for the poor and other social works. As a result, they made some changes to college policies to bring some more students and open programs for poor students mainly from villages. The college contributes to the application of the ideal of the Church in

society (Interview with Peixotto, February 5, 2016). The college decided that one of its main goals must be to try to inspire students to become socially conscious. Students must consider their intelligence, abilities, and education as gifts given for them to use for the benefit of society. Thus, the college started several social projects on campus. To the extent possible it tries to get students involved in social projects, or at least to make them aware of what the college tries to do so that they might appreciate the values the college considers as primary (Peixotto 1992).

For example, he mentioned that since 1972 Notre Dame College has been operating a literacy school for the slum dwellers and street children. The college was one of the first institutions in this new nation to respond to the appeal by the then President of Bangladesh to provide literacy instruction (Gillespie & Peixotto 2001). The priests at NDC felt that something should be done for the poor and slum dwellers, and one task would be to offer literacy training to the masses. The principal of NDC hired a couple of teachers and started school with 40 children. Over the years, the total enrollment has grown to 1200. Now, the school has three shifts: morning, afternoon, and evening. The night shift of the literacy school is for children and adults living in slums, most of whom work during the day attend classes from kindergarten to class seven (Peixotto 1992). These classes are taught by the Martin Hall students, who are poor students on a special work-program that enable them to pay their college fees and thereby study at the college for free (Timm 2002). The college has also a trade school for poor students, a dispensary and sick shelter, a handicraft workshop for destitute women (Peixotto 1992b). Of all the social projects conducted at NDC, the school seems to have the widest impact and must, therefore, continue to be given top priority (Banas 1999).

Many Holy Cross priests contributed much to social ministries after Vatican II. Fr. Jim Banas spent the time organizing and supporting a variety of programs for the poor who live around Notre Dame College's campus. He supervised jute handicrafts made by poor women and children in a training program that was located on the campus (Holy Cross in Bengal 1988). Peixotto (1992) notes:

From the time of the foundation of Bangladesh, the college has made a determined effort to operate projects for the poor. These projects not only provide direct service to the poor but also proclaim to students the

priorities of the college itself – with the hope that these future leaders of society will become imbued with the same spirit of social concern and service to the poor and oppressed. The college's efforts are in line with the priority of the church of Bangladesh of giving the preferential option to the poor. (7)

The student work program is Notre Dame's main means of making education available to students from poor families, particularly for Christian students. The college authority started the program in 1976, and Thomas Costa of the Student Welfare Department oversaw the program. Each year the director of the program sends letters to pastors and headmasters of Catholic schools asking for names of students who are completing their high school studies, are capable of studying in the college, but who cannot afford the cost of college studies. After scrutiny, about 50 students are selected each year. They live in Martin Hall, do part-time work at the college, and continue their study at the college. They work on the college grounds, office, labs, paint the buildings, serve as gatekeepers, etc. Their college fees and residence fees are paid with credit for the hours worked. They pay as much as they can afford for their food (Peixotto 1992).

The program provides many benefits. Students who otherwise could not possibly study in the college get an education with regular classes with other students. They also gather valuable work experiences. Those who earn good reputations get good jobs at the college after completing their studies. The college is also benefited by this student work program because many of its odd jobs are done by this large workforce at the college. Some of these students of this program return to their rural parishes and contribute to the work of the church and their communities (Peixotto 1992b). The program has enabled many tribal students to study at NDC. Although most students in the program are Christians, a small number of them are Muslims, Hindus, or Buddhists. Struble (1999) claims that the unique benefit of the Martin Hall program is the empowerment of village students as they move from dependency to the realization that they can build their future. This is the key to education at NDC.

Like Notre Dame College, other Holy Cross schools and colleges, such as St. Joseph Higher Secondary School has a special program for the poor and underprivileged. Robi Purification mentions that they have a responsibility for the children of rich people because they want to teach them, educate them. At the same time, they have the responsibility for

those who don't have - the poor and the underprivileged. Therefore, they have almost 200 students, who are studying the college campus in the afternoon. They get a basic education. As they don't always have proper nutrition, they are provided with some meals (Interview with Purification, January 18, 2016).

Although Holy Cross missionaries have been trying to serve the poor and underprivileged in the county and they have different programs concerning poverty alleviation and social justice, many of their programs and services are part of the broader missionary projects which are specially designed to achieve certain missionary goals, such as evangelization. For example, Peixotto (1992b) claimed in the context of third world countries, Holy Cross is considered a missionary Church. Thus, one of the primary goals of the Congregation is to serve the poor and oppressed. Morin (1994) argued that Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries in the world and is confronted by poverty. Therefore, they commit themselves to the preferential option for the poor.

Although Holy Cross missionaries emphasize on 'preferential option for the poor' in education, they have intensified the program in post-war Bangladesh. They emphasized "preferential option for the poor" in the new country because there was a great need to support the people of the country, and they reflected on how their institutions such as Notre Dame College can attach more to that programs. Therefore, they made some changes to college policies to bring some more students and open programs for poor students (Interview with Peixotto, February 5, 2016).

Although they claimed that Notre Dame College has been serving the poor and underprivileged through formal and non-formal educational programs, the college mostly fails to serve the poor or has preferential options for the poor through formal or regular educational programs at the college. The poor students who get financial support or get admitted under the Martin Hall program belong to their Catholic community. Therefore, the poor and underprivileged belonging to other religions are excluded from the programs. Moreover, as the admission policy at the college is based on meritocracy, there is very little scope for the poor to get admitted in the college. The question also arises how the 'preferential option for the poor' is being practiced at the college that charges tuition and educates wealthy students. Studies claim that Catholic schools around the world charges tuitions and educate wealthy students (Grace & O'Keefe 2007; Robert & Morrison 2009).

Moreover, there is tension between the mission of Catholic education and the educational market-place that has been taking place in recent years. Catholic education is a global education enterprise of the Catholic Church (Whittle 2015; Grace 2002). As a result of this market economy in education, Catholic educators are adopting a policy of giving more priority to academic achievement sacrificing the preferential option for the poor. It is also argued that as Catholics believe in God's unconditional love for all, they will confirm that belief by a mission of preferential love for the poor, oppressed, excluded, or voiceless. Because of this commitment, it is not only expected that one would find more Catholic schools in areas of poverty but in all Catholic schools, the children who are on the margins will be given attention and support (Arthur 1995; Grace 2003). Notre Dame College is not an exception to market economy policy and is not beyond criticism as they have compromised their educational missions and preferential options for the poor and underprivileged with academic excellence that excludes the poor from formal and regular educational programs.

### **Conclusion**

Vatican II created a major paradigm shift to the Roman Catholic Church and brought significant changes to its religious congregations and educational activities across the globe. Therefore, it brought changes to Holy Cross education at NDC in Bangladesh. The Vatican documents on education emphasized that the effectiveness of their schools and colleges depends on its ability to adapt and meet the local needs and ensures the true reflection of the national Catholic community. Therefore, being a Catholic religious congregation, the Holy Cross Congregation adopted the policy and means suitable for the local context and culture of Bangladesh to realize its educational objectives at NDC. Thus, after Vatican II and the emergence of Bangladesh as a new country, the college decided that one of its main goals must be to try to inspire students to become socially conscious so that they use their intelligence, abilities, and education for the benefit of society and mass people of the country. Hence the college started several projects on campus for the poor, and it tries to get students involved in those projects, or at least to make them aware of what the college tries to do so that they might appreciate the values the college considers as an important duty to the society and the country. However, Holy Cross educators mostly fail to include students in the college's formal and regular educational programs from a poor educational and economic background, and students from indigenous and minority communities.



## References

- Ahmed, S. T. 2018. *Christian Missions in East Bengal: The Life and Times of Archbishop Theotonius Amal Ganguly, CSC (1920-1977)*. Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers.
- Arthur, J. 1995. *The Ebbing Tide: Policy and Principles of Catholic Education*. Herefordshire: Gracewing Publishing.
- Banas, J. 1999. *Notre Dame Literacy School*. Dhaka: Notre Dame College.
- Beiting, M. A. (2005). A case study: Archbishop Hobon high school's journey to coeducation. (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertaion), University of Arkon.
- Bwangatto, A. J. 2014. *Mission from Conversion to Conversation*. Nijmegen: Radboud University Nijmegen.
- Congregation for Catholic Education. 1997. *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*. [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccatheduc\\_doc\\_27041998\\_school2000\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_27041998_school2000_en.html).
- Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977. *The Catholic School*.  
[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccatheduc\\_doc\\_19770319\\_catholic-school\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_19770319_catholic-school_en.html)
- Congregation for Catholic Education. 1988. *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*. [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccatheduc\\_doc\\_19880407\\_catholic-school\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_19880407_catholic-school_en.html)
- Congregation for Catholic Education. 2002. *Consecrated Persons and Their Mission in Schools: Reflections and Guidelines*.
- Congregation for Catholic Education. 2007. *Educating Together in Catholic Schools. A Shared Mission between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful*. [http://www.vatican.va/romancuria/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccatheduc\\_doc\\_20070908\\_educareinsieme\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/romancuria/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20070908_educareinsieme_en.html).
- Congregation for Catholic Education. 2013. *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools. Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love*. [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccatheduc\\_doc\\_20131028\\_dialogointerculturale\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20131028_dialogointerculturale_en.html).
- Constitutions of the Congreagtion of Holy Cross 1988. Retrived from <https://www.holycrossusa.org/article/holy-cross-constitutions/>
- Declaration on Christian Education. 1965. The Vatican Retrieved from [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651028\\_gravissimum-educationis\\_en.html#](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_gravissimum-educationis_en.html#).
- Dziekian, T. 2002. "Holy Cross Charism in Education." In *Asian Holy Cros Educators Conference*, edited by F.B.S. Rozario. Dhaka: Holy Cross Education Commission.
- Farid, M. S. (2020). *The educational mission of the Congregation of Holy Cross in Bangladesh (1947-2016)*. PhD Dissertation, The University of Hong Kong.

- Gillespie, C. P., & Peixotto, J. S. 2001. *The Spirit of Notre Dame: A History of Notre Dame College, Dhaka 1949-2000*. Dhaka: Provincial Holy Cross Fathers.
- Grace, G. 2002. *Catholic Schools: Mission, Markets, and Morality*: Routledge.
- Grace, G. 2003. "First and Foremost the Church Offers Its Educational Service to the Poor: Class, Inequality and Catholic Schooling in Contemporary Contexts." *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 13(1): 35-54.
- Grace, G., & O'Keefe, J. 2007. "Catholic Schools Facing the Challenges of the 21st Century: An Overview." In *International Handbook of Catholic Education*, edited by G. Grace, and J.O'Keefe, 1-11. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Hession, A. 2015. *Catholic Primary Religious Education in a Pluralist Environment*. Veritas Publications.
- Holy Cross in Bengal. 1988. *Holy Cross*, Indiana: Holy Cross Mission Center.
- McKinney, S. J. 2018. "The Preferential Option for the Poor and Catholic Schools." In *Researching Catholic Education*, edited by S Whittle, 95-112. Singapore: Springer.
- McKinney, S. J., & Sullivan, J. Eds. 2013. *Education in a Catholic Perspective*. London: Routledge.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. 1994. *Qualitative Data Analysis*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Morin, R. 1994. "Holy Cross in Bangladesh: The New Challenges." *CSC Internazionale*, viii, 1-12.
- Morris, A. B. 2008. *Fifty Years on: The Case for Catholic Schools*. Chelmsford: Matthew James Publishing.
- Peixotto, J. 1992. "The Other Notre Dame: Christian Education in an Asian World." *Transmission*, XV, 1-8.
- Peixotto, J. 1992b. "Notre Dame College: Education in a Third World Context." Dhaka: The Congregation of Holy Cross.
- Pope Pius XI. 1929. *Divini Illius Magistri*. Online Papal Archive of the Vatican.
- Stake, R. E. 1995. *The Art of Case Study Research*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Sullivan, J. 2001. *Catholic Education: Distinctive and Inclusive*. London: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Timm, R. W. 2002. "Holy Cross in Education: Past (History, Achievements, and Failures)." In *Holy Cross in Education in Asia: Past, Present and Future*, edited by F. B. S. Rozario Rome: Holy Cross Education Commission.
- Whittle, S. 2015. *Towards a Theory of Catholic Education*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Corrado, de R. and Morrison, K 2009. "Catholic Schooling, Identity and Social Justice in Macau." *International Studies in Catholic Education* 1 (2):152-169. doi: 10.1080/19422530903138044.

