

DISCERNMENT EXPERIENCE AT THE HOLY BARNADETTE CENTRE OF KISSIDOUGOU (WEST AFRICA)

Historic of the center

The Sainte Bernadette centre has been in existence since 2000. It was founded with the contribution of a diocesan priest and supported by an organization for the promotion of women. It was given to the sisters Augustine Notre Dame de Paris to be run. Its purpose was to train and educate girls and women who were not in school or who did not have the means to continue their education.



From the outset, the students have received training in machine embroidery, sewing and cutting, layette knitting, and hand embroidery; along with courses in literacy, numeracy, life skills, Christian education; childcare, hygiene, marriage preparation and married life. This training met the public's expectations until 2010. By 2011, the parents of the girls and the husbands of the women were asking for additional sewing skills to give an opportunity to their daughters and wives to make a living. This was done in October 2012 with the beginning of women's sewing in addition to the other training sessions given. More recently we have gone further and added hairdressing training. At the end of each year, we evaluate all courses given, with an announcement of the results in either sewing or embroidery according to the students' chose option. The other courses offered were no deemed longer so important at that time.



Soon the RA will also begin a discernment process to discover a new working method, taking into account all the training received at the centre, to allow for a more transformative education.

1st step:

Listening to the past experiences with end results of year

The arrival in 2018 of Sister Cécile, as treasurer and the second sister there, has allowed for changes in both the economic and administrative running of the centre. This is what she proposed for us,-based on her previous experience as a director-, to set out a written document to give assurance to parents of ours aims in transforming the students ' training. We finally agreed to this proposal by accepting the transformative aspect of the training taken as a whole, and thus the value of continuous assessment.

As she says, "the word flies away but the writing remains". Sister Cécile therefore proposed to draw up a certificate that would

take into account all the training received by the students and make it the main means of assessment without neglecting sewing as the most important part of their training. The sister's proposal was listened to but has taken a while to implement.

2nd step:

Eventually, we made a start on this proposal by agreeing to give value to every aspect of training programme, we thus recognize it to be a transformative education taken as a whole.

Step 3:

We held our first class meeting with the students to explain our new proposed method. Our priority was to give a beautiful quality of experience in the education process, and to allow a sense of release from the pressure of merely delivering results. Students were appreciated in their particular

and personal reality, giving educators the freedom to evaluate more real, good way, on all.

Teachers felt happier with this situation, which in fact made no one feel guilty after the results were announced.

4th step:

After the class meeting, the teaching team called out the graduating students to give each of them their results and advice in person. The person concerned is then allowed to publicly assess herself according to her results and the decisions of the board. It was a worthwhile experience because the learners were made aware of the value of their training and its significance for all of us and our well-being. We also took the decision in council not to announce the end of year results during the ceremony to respect the students' dignity as women, wives, and mothers.

The intermediate classes were given a personalized delivery of the bulletin in a dialogue with the sisters and formatters.



5th step:

The new method has seen many students asking to come back. Some of them brought along their husbands to allow them to start the next year over, despite the board's decision to ask them to start again the year because of their negligence for certain classes in their training. It took a while to review. We have learnt from the success of this venture, which is certainly new but which gives students more opportunities to ensure that they receive the training they need.

For the end-of-year celebration, they all attended a beautiful ceremony.

During our discernment and once we had chosen this route, we said to ourselves: "Either we have a strong demand in the coming year or people will say it is too difficult". However, it is a great surprise to us to see that the very people who were admitted to resume their year were the first to register and external requests are very strong. The parents present praised the

new approach, which has given such life and meaning to this education provided to girls and women. ***Our charism finds its place among the people to whom we are sent.***



Sr Eugénie, Director of the Centre Saint Bernadette of Kissidougou