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MEC MEMORANDUM
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TOWARDS QUALITY INSTRUCTION IN INSTITUTIONS
OF HIGHER LEARNING

To Bureau Directors
Regional Directors
Heads of Private Schools, Colleges
and Universities

1 In the meantime that the Integrated Tertiary Education awaiting final approval by the National Board of Education, this memorandum is being issued for a number of reasons among which are: urgency in view of feedbacks from various sources on some criticisms of instruction at the higher education level. Among the criticisms which require immediate attention and serious concern are the following:

A. The Deanship

The deanship of a college, both at the undergraduate or graduate levels, has always been and still is one of the most sensitive positions in any institution of higher learning. The importance of the position cannot be over-emphasized especially at this time because of the complexities brought about by the explosion of knowledge in all areas of human endeavor and activity. Moreover, the changing values and behavior which have resulted and will continue to effect changes in the patterns of relationship of the college or university with the student and/or parent have made it imperative for the role of the dean to be reviewed and reoriented so that it may effectively respond to the needs of the time.

The work of the dean has never been clearly defined. The dean himself through his personality, scholarship, imagination and leadership brings to the position the necessary breadth and depth that make for greatness. The deanship, therefore, will either be great or mediocre depending upon how much the individual brings in terms of personal and scholarship qualities.

The effective dean extends his concern beyond administrative problems. He is concerned with particularly all areas of knowledge in which the college or university

engages. This makes it necessary for him to be committed to the management of his college and lead his faculty in academic pursuits and research. It is incumbent upon him to draw up a program in which the latest development in all areas of scholarship may be discussed with the cooperation of the chairmen of departments and members of the faculty.

The dean who is effective is an authority in his discipline and is well informed on the various scholarly areas. Such a dean earns the respect of his superiors, colleagues and students.

The effective dean provides faculty members with rich opportunities to grow and develop in their own disciplines. He provides vigorous educational leadership through such measures as holding regular lecture series, and/or conferences in which the faculty themselves take turns in delivering the lectures. He leads in the development of innovative and effective instructional techniques.

It is desirable that every faculty member publish at least one major publication every year in his field of scholarly interest. The institution of an incentive system for rewarding faculty members who are versatile, prolific, and productive and have contributed to the advancement of knowledge through research and publication will encourage more publication. In some of the best institutions, faculty advancement is one of the rewards often given to such faculty members through the leadership of the dean.

B The Faculty

The quality of instruction in any educational institution depends to a large extent on the capability of its faculty, and the strength and excellence of the faculty reflect the kind of leadership exercised by the dean. Among the most important characteristics of a strong faculty are as follows:

The faculty member who is respected by the academic community - both by his peers and students - is he who comes to class well prepared at all times. There is nothing more abhorrent to a student than a faculty member who comes unprepared and because of such unpreparedness resorts to time-killing activities irrelevant to the subject under consideration.

A college or university student expects to have his work assessed and the quality of his performance properly communicated to him by his professor from time to time. There is nothing more disconcerting to a student than to learn that his papers, for example, for which he labored and spent time and energy and which he expects to be read carefully by the professor, have either been unread or simply passed over by an assistant or substitute. Even more tragic is the situation in which a student learns of his failure only at the end of the course or term when it is too late for him to either make up or improve or even withdraw from the course.

Another characteristic of the effective faculty member is his ability to constantly revise and update his syllabus and tailor it to students' learning needs. This can be done only if the faculty member keeps himself informed in his discipline through such means as belonging to a learned society in his discipline, subscribing to publications concerning his field of interest and attending conferences and, in the best cases, not only participates but presents papers on his own research and/or investigations.

The effective faculty member is concerned with making his students learn. Unless the student has learned what he purports to teach, he has not really taught. The time-honored instructional technique at the higher education level is the lecture method. However, it is effective only with some faculty members and with certain types of subject-matter. There are styles of teaching or communicating with the student that are more efficacious than the lecture method. The effective faculty member employs a variety of techniques of teaching that will enhance student learning.

Inasmuch as the primary objective of both faculty and student is to enhance learning on the part of the student and in some cases also that of a professor, the effective faculty member explores as many techniques as possible which actively involve the learner in his own learning rather than limit himself to a one-way passive spoon-feeding approach which is akin to the traditional lecture method.

The effective faculty member manifests understanding and patience with all kinds of learners. He respects the dignity and worth of every student and thus avoids humiliating the low achievers. Instead he inspires them to improve and shows sincere concern for their learning. Thus he is loved and respected rather than cursed and feared.

The most effective faculty member has specific objectives for a lesson, employs techniques designed to achieve them, evaluates the outcomes of his instruction, and provides feedback to the student on his performance so he would have basis for improving his work. Such faculty member earns the respect of his students and peers. He is the pride of the academy.

C Cooperative Programs

Higher education, but most specially, quality higher education, is expensive. It is expensive in terms of its demands on quality faculty, infrastructures such as library, laboratory and other supportive facilities such as equipment, buildings and space.

In view of this reality, one of the most effective means toward maximizing limited institutional resources is the adoption of cooperative programs through consortia by and among colleges and universities, public and private.

It is universally recognized that no institution of higher learning can be a center of excellence in all disciplines or areas of knowledge. The practice of the best institutions of higher learning is to concentrate on certain fields and develop distinctive competence in such areas for which they become recognized and attain fame. This Office looks with favor upon this institutional development approach. Colleges and universities are urged to take steps to initiate various consortia arrangements where one university or college alone cannot operate but can offer strong programs and mutually help each other by combining their resources.

D The Presidency

An institution of higher learning may be likened to a symphony orchestra. A great orchestra derives much of its greatness from its conductor. In like manner the president of a college or university brings into harmony all the various segments of the institution. The great president, like the great conductor, grows professionally and culturally to be able to bring out the best out of every segment of the academic community through his leadership.

In addition, the president provides the needed facilities, improved working conditions, and desirable incentives such as a national promotion system and fringe benefits. More importantly, the president initiates and supports forward-looking academic and research programs aimed at attaining institutional objectives and goals within the context of regional and national development.

2 The foregoing are at best suggestive and are by no means exhaustive. It is naturally expected that each institution of higher learning take immediate steps, if it has not yet done so, to assess its resources and capabilities in delivering relevant programs to its clientele and develop a plan for progressive development of its faculty and material resources. The social responsibility of institutions of higher learning requires that it institute research and programs that provide opportunities for faculty members and students to help advance human knowledge and to contribute to the solution of some of the more important problems of society. The institutions also have the responsibility of providing leadership in the different professions and educating their clientele to prepare them for occupation or productive endeavor. The responsibilities of the institutions of higher learning are tremendous, their role in society is critical - they cannot thus afford to be content with mediocrity.

3 The head of each institution of higher learning is called upon to cause the distribution of this Memorandum to every dean, faculty member, and other personnel concerned in the academic community, for their reference and guidance.

4 This Office would like to be informed about the steps each institution of higher learning has taken and is taking to improve the quality of instruction. Regional directors are urged to submit to this Office a report on what specific measures each institution is taking to upgrade the quality of instruction at the end of each semester. Such reports will constitute a valuable basis for policy and decision-making on vital concerns related to higher education. Regional offices are also urged, wherever feasible, to intensify supervision of programs and provide assistance to the institutions of higher learning in the pursuit of quality and relevant education.

(SGD) JUAN L. MANUEL
Minister of Education and Culture

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