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## **The Faculty Development Program of Mindanao State University**

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Faculty development programs are institutionalized activities designed to improve instructors' performance. The need for instructional improvement has become the focus of attention in recent years due to many environmental forces affecting educational institutions which have a direct impact on the quality of both students and faculty. Among these forces are the changes of behavior patterns among the studentry, inadequate school budget that fail to keep pace with the ever-increasing student enrollment; the uncontrolled increase in the prices of school supplies, equipment and books; the socio-economic value of education resulting in the swelling of enrollment at all educational levels; the attitude of administrators and teachers toward their work; public accountability, and a host of other problems that have serious implications on the role of the faculty in the educational enterprise.

These environmental forces are perceived to have affected tremendously the quality of the products of both public and private schools. Consequently, the educational system has been accused of academic mediocrity, evidenced by the distressing performance of students in all levels of education and the presence of many teachers with inadequate communication and computation skills, notwithstanding the high expectation of the teacher by the public. The teacher, as a rule, is expected to possess much knowledge and skills and other enviable traits by the very nature of his training.

A review of existing literature commonly points out to the significant association between excellent faculty and excellent students. The common belief that competent teachers breed

quality students is supported by empirical data. And to say that the quality of an educational institution depends upon the quality of its faculty and students bears no contradictions. The teacher, indeed, plays a pivotal role in solving a universal problem of making education better than what it is now.

Because of the importance of the teacher in the teaching-learning activities, most educational institutions adopt a rigorous recruitment and selection procedures not only to obtain the best qualified person for a teaching position but also to meet certain legally mandated requirements. State licensing for teachers like the Professional Board, for instance, provides a reasonable indicator of proficiency. But oftentimes, there is a good deal of difference between the world of work and the classroom where the teacher learns his theories and principles. Hence, the need for a faculty development program in schools, colleges and universities.

### **What Is a Faculty Development Program?**

The faculty development program is a natural consequence of faculty evaluation. After certain weaknesses or deficiencies in instruction and behavior are identified, a development process should follow. A more comprehensive concept is elucidated by John Bruce Francis, thus:

Faculty development may be described as an institutional process which seeks to modify the attitudes, skills, and behavior of faculty members toward greater competence and effectiveness in meeting student needs, their own needs, and the needs of the institution. Successful program change the faculty feel about their professional roles, increase their knowledge and skills in those roles, and alter the way they carry them out in practice. Instructional development increases faculty awareness of the importance of teaching, provides specific and intensive training in classroom skills, and establishes

There are great variations in the definitions of faculty development involving the sharing of resources. Eash and Lane<sup>2</sup> developed four definitions which were used in their study. These covered the area of faculty exchange, faculty retraining, faculty updating, and individual professional growth.

Faculty exchange involves the moving of faculty members from one institution to another for the purpose of relieving an excess of faculty or augmenting the faculty where there is shortage. Faculty retraining is the process by which a faculty in one academic area is trained in other areas where there is a need. Faculty updating is a type of development which allows a faculty from one institution to study in another institution to acquire new knowledge and develop advanced teaching and research skills in a particular discipline.

Individual professional growth permits a faculty to leave his school on sabbatical and study in another institution, which includes time for research, seminars and tutorial sessions with the faculty.

It is observed that faculty development as a process has received little empirical investigation not only in the Philippines but in other countries as well. Most studies that were done investigated the problems of enhancing teachers' professional growth and their attitude toward faculty development. Literature on the subject indicate that the program is envisioned primarily to improve teaching competencies in order to upgrade instructors' performance. While this strategy may have attenuated mediocrity in classroom instruction, it has failed to address other important needs in education such as curriculum development in terms of formulating new and upgraded program relevant to regional and national development, skills training in other disciplines, and redirecting faculty capabilities towards research and other academic pursuits.

### **The Need for Faculty Development**

Education is dynamic. In order to be relevant and effective, the teacher should keep pace with the growth of knowledge and other modern technologies — otherwise, his teaching would become obsolete. As schooling becomes accessible to all and the equalization of educational opportunities has emerged as a government policy, the student population has become more heterogenous and problematic. This changing nature of the student body characterized by variations in academic ability, differences in cultural backgrounds and educational preparations necessitates the adjustment of a school program to suit the needs, interests and aspirations of students. Appropriate responses to the changing student populations are, therefore, needed. The faculty must recognize this need and should be willing to undergo further training for improvement.

The attitude towards work is also an area of concern. The teacher must not only have the professional training for knowledge and skills but must likewise possess a wholesome attitude toward his work. It is to be noted that efficiency and effectiveness are best attained through a balanced combination of knowledge, skills and abilities on one hand and values and attitudes on the other.

Research and publication is another area of challenge to the faculty. To be able to face this challenge, it should be encouraged to develop skills in undertaking research and improve skills in writing for publication.

A faculty development program is also needed when an educational institution decides to adopt innovative programs. Faculty must be trained to utilize new instructional materials and technologies. A comprehensive development program will give the faculty more flexibility in meeting the challenges of change.

### **Organizing the Program**

What are the considerations in organizing development programs for the faculty? One basic criterion is the stated mission of the institution because it is the framework around which the present and future programs and activities of a school, college or university is built.<sup>3</sup> Also of prime importance are the capabilities of the administrators and other personnel to undertake program planning and implementation, financial readiness of the institution, and the values and attitudes of both administrators and faculty toward professional upgrading and the possible upsetting of the status quo. It should be noted that programs usually fail because of the absence of support from those who are affected by it. To be successful, therefore, a faculty development program ought to be developed together with the faculty taking into account the overall climate of the educational institution.

What department or unit in the school should handle the program? In fairly large institutions, this could be under the supervision of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, or its equivalent, or may be placed under the Human Resource Development Office. In smaller institutions, this could be directly under the Office of the President, Office of the Director, or its equivalent. However, some schools do not have a formal office for this purpose but have some form of training which may also serve the purpose of developing the faculty.

### **Studies on Faculty Development**

As mentioned earlier, several studies have been done on the area of faculty development which dealt mostly on the issues and problems of the institutions and the faculty themselves.

One survey on the types of development was done by Centra.<sup>4</sup> Studying more than 700 institutions in the United States, he found that 405 had some kind of development unit. These units can be found more in large universities (6%) than in four-year and two-year colleges. The staffing of these units ranged from a single Director or Coordinator working alone to a more

complex organization. Funding of the program generally come from the institution (70%), foundation grants, government subsidy, alumni and others. The same trend in financing is also observed in Philippine schools.

What are some practices in faculty development? Wolotkiewics<sup>5</sup> cited a system of educational planning and program development at the Medical College of Virginia which was established to "assist educational units in defining their goals more precisely and assist in goal accomplishment." Among other areas, the major concentration of activities was developing the faculty so that it can function well in the university setting.

Activities in eight areas were conducted to attain the above objective. These consisted of workshops on simulations and self-instructional packages, conversion of departmental curriculum to self-instruction setting subject matter objectives, faculty retreat, a follow-up retreat, faculty in-service series, human interaction skills and curriculum development. From these areas, a model for faculty development emerged which Centra<sup>6</sup> categorized into 28 practices and grouped into four main headings, namely, high faculty involvement, instructional assistance practices, traditional practices, and emphasis on assessment.

High faculty involvement consists of items to acquaint faculty with the goals of the school and the nature of the students enrolled, advising, discussion of current trends and issues in education, senior faculty working with junior teachers or new recruits, consultation with other faculty on improving course requirements, and a system of self-improvement.

Institutional assistance practices provide a specialist to assist individual faculty in the development of course objectives and design, acquiring teaching skills and the use of teaching strategies, test construction and student evaluation, including the use of instructional technology as teaching aid.

Traditional practices include the "visiting scholars program," awards for teaching excellence, sabbatical leave,

activities to improve research and scholarship skills, reduced teaching load to enable teachers to work on course revision and/or prepare new courses and travel grants to refresh or update knowledge.

Emphasis on assessment covers a periodic review of faculty performance, attendance in professional conferences, systematic evaluation of courses, and other activities to improve faculty performance.

Some of these ideas were also expounded by Finn<sup>7</sup> in an article that discussed the current efforts to improve the public schools in the United States. The "excellence movement," one of the "most promising initiatives invigorating the drive to improve American public education," has generated varied interests and ideas on how to improve schooling. Among these, it is the use of the "master teacher" to help a new teacher in classroom instruction, design or develop curriculum, or teach difficult children.

Investigating the problems in organizing a program for faculty development, researcher Eash and Lane<sup>8</sup> gave some pertinent findings, among which were faculty imbalance, that is, a surplus of faculty in one discipline and a shortage in others; and, the need for a multi-institutional program to inform the faculty of the need and opportunity for faculty development and exchange.

On the attitudes of Muslim teachers towards professional growth, Noor<sup>9</sup> revealed that despite the attendant problems, teachers and administrators strongly agree that they should be given the opportunity to avail of all types of in-service education on official time rather than the leaders of teachers associations.

### **Problems in Faculty Development**

In their study, "Evaluation of a Model for Faculty Development Implications for Educational Policy," Eash and Lane<sup>10</sup> contended that "there are few constraints or legal

structures in institutional policy that would handicap a faculty development program incorporating any or all of the four constructs" of faculty exchange, retraining, updating and professional growth. On the problem of faculty imbalance, for instance, all the administrators involved in the study expressed the need to manage the problem of faculty surpluses and shortages in the different areas of discipline in a "time of budget restraint." It seemed that institutions have "not explored in depth the possible dimensions of programs in faculty development" and concluded that the "area is poorly defined, conceptually underdeveloped, and largely neglected in higher education."

Faculty sharing between surplus and shortage institutions may be explored. However, it was observed that since there was much commonality in the areas of surpluses and shortages among institutions, the more pressing need, if the faculty is to be deployed and utilized effectively, is retraining and upgrading.<sup>11</sup>

Despite its benefits, there is still a problem of the "lack of enthusiasm" for faculty development program, especially when "serious personal adjustment is entailed." This is particularly true in the areas of exchange and retraining when married faculty members have to leave their families, or when one has to live in another cultural environment different from his own, like a Muslim living in a Christian community, and vice-versa. One could also foresee the resistance of Deans or Department chairmen because of the loss of control over their personnel.

Among the problems identified by Maruhom<sup>12</sup> and Noor<sup>13</sup> were: (1) their income is not enough to cover the cost of advance education, (2) lack of good pay incentives, (3) a low promotion in salary and rank, (4) family responsibilities, (5) inadequate peace and order, (6) scholarship grant "was not open, neither encouraged by superiors for teachers" (missed scholarship was largely due to communication gap between teachers and administrators) and (7) strong family ties and religious values which do not readily allow women to leave the home without strong assurance of their security and protection.

Other studies show a high turnover of faculty members who have enjoyed one form of scholarship or another which is really a great loss to the institution concerned. Also, because of some weaknesses in program implementation, some of those who were sent on study grant for upgrading failed to finish a degree because of academic delinquency. But generally, the most important problem is financial, especially for private schools that solely depend on students tuition fees for their operational expenses.

All these problems in faculty development may be summarized into four major areas, namely: (1) a socialized professorate that has fixed attitudes of performance expectations and responsibilities; (2) weak program planning systems of the responsible academic administrators, which are haphazard and short-range; (3) lack of development capital and fiscal incentives for programs; and, (4) resistance of traditional structure (e.g., departments and colleges) to overall academic planning.

Despite the numerous problems, programs for the development of the faculty are here to stay. As long as schools exist, as long as there is a public clamor for academic excellence, relevance and accountability, educational institutions shall continue to embark on a suitable program for the development of their faculty.

### Notes

1. Rita J. Wolotkiewicz, *College Administrator's Handbook* (Boston, Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1980), p. 103.
2. Maurice J. Eash and John J. Lane, "Evaluation of a model for faculty Development: Implications for Educational Policy" in *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, edited by Eva

Baker, a quarterly journal of the americal Educational Research Association, Vol. 7 (1985), p. 128.

3. Ibid., p. 104.

4. Ibid., p. 105.

5. Ibid., p. 108.

6. Ibid., p. 109.

7. Chester E. Finn Jr., "Education Enters the Market Place," in *Dialogue* edited by Stephen Espie, Vol. 2 (1987), p. 41.

8. Ibid., p. 129.

9. Ramli A. Noor, "Attitude of Maranao Teachers Toward Professional Growth," unpublished Masteral Thesis, Bukidnon State College, Malaybalay, Bukidnon, 1984.

10. Ibid., p. 130.

11. Ibid., p. 132.

12. Myrnalyn Maruhom, "Educational Growth Problems of Maranao Teachers," unpublished Masteral Thesis, Bukidnon State College, Malaybalay, Bukidnon, 1980.

13. Ibid., p 82.