STUDENT HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT: BEYOND CURRICULUM
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ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVES
This special session discussed:
1. an educational strategy to ensure the holistic development of students;
2. a recommendation to create a better controlled learning environment;
3. an administrative solution to faculty absenteeism problems;
4. transparency in school finance as to the student tuition fees and academic services;
5. an administrative marketing mix strategy for schools to create a better social reputation; and
6. the start of a student “culture of research,” focusing less on grades and more on educational experience and knowledge fulfillment.

INTRODUCTION
To follow the program curriculum approved by the Commission on Higher Education is compulsory and obligatory. However, the courses, mandated school activities, and administrative educational thrusts of individual schools through the academic affairs office may not be enough to satisfy students’ craving for knowledge, whether that knowledge is in the scope of the program they are enrolled in, or just a temporary preoccupation they are engaged in because of their individual or group hobbies, social issues, trends, and fads. After graduation, these temporary preoccupations will haunt them, making them focus their careers in reaching for what they enjoy doing best, equipped with the lessons, concepts and academic experiences of college. Thus, educational institutions should find ways to create a controlled learning environment, where educators feed hungry minds with academic concepts as well as uniquely supervised topics and interests which in turn would be individual student preoccupations leading to individual research and a sense of fulfillment, consciously knowing that this hard work is not part of the computation of their grades.

When teachers are absent, students may get short-changed of the education expected to be delivered to them. Teachers are the frontlines of this task. It is a shame if schools unintentionally create students who do not anymore care if all the concepts and learning experiences in the syllabus are effectively delivered.

Though teachers do not plan to be absent, uncontrollable circumstances make them do so, knowing that these absences will reflect in their performance evaluations. Teacher-absences are also a concern to administrators. It is a common administrative problem. May it be a university of more than 300 professors, or a college of even less than a dozen professors, the administrative stress ratio is still proportional.

“Whatever…”

Students have diverse interests, information they feel is worth searching for rather than the topics and concepts in the course syllabus. Even inside the classroom, these interests preoccupy their minds. If educators will also focus on the interests of students, it will bridge these ideas with the curriculum. Students’ holistic development is not achieved by the curriculum alone. The school in itself is the learning environment, and the classroom is the best venue for development, where the teachers somehow emanate authority and control. Ironically, students at times lack interest in topics which they consider “academic.”

“Do we have class?”

The usual class schedule is one and a half hours. In most schools, if there is no prior announcement from the course professor, the students are obliged to wait for their teacher for fifteen minutes, after which they can leave the classroom. The dean’s office or the office of the program director may be able to know beforehand if the professor will not come to class, and will announce the news to the students.

When a professor is not able to attend classes, students wait in the classroom with two frames of mind: “Cool! The professor is absent! Break time!” or “This is not fair! I am paying hard-earned money for my education. I demand knowledge from my professors!”

Students paid for their tuition fees in full. They are not given a rebate for every class a professor has been absent.
FEEDING HUNGRY MINDS

It is proposed that a one-hour lecture could substitute for the academic lecture class of the absent professor, thus ensuring that students receive knowledge from reputable sources, and not just street-smart peer conversations where information at times is not derived from scholarly work, first-hand sources, and academic expertise.

The office of academic affairs, through the college deans, may create a pool of lecturers, with carefully selected topics that are interesting to students. These topics outside the curriculum and individual course syllabus may range from simple information on about any topic of interest, to serious academic, social, or political issues facing students.

Students will not anymore feel short-changed of the educational services they feel entitled to receive for the fees they paid. The absence of the course professors may feel less of a loss to them since they will be looking forward to a topic of their interest. Schools who adopt this concept will create students who will engage in individual research because the lecturers will open their interest on the topic, and consciously encourage them to learn more by themselves, not focusing on grades since this is not part of the syllabus, but searching for the truth and reflecting on how these topics will help them in life.

Through this, educational institutions will be able to reach out to students and make a significant connection. Through the careful choice of topics, educators will significantly contribute to students’ holistic development, beyond curriculum.

ADMINISTRATIVE PREROGATIVE

The following are some policies and lines of thought that school administrators may consider if they decide to use this concept in their institutions:

1. The program is for the best interest of student development. The lecture substitution program does not justify teacher absenteeism.
2. Substitute topic lecturers will only be of service in their free time. This will not in any way affect their regular class schedule.
3. Substitution pay should be given to the lecturer who took over the class in lieu of the regular class.
4. The choice of topic should be decided by the substitute lecturer and the department head or dean. Students will naturally leave the class if they are not interested with the topic.
5. Students will not be graded and attendance is not compulsory. Thus, the choice of topic should be decided with the best interest of the students in mind.
6. Substitute lecturers may be given recognition during faculty meetings or institutional celebrations.

Other policies and guidelines should be decided upon by the office of academic affairs, the college deans, and the department heads.