

COMMENT

Higher education commandments

QUALITY TEACHING:

Rules promote demonstrable actions, deliverables



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WITH the development of higher education in Malaysia, and global competition and collaboration, there has emerged a new language register in the domain of higher education.

It is the new language of managerialism, which encompasses concepts such as education providers, regulators, stakeholders, drivers, marketing counsellors, product leaders, module developers, facilitators and entrepreneurs.

Lecturers are no longer ordinary, but the status hierarchy includes

Royal, Distinguished, Emeritus, Associate, Senior Professors and Resident Fellows. Teachers look small under the canopy of impressive and illustrious words. But really, at all levels, from preschool to university, all are teachers.

The 10 Commandments were written in stone and are unchangeable. The 10 commandments in education, which promote evidence-based and demonstrable actions and deliverables, are as follows:

KEY performance indicators for everything measurable and deliverable that is promised and planned to be done;

EVIDENCE of blended and hybrid teaching-learning, multidisciplinary and transdisciplinarity across subjects;

STUDENT-CENTRED and student learning time;

INDUSTRY and professional body focus;

INTERNSHIP experience and focus on enrolment to employment;

HIGHER Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), which are generic and universal skills;

EVIDENCE of the soft skills mentioned in every course and lesson;

COUNSELLING, including marketing, academic subject and general psychological counselling;

EVIDENCE of creativity and innovation in teaching, research,

publication, community service, management and governance; and,

COMMERCIALISATION of everything that can be commercialised.

It is fun to work in higher education. However, it can also be stressful and depressing for people who are not scholars. It can also be difficult for true scholars who want autonomy and the freedom not to comply with all the commandments.

The commandments are surface-level directions and contents of minimum standards of performance. There are layers of depth in the sacred art and science of teaching and learning.

Take the case of HOTS. As promoted, these are actually generic thinking skills, which are subject-specific thinking skills, with specialised modes of thinking. In addition, there are differentiated notions of intelligence and varieties of mind, as well as habits of mind and mindset. There are knowledge authorities in any of these various foci of thinking.

Every teacher who teaches in school must possess a teaching diploma or degree. In higher education, lecturers just have to apply for a licence to teach. As of now, instructors, teachers, lecturers or professors — call them what you

may — in tertiary institutions do not have diplomas or degrees in teaching in higher education. The exception are maybe those in faculties of education who were trained as professional educators and had worked in schools before joining universities.

Initiatives have been taken by several universities to encourage their teaching staff to pursue and acquire degrees in teaching in higher education. There is already the near completion of the policy that every teacher in Malaysia must have a university degree. There is a similar plan that all nurses must have degrees in nursing or the medical sciences.

In the teaching profession, there is already the move in several countries and an initiative in Malaysia that educators must pursue master's and doctoral degrees. The agenda to encourage every university teacher to obtain qualifications in higher education has been set and, soon, there will be a critical mass of higher education instructors who possess certificates in teaching in higher education.

In a competitive world in the near future, only those with such qualifications will be admitted as instructors at that level.

During a gathering of religious scholars recently, two pertinent

matters were raised. First was that religion, as a subject matter, was about revealed knowledge, not acquired or human-constructed knowledge. Second was that while religion cared for the here and now, the ultimate goal was for the hereafter, for life in the eternal kingdom. By what commandments, legislation, procedures, regulations or rules do secular organisations have the right to invade and evaluate religious domains and commandments?

Also, it is obvious that the sciences, whether physical or human sciences, focus on inquiry, discovery, problem-solving, trial-and-errors experiments and learning. Religion, on the other hand, is about the Truth, which is divinely given, not one to be discovered. It is about faith, and surrendering and committing to God and His teachings, with all the embedded wisdom and divine ethics in the sacred texts. There are no equivalent grand theory texts in the secular sciences, but the holy texts are the grand intelligent designs themselves.

How are the 10 commandments in education aligned with the original 10 Commandments?

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