

COMMITTEE FOR RELATIONS WITH INDUSTRY - ITS ROLE IN THE
TRAINING OF ENGINEERS

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Education and particularly higher education has undergone various transformations in concept and purpose. It has transformed from the concept that education is a privilege of the ruling nobility and where it is related to and serves only the interests of the ruling class, to one where education is considered as a tool to be used by the society as a whole for human development and betterment. Where education is acknowledged as a tool to serve the need of the society the educational programme must then of necessity take into account the societies needs and the society must be involved in formulating and running the educational programme. This need to involve the society becomes even more imperative for such practical studies as engineering. A meaningful engineering education programme must take into account Industry's needs and must involve Industry in its formulation and running. The centre of learning then stops being an ivory tower and instead it is integrated with industry. The academics, i.e. teachers and students should have the chance of participating in the activities of Industry even if to a limited extent and Industry should be able to sue the engineering school to solve some of its problems and also assist in the teaching even if on a limited scope.

Determined therefore to set up a meaningful engineering teaching related to the needs of Tanzania Industry, it was right from the beginning ensured that Tanzania Industry was involved in the planning for the Faculty of Engineering. At first there was the formulation of the broad principles and guidelines on which the Faculty was to be based. These were prepared by a Working Party which consisted of representatives of various sectors of Industry together with academics from both University and outside.

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The Working Party was involved throughout the planning and construction stage of the Faculty and did give advice on such issues as facilities to be provided in the Workshops etc. and also on curricula.

But even after the Faculty planning work is completed and construction completed and the Faculty starts admitting students, Industry must continue to be involved. For this reason the Board of the Faculty of Engineering established the Committee for Relations with Industry with the following terms of reference:-

To advise the Faculty Board on all matters concerning the relations of the Faculty with Industry particularly on:-

- (a) Adaption of curricula to the needs of Tanzania.
- (b) Practical training of engineering students on the site or in factories during vacation time.
- (c) Faculty services offered to industry e.g. laboratory facilities and research work on applied level.
- (d) Assistance in providing Tutorial Assistant Trainees to join the Faculty staff after completion of post-graduate studies.

The Committee is made up of representatives of Industry, representatives of the Faculty and the University and two representatives of the Engineering students. The secretariat is provided by the Faculty.

The Committee has now been in existence for about two years and it is the opinion of the writer that it has succeeded to a point in discharging the responsibilities given to it. Of course there have been shortcomings but from its experience there is no doubt that its existence and its proper functioning will go a long way towards making the Engineering training at the University more meaningful and relevant to the concrete circumstances pertaining Tanzania. The University in general, and the Faculty in particular, has shown keen interest in making the Committee succeed. It is therefore up to the Industry to ensure that it makes full use of this Committee in shaping and influencing the

working of the Faculty so as to ensure that the Faculty works in close liason with Industry and thus the Faculty does indeed become and continues to be a peoples institution. Industry's voice must always be heard on this Committee and this can only be done if Industry does send representatives to the Committee meetings or written views or comments are sent. With this sort of cooperation it is sure that the Faculty will be able to produce manpower with the capability to face and solve problems of Tanzanian Industry and any failure to do so shall not be blamed on the insensitivity of the Faculty to the country's needs but it will be taken in the right spirit of it being a lesson from which Industry and the Faculty can learn for better future programmes. Industry has also shown keen interest in this cooperation. For example there was little problem in placing students for their practical work during their last long vacation. It is hoped that this cooperation shall not only continue but it shall be strengthened.

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