

Editorial

QUESTIONS OF CONTEXT

In the paper by Janna and Jakubowski in the current issue evaluation and rating of faculty are discussed in detail. How can we decide the level of merits of a faculty member? Once one accepts that faculty members need to be evaluated then the question of how to do it is in the foreground and can easily evolve into a complex controversial issue for faculty discussions. In Janna and Jakubowski's paper a comprehensive system involving teaching, service and research criteria is put forward. That such evaluations cannot be entirely free of circumstantial randomness is quite clear. On the minor point of classroom size and student evaluation one notices that variations between results from student evaluations of the same faculty member may vary between smaller and larger classes. Approaching the question from the side of evaluation content is just one aspect. Another aspect is the dependence on the system and structure of higher education. There is for example, a difference between the authority of a Department Chairman in the USA and a Department Chairman in other countries, as for example in Germany or in France. It would be inappropriate for a department chairman to input his own evaluation of a faculty member without referring to a committee, or rather to an "independent" evaluation questionnaire. Legal questions regarding the authority and methodology of making evaluations abound. In the former German Democratic Republic which is now East Germany, some universities are evaluating faculty to be considered for further employment. Evaluations are carried out by questionnaires to all staff members who are being asked about their 'opinion' on the qualifications and conduct of the faculty. This reminds us of some of the strategies used by the now defunct regime. All this brings me to the question of context. Within democratic society frameworks, many more or less democratic procedures can be and are being employed. Implementation of evaluations of faculty is dependent on the system, structure and legal framework, even if we ignore personal variations in attitudes and relevance of criteria. Examples could be the influence on the rating of functions such as being an officer in a community organization (see Janna and Jakubowski) or in a bygone context possibly 'member of the party'.

Another question of context is the name of our journal. Occasionally, I have heard comments that we should drop the Applied from the title, and become the International Journal of Engineering Education. The original rationale was that the journal would appeal to engineering technology and polytechnic level, as well as to university level institutions. As it has turned out the levels have become diffuse and sometimes unidentifiable. Especially from the USA the comment came that applied refers to vocational rather than tertiary education, which does not fit the context and contents of the journal. As these comments were numerous, we have decided to rename the journal as from 1992 as the **International Journal of Engineering Education**. So much for context.

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