

UNIPED
84

51

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE
REORGANIZATION PROGRAM OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CONCEPCION

RUDOLPH P. ATCON

UNESCO Expert on
University Organization

INTRODUCTORY:

The University of Concepción is situated on a campus at the eastern periphery of the city of Concepción in the central region of Chile. Its educational functions are carried out through seven large units:

Medicine
Law
Agronomy
Dentistry
Chemistry & Pharmacy
Education & Philosophy
Physics & Mathematics

These are traditional professional schools furnishing a variety of professional courses such as:

Medical
Nursing
Dental
Pharmaceutics
Agronomy
Chemical Engineering
Mechanical Engineering
Law
Economics & Commerce
Journalism
Social Welfare Services

as well as those aimed at the formation of secondary school teachers, with specializations in:

Mathematics & Physics
Biology & Chemistry
History & Geography
Spanish
French
English

Each of the seven units for academic purposes is called a "faculty", headed by a Dean. For administrative and fiscal purposes each of the same units is named a "school", headed by a Director. While a dean is elected by all members of his faculty, the director of the corresponding school is nominated by the University Council but appointed by and responsible to the Board of Regents.

All deans and directors together compose the University Council which is chaired by the Rector. He serves simultaneously as President of the Board of Regents, whose eleven regular members are elected to their posts every three years by the General Assembly of the Corporation, an independent body of three hundred private citizens. The Board is composed of these eleven members and the President, Vice-President, Secretary-General and Treasurer of the University.

The entire Corporation is sustained by varying percentages of the income from the National Lottery of Concepción, by private donations, legacies and contributions, as well as a substantial annual State subsidy. Within certain legal restrictions governing all private corporations, higher education in general and civil service salaries in the field of medicine in particular, the University is free to pursue whatever policy and organization it deems appropriate, necessary or desirable.

Founded in 1919 as a private corporation, Concepción University enjoyed the long and fruitful direction of don Enrique Molina Garmendia, educator and philosopher, man of letters and idealism, whose 35-year leadership gave the Institution its present form, its campus and objectives. Retired from the Presidency in 1955, covered with honors for his life-long dedication to the cause of education, he continues as permanent Honorary Rector of the University.

NEW INITIATIVES:

In 1956 a radical change took place which brought to the helm a man from outside, a former professor of Concepción who was teaching civil law at the University of Chile in Santiago when he was offered the Presidency of Concepción University. Such a step by itself represented a remarkable deviation from the Latin American norm symbolizing the advent of a different orientation.

The new Direction undertook the task of consolidating and amplifying the already accomplished, and to promote a program of expansion that is intended to take the University beyond its present limits as a regional institution. Its declared policy is to turn a loose aggregation of professional schools into a close-knit organization with a single purpose, into a university willing and able to serve com-

munity needs as they exist or as they arise with the growth of society. Every effort is made to further the integration of present professional school policies, the creation of new courses, both professional and scientific, the growth of scientific research, the expansion of linkages with the community, with surrounding industries, commerce and agriculture, and the consolidation of the University's position within the panorama of Chile's growing economy as a useful and purposeful contributing instrument.

1. This objective has already met with considerable success. The policy-making bodies of the University have been cooperating to the limit in the creation of an environment propitious to change and progress. Among the positive accomplishments to date stands in first place a large-scale urbanization plan of the campus. Large tracts of land, 82 hectares of forest-covered hills, were recently purchased and added to the 64 hectares already owned by the University in addition to 144 hectares of adjacent farmland. This step rounds out the real estate at Concepción and insures ample space for decades if not centuries to come.
2. Simultaneously, a first-rate architectural concern was commissioned to project an integrated construction program to insure uniform utilitarian and esthetic criteria for all construction over the coming decades. This study was undertaken in coopera-

tion with an UNESCO expert in university organization to guarantee that the final outcome be a sound plan for an up-to-date integrated university campus. The task was completed only last month and at once approved by the Board of Regents who authorized the first constructions to be initiated immediately.

3. The University also undertook to revise, rejuvenate, integrate and expand its academic and administrative organization. This University Reorganization Plan calls for successive steps over several years to turn the University of Concepción into a modern institution capable of meeting the multiple demands of Chile for qualified specialized manpower. Last year UNESCO was asked for and granted technical assistance in the form of an expert in university organization, whose preliminary findings and recommendations were accepted and approved in December of 1957 and whose efforts of putting into practical application these ideas are currently being financed by the University.
4. These recommendations call for a fundamental change in organizational aspects concerned with teaching and research in the basic natural sciences, through the creation of four University Institutes, one each for Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics, with the way open to establish more as need and financial resources will indicate. University legislation to this

effect was passed on June 3rd. The immediate construction authorized will concentrate on making available the needed additional space the four new university units will require to be installed and functioning by March 1959.

5. On April 10, 1958, the national government through the Ministry of Agriculture donated to the University another 100 hectares of rich land in the neighbouring province of Chillán, headquarters of the National Development Project which goes under the name of "Plan Chillán". Three new courses were initiated this year, one each in Philosophy, History and Biochemistry. Summer and Winter courses, as well as regular extension courses have been greatly amplified and next year a University Radio Station will be reaching thousands of citizens through a large-scale adult education program.

THE NEED FOR UNIVERSITY REORGANIZATION:

1. Higher education in Latin America is almost everywhere centralized, State controlled and identified exclusively with professional schooling. This unwarranted equation of university education with professional careers represents a real barrier to the industrial, technological, economic and social growth of this Continent, despite fervent declarations by all concerned that this is just the type of growth desired.

2. Latin America needs specialized men in great numbers, men with initiative, imagination and know-how in the most varied fields of human knowledge and endeavor - more desperately perhaps than machines, unintegrated money grants or abstract theoretical planification. Logically, the universities should supply this qualified manpower. However, despite heavy investments representing a real drain on the national budgets which almost exclusively support these institutions, the job is not properly done.

3. Because we are dealing with a system of education dedicated to the erroneous proposition that all social needs, all specialized technology and diversified production can be satisfied and forever attended to by a handful of traditional all-powerful professional schools.
 - a. It is a system of education which can think of no solutions to new demands except in terms of old mechanisms within the sphere of authorized and vested interests of the established schools.

 - b. It is a system of education which can not conceive of the right of an individual to acquire knowledge and background education for their own sake or for the interest he as a person may have in a given special field, without immediate utilitarian application.

- c. It is a system of education which is not flexible enough to meet a sudden demand for specialized training that the society in which it operates clearly necessitates but can not obtain within its own boundaries.

It does seem obvious that such an educational system has clearly outlived its purpose.

4. Pressures are building up within the social structure of Latin America directed against this impasse and in favor of changes which the universities must provide if these societies are to meet with success the challenges of today and tomorrow.
5. If such tensions find no outlet, no understanding, no mechanism at the top to channel them into new productive activities, if allowed to accumulate further they are bound to lead to violence when violence is the last thing the Western World wants. Hence the tremendous importance of a farsighted policy of varied technical assistance, of unofficial but effective help and sincere cooperation generously offered.
6. For obvious reasons one of the critical control mechanisms is the system of higher education. If given a chance with outside help to change and to transform itself into an in-

strument of innovation and a creator of new opportunities, it is still possible that the tensions, aspirations and needs confronting the group as a whole will resolve themselves in an evolutionary form without recourse to disruptive measures. This is the objective to which Concepción University is dedicated. Any assistance proffered to this University will directly or indirectly contribute to this objective.

7. An administration united in purpose, inspired by common ideals and dedicated to their realization - a physical plant characterized by its integration and a policy of organic growth - an institution where free enterprise operates as practically nowhere else in Latin American higher education - and a community favorable to progress - represent a set of undeniably favorable factors. These factors are now being channelled into a Reorganization Plan which is going to turn the University of Concepción into a free and flexible institution of service to the society, patterned on the precepts and in the best tradition of private U.S. educational plants.
8. The four University Institutes just created are cornerstones of the whole reform plan, dedicated as they are to the following objectives:

- a. Service all university schools in their undergraduate courses;
- b. Pursue scientific research;
- c. Train and form specialists in their respective fields;
- d. Develop new disciplines and specialties to meet both current and future needs of the country;
- e. Promote extension and specialization courses on a regional, national and international basis, serving as training centers for both auxiliary and post-graduate personnel;
- f. Promote expansion of inter-university exchange and cooperation.

If they succeed to break the hold of the professional schools on university education, to create new interchangeable independent courses and to establish a really serious atmosphere for scientific work, all else will follow from there. They will of themselves form the central core of a future liberal arts college, of new ideas and new methods, of new generations trained to learn before they specialize professionally.

THE NEED FOR OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE:

Certain steps must now be taken to insure the successful operation of these new University units. The University of Concepción on its own is already following step by step the recommendations of the UNESCO specialist, but would welcome outside assistance and cooperation to carry them out in the most efficient and useful way possible and without undue delays.

SPECIALISTS IN CURRICULUM CONSTRUCTION:

1. In the first place, and as soon as possible, four specialists in curriculum construction, one each for Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics, must be selected and brought to Concepción. Each of these men should be chosen with the greatest of care, since their recommendations and work will become basic starting points for a new trend in University operation. In preference, they should not be professional educationalists. Each should be a scientist of renown in his own field, with many years of teaching experience; preferably at more than one university to allow for comparisons and insure flexibility of approach. If possible, he should have served at some time during his career as chairman of his Department, to know of the problems of integrating courses and distributing responsibilities among all members of the Department. None would need more than two or three months to accomplish what has been described above, given each specialist upon arrival finds everything prepared and all information available to proceed with his work.

2. At Concepción he would receive summary descriptions of courses demanded by those professional schools in need of the specialty in question. These course descriptions he would then amplify and define in uniform terms and finally integrate into a reduced

number of courses to be given at the given Institute and to be taken in common by students from various professional schools. Further, he would be asked to expand existing facilities for new specialties not yet taught at Concepción.

3. Finally, he would be asked to prepare a comprehensive curriculum for a four-year course which could lead to an equivalent B.A. or B.Sc. degree in this field. If time and opportunity should present themselves, he might even work on a curriculum leading to a Ph.D. degree in the same field. By the time he finished, the Institute should be in possession of an integrated schedule of all courses to be given in it. Preferably this should be presented in some form characteristic of U.S. university courses, using a numerical system which will indicate the level of each course.

DIRECTORS OF INSTITUTES:

To insure the proper development of the four new institutions it is technically advisable and officially desired to engage foreign specialists of outstanding capacity in their respective fields to serve as Directors of the recently created Institutes. With outside help these men should be contracted for a definite

period of time, to assume full responsibility for the organization and integrated expansion of these university units which are fundamental to the entire reorganization program.

1. The qualifications of these men must be outstanding. Each must be known in his field as a sound scientist, with ample teaching experience as well as some administrative ability. They may not be too old and can not be too young, preferably between 40 and 50 years of age. The ideal would be an experienced head of some good university department.
2. Each man must be aware of the uniqueness of the effort undertaken and apply missionary zeal to his job of creating and organizing his unit within the structure of a Latin American institution of higher learning.
3. Each Director will have to apply his full-time energies to the task of administering his Institute, without opportunities for outside consultative work, remunerative or otherwise. It will be his responsibility to determine whether or not there will be sufficient time to teach and how much, though it will be expected that he can continue his own research work within the limitations intrinsic to an institution just beginning to operate.

Each Director will be subordinated to the Rector, to the University Council of which he is a member, and to the Board of Regents, in that order. His responsibilities and authority will be as follows:

1. Direct, coordinate and supervise the Institute's activities, and act as its representative before other University units.
2. Represent his Institute on the University Council with full voting rights.
3. Represent his Institute at the Council of University Institutes, made up by the Directors of all other Institutes and presided over by the Rector, to set common policy and coordinate all activities of these Units.
4. Submit to the Rector at the indicated time the annual budget for the following year, for subsequent approval by the Board of Trustees.
5. Submit to the Rector at the end of each year an account of the financial movement of his Institute, both for the normal budget and expenses incurred through special funds or other private sources of the institution.

6. Submit to the Rector for final approval contracts of all Institute members. The hiring, placement or firing of all Institute personnel will be handled by its Administration Department according to needs, the development of its programs and availability of funds.
7. Handle all special funds of his Institute, giving account at the end of each calendar year in accordance with N° 5 of this same Art.
8. Authorize the publication of the work prepared in the Institute.
9. Sign agreements and contracts for services to be rendered concerning all matters which affect the activities of his Institute.
10. Promote the specialization of Institute members through the financing of scientific exchange with other institutions and study trips at home and abroad.
11. Recommend to the Rector the promotion of Institute personnel according to procedures and criteria established by the University.

12. Recommend to the Rector the appointment of Department Heads to be contracted by the Board of Trustees.
13. Call and preside over all ordinary meetings of the professors of his Institute, of the Departments and of the Institute Council.
14. Designate Heads of all Common Service Sections of his Institute.

SPECIALIZED LIBRARIES:

Each Institute will have its own specialized library with direct linkages to the Central University Library now under construction.

These libraries will also be in need of expansion. Though many books and subscriptions to technical and scientific journals already exist, many more basic reference works, specialized publications and long-term subscriptions to further scientific journals will be needed.

If funds could be made available at once for the amplification of these reference libraries, an effective way would be found to stimulate the environment while attending to an undeniable need that under no circumstances could go wrong or be in vain. Such assistance would represent a much needed psychological boost for all those at the University who are making a real effort under the present Reorganization Plan. By receiving tangible evidence that their work is appreciated and visibly supported by outside organizations, they would feel more justified in making their own contributions and sacrifices.

C O N C L U S I O N:

If a decision were reached on the advisability and utility of participating in this fundamental reorganization effort, it would be best if authorized representatives were sent to visit Concepción to determine in person and on the spot the type and extent of assistance in experts and equipment that could be offered to the University by January 1959. The curriculum construction specialists would necessarily have to complete their respective activities prior to March 1959, but the equipping of the four Institutes with additional personnel and scientific apparatus can proceed during the coming calendar year.

In any event speed is of the utmost importance if aid is to be really effective. And aid is needed for more than the obvious financial reason.

In as carefully planned an expansion program as the one already under way, financial assistance in any amount within reason would find proper application and be well worth the risk necessarily involved in any new undertaking. But even more important, from a psychological viewpoint, external help is imperative to any undertaking that involves making a clean break with the past. Without outside help, which gives prestige and commits everyone more firmly to the maintenance of a chosen line of action, forces adverse to the new initiative could succeed in slowing down the momentum of such a tremendous effort, whose ultimate triumph or failure would by far transcend the immediate environment or even this country. Thus technical and financial assistance offered now at this critical point would go a long way toward insuring a victory important to all of us who belong to the Western community.

CONCEPCION, June 30, 1958

RUDOLPH P. ATCON
UNESCO Expert on
University Organization

RPA/mrs