



WEEKLY COLUMN in TORONTO
CANADA

Melvin University with Me



Relationships between fish and pond

I often talk about "big fish in the small pond" when I meet with our university staff, especially the vice president and the head of the faculty. It is expressed as a joke in the case of a new professor at school or a large church pastor who participates in the school management. It doesn't mean there's a problem with such people coming into school. The key is how to deal with it from the school's point of view.

In any organization, in any ministry, there are competent people. They might always think, "Should I stay here longer?" Therefore, rather than expanding their organization or ministry, they always check whether they can grow or not in here, or they can leave at any time. Because they are big fish, it is inconvenient for them to stay in a small pond. There are two options for us as leaders at this time: let them leave freely, or grow our organization and make it bigger. Certainly the latter is a wiser choice, and I think it's entirely up to us, the top leaders.

In the case of our Institute, there have been several such moments. In the beginning stage, the fish were small, and the pond was small as well, so there was no problem at all. But a few years later, exactly two years later after the Institute began, big fish slowly came into our pond. So definitely with their help, our pond was slowly upgraded and became an increasingly large pond, and eventually expanded internationally, so the big fish in our pond were satisfied. I think they are determined not to leave our Institute. Because they think they can grow in our pond. And the pond got bigger and bigger. It became like a big river, and later like the ocean.

But something happened. This is the third step. Small fish, and those who first started the Institute, could not survive in the present large pond. They seem to be depressed, thinking about leaving on their own, "I don't have to stay here,

in this big pond anymore." It was sad, but was true. So some left and some remained. The remainder were not key members as they used to be, and eventually they remained behind the scene. As a top leader, I often find it difficult to keep both big and small fish in one pond. It is now a realistic job because there are two classes of people at Melvin University today. I think it is my job to continue to improve the school so that the big people can be satisfied, and also to make the early members proud and not feel bad.

And something happened, that is the third stage. Just small fish, those who started this institute couldn't survive in the big pond now. They are shrunk, and they might think to leave and think to themselves, "I don't need to stay here anymore, in this big pond." That's sad. So, some left and some are still with us, but they are a little behind the scene, behind the screen automatically.

As a top leader, I can't keep them both, big and small fish, in the one pond. That is a challenge for me to manage. I found three ponds in Kenya presently as well. LPM Kenya, LPM Seminary, and Melvin University. So it's good for people to put them in their proper place among those three different ponds. As a top leader, I can't keep them both, big and small fish, in the one pond. That is challenged for me to manage this.

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The other day, I wrote, "It is inconvenient to have large fish in a small pond." That's when our Institute was small, and when the University of Melvin was small, because it was just starting and settling down. It was true that they didn't want to come in. When they come in, they might say, "The pond I'm going to stay in is too small! So better to leave."

But now Melvin University is slowly established and the four-year B.A. the course begins, so many big people are coming in. They can ask me to put their name up, or how much we pay them! It's something like that. It is thought of as phenomena that occur in growing and developing. I try to take it as a natural process.

But it doesn't matter if big people try to come in. The problem is in our preparation that they do not meet what they want. In a way, the pond has grown (Hardware), but there is still no internal (Software) to accept such large people.

First of all, those who want to come to offer us three requests: airplane tickets, salaries, and accommodation. It usually comes from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Korea, but the request for a round-trip plane ticket makes sense. Since it's a university, I guess they are thinking that we can do that. But the salary is quite a different problem. Professors coming from the UK are usually from Oxford University (those introduced by our honorary chancellor) and seem to be demanding in British pounds. The British pound is much more expensive than the U.S. dollar, which is a considerable burden. What they're asking for seems to be 10 times the salary of the locals here. The third is the accommodation, which is easy for male professors, but when female professors come, the preparation for accommodation is also very burdensome.

Another consideration is for our students, which may be directly related to the above problem. This is a university in poor Africa, and furthermore, a school in a very rural area. The students here also know that they are referred to as "black continents" from the outside. It means that Africa is the place where it is difficult to live.

So when I introduce our school to people outside, I always [in Africa] University emphasizes, because most people think that Melvin University is in the United States, Korea, or another country, and imagine it as rich as American universities. Developing schools and, on the other hand, financial burdens are our main concerns now. So I think we need a little more time. The local professors and school staff here have never been to any country other than Africa, so they are satisfied with a small salary and work with gratitude. This is because they enter a competition of 20 to 1 even if they select one professor or employee. The reality here is that it is difficult to find a job.

When is the time to expect a big fish to come in, but now it seems that another worry is beginning. However, this is a grateful concern because it is possible that the school has developed that much.