CAN THE AUTHORITY TO TRAVEL ABROAD FOR DEPED OFFICIALS AND EMPLOYEES BE WAIVED?

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“Spend quality time with friends and travel while you can”. These are some reminders you’ll read and see in various media. These make sense but these won’t be simple if you are a government official or employee and you are going to travel abroad.

There are documentary requirements for all government officials and employees if they are going to travel abroad. The documentary requirements depend on the following: first, if the travel is on official business (OB), second; if it is on official time (OT) and, lastly if it is private trips. These requirements are discussed in Memorandum Circular No. 35 (MC No.35,s.2017) issued by the Office of the President (OP) of the Philippines last November 22, 2017.

One common documentary requirement for OB, OT and private trips is authority to travel. Focusing on private trips abroad of government officials and employees, according to Section 6 of MC No. 35, s.2017, all government officials and employees who shall travel abroad for private and personal reason should accomplish the requisite leave forms and secure travel authorization from the agency head where they work. Failure to comply shall be sufficient ground for the outright denial or non-processing of requests for foreign travel authority. This is what makes it hard for DepEd officials and employees. All officials and employees of DepEd are required to present an authority to immigration officers at the airport when going abroad or out of the country.

Authority to travel cannot be easily secured as per DepEd Order No. 43, s. 2014 otherwise known as “Protocols for Travel Authority Requests for Official Travel
Abroad.” A DepEd official or employee would need at least 50 days to submit all required documents before departure. This is the time required to completely facilitate the processing of the authority to travel from the school level up to the central office before the authority can be released. As per this order, the authority to travel should be released by the Office of the Secretary upon approval at least 10 days before departure.

As per personal experience, the 10-day period of releasing at the Central Office was not followed. The authority to travel was released in less than ten days. This experience was stressful. For a first timer to travel out of the Philippines and who follows legal mandates and/or orders, this caused a lot of worries and fears other than stress.

The point is, what if the travel abroad is unplanned, urgent due to some uncontrolled situation or for a couple of days only? Still, would they need authority to travel? If at the school level, they would need fifty (50) days, almost two (2) months of processing for three (3) to five (5) days of travel abroad to unwind, refresh and enjoy, would this be practical? No wonder, other DepEd officials and employees are taking the risk of travelling abroad without authority to travel. But, of course, all DepEd officials and employees would like to follow orders. Don’t the DepEd Secretary, though the agency staff at the Central Office, thought and consider revisiting mandates on orders relative to travel abroad?

For a DepEd official or employee, since there are guidelines and DepEd Order issued pertaining to travel outside the Philippines, they should follow and abide by these mandates.

Can the authority to travel abroad for DepEd officials and employees be waived?

Manila Bulletin published an article last August 1, 2017 which is entitled “Authority to travel waived by Bureau of Immigration (BI) for LGU employees.” This article reiterated that the officials and employees of LGU going abroad are no longer
required to present an authority to travel to immigration officers at the airport instead they just need to present a copy of their approved leave application. This is the case if the travel abroad for LGU officials and employees as not OB or OT, and less than three (3) months of travel abroad for mayors, vice mayors, provincial vice governors and councilors.

If this was made possible by the DILG, can DepEd not adapt this policy? DepEd officials and employees need and deserve a break or breaks too from their job through travel abroad. When will the DepEd officials and employees be given a much deserve break for them to see, be with and spend quality times with friends and families abroad without the 50 minimum days of processing for the authority to travel be issued?

With all due respect, can the DepEd authorities not dwell and consider revisiting its policies on authority to travel abroad? A lot of DepEd officials and employees may become happy if this will be given due attention.

If the Bureau of Immigration waived authority to travel to LGU officials and employees, then, it is also possible for DepEd officials and employees who will travel abroad for private purpose and personal reasons.

References:

DepEd No. 43, s.2014, “Protocols for Travel Authority Requests for Official Travel Abroad.”

Office of the President of the Philippines Memorandum Circular No. 35,s.2017, “Clarifying and Reinforcing Existing Rules and Regulations on Foreign Travel Authorities , Travel Entitlements and Travel Tax Exemptions, which Require the Approval of the Office President.”
Division Memorandum No. 397, s.2018, “Authority to Travel”.