

**FACILITATING EDUCATIONAL REFORM:
ABSTRACTS PREPARED BY 1996-1997 VISITING PROFESSORS**

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PREFACE

The Research Program in Social and Organizational Learning at The George Washington University hosts visiting professors for periods of several months or an academic year. In the 1996-1997 academic year the Research Program hosted ten visiting professors. Four were from Russia. Two were from Ukraine. Two were from Kazakhstan. One was from Azerbaijan, and one was from Austria. The scholars from the former Soviet Union were part of the Junior Faculty Development Program. This program is funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. The visiting professor from Austria was not part of a US government program. Each visiting professor is assigned a GW faculty member as a mentor.

Several of the visiting professors made presentations at the annual Faculty Research Forum of the Washington Consortium of Business Schools. The Forum was held at The University of the District of Columbia on April 26, 1997. Abstracts 1,2,3,4, and 7 were presented at the Faculty Research Forum. Abstract 5 was presented as a lecture for the Austrian Society for Cybernetic Studies in Vienna, Austria. Abstract 6 was presented at the annual meeting of the American Society for Cybernetics held in Urbana, Illinois, March 8-12, 1997. A theme of the abstracts seemed to be "facilitating educational reform."

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Facilitating Educational Reform in the Former Soviet Union

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For three years the GW Center for Social and Organizational Learning has hosted visiting professors from the former Soviet Union. Their time in the U.S. is supported by the U.S. Information Agency. While here the visiting professors improve their English, observe American teaching methods, become familiar with the American literature in their field, and acquire an understanding of how American universities operate. They also learn to use email and the world wide web. So far we have hosted sixteen professors from Russia, two from Ukraine, two from Kazakhstan, one from Azerbaijan, and one from Turkmenistan.

After they return to their home countries, the visiting professors are encouraged to obtain access to email and the world wide web in order to keep in touch both with the people they met in the U.S. and with colleagues in their own countries. We then seek to aid this network of English-speaking professors in publishing articles and course notes for use by other professors in the former Soviet Union. We also invite them to present papers at international conferences so they can continue to be involved with the progress of knowledge in their fields, as those fields are developing in the West. For example, every two years since 1990 we have organized a symposium on country development at a conference in Vienna, Austria. At these symposia professors from East and West review the theories available to guide social, political, and economic reform programs, the experiments currently underway, and the results of experiments to date.

This presentation will describe the flow of activities during the academic year, the way that we coach mentors for the visiting professors, the site visits that they find most interesting in Washington, and the cross-cultural issues that often arise.

Will Russia Become an Industrial or a Post-Industrial Society?

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The people of Russia are facing a strategic decision about the future of their country. Either Russia can choose to export its raw materials in exchange for manufactured goods and services, or Russia can choose to join the world economy and produce goods and services itself. If it chooses the first alternative of being a raw materials supplier, the country will become an early industrial society with many jobs for blue-collar workers, but few jobs for more highly educated professional workers. If it chooses the second alternative, Russia will become a post-industrial society with a large percentage of highly educated knowledge workers.

Presently, this choice is not being discussed in the press or by the political parties. If Russia does not confront this choice directly, it is likely to make the first choice by default. The first choice is the easy choice. Russia has huge reserves of oil, natural gas, gold, diamonds, lumber, and other resources. These materials can be sold on international markets in exchange for consumer goods and high tech equipment.

The second choice is more difficult. In order to make the second choice Russian intellectuals and professional workers will need to organize themselves to put pressure on business and government to adopt policies consistent with the creation of a post-industrial society. Much work would need to be done by educators, journalists, and policy analysts. As just one example, the methods of continuous quality improvement would need to be adopted by business and government and taught in universities. These methods have proven to be quite effective at improving productivity in Japan, the U.S. and Europe. Some work on quality improvement methods has begun in Central and Eastern Europe, but in general productivity in these countries lags far behind Western Europe, parts of Asia, and the U.S.

In order for Russia to become more productive and competitive internationally, the work culture will need to change and societal values will need to become more accepting of profit and individual achievement. Making these cultural changes will require considerable rethinking and reinterpretation of Russian history and values. Currently there are many calls in the press for creating something new, but it is not clear what the new should be. The experience of other countries can provide models and suggestions, but the new arrangements in Russia must be consistent with the Russian experience.

Each time quality improvement methods have moved from one country to another, they have been redefined and new procedures have been added to make the methods acceptable in the new cultural context. This work will need to be done for Russia as well. What we are proposing is not the rejection of past cultural experience, as has been attempted before in Russian history when a previous cultural experience was deliberately destroyed, for example by Peter the Great, after the October Revolution of 1917, and during Perestroika. Rather, what is needed is a reinterpretation of previous experience in light of the new social, cultural, political and economic conditions. The Russian cultural experience, like that of other countries, is many faceted with many traditions and values that can be drawn upon in the present situation.

Most discussion of the Russian economy has focused on mafia activities, corruption, and the absence of legal mechanisms for enforcing contracts. These are indeed important considerations. One advantage of adopting quality improvement methods is that this approach to problem solving helps an organization or a society make a large number of small improvements on a continuous basis rather than falling into despair over the large number of problems that exist.

Designing an EFL Curriculum for Business and Management Students

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A look at a world map shows that a vast area of the world speaks English. Since Ukraine's interaction with the world is increasing, there is a growing demand for people who are fluent in this language. English is seen as an indispensable device in gaining access to Western civilization. It is recognized as a powerful tool of cross-cultural communication and the key to the technological wealth of the West and the process of modernization. It is unquestionably considered a great advantage in education and employment.

To meet the national demand for people who can match the broad needs of the country and benefit Ukraine economically and technologically, Ukrainian higher schools have expanded English as a Foreign Language (EFL) curricula. Schools of Business and Management whose graduates will be directly involved in economic transformation of society were the first to respond.

The new curricula place special emphasis on (1) developing students' communicative competence which includes grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic characteristics, (2) developing their competence in a range of styles of English for educational, work-based, social and public-life purposes, (3) providing learners with the skills which can help them to communicate with native and non-native speakers of English, and (4) exposing them to the culture of English speaking countries.

Experience shows that dogmatic approaches to EFL teaching based on grammar and translation alone do not adequately prepare learners for effective and appropriate use of English. Knowledge of grammatical forms and structures is useless, if students do not know the rules of their use. So, special attention is paid to a variety of sociolinguistic and social interaction rules that underlie appropriate language use. The curriculum design combines the traditional four-skills approach, which divides language programs into reading, speaking, listening, and writing components, and a functionally based language approach that emphasizes functions and linguistic forms rather than simply grammar and vocabulary.

EFL teaching is situation- and content-oriented. The content is relevant to students' professional interest and includes technical literature and typical situational fragments of everyday business activities. Only authentic sources, such as real-life situations or pieces of literary fiction describing diverse episodes reflecting essential elements inherent in communication, can teach students to handle speech settings of varying complexity and prepare them for the language contacts they are most likely to engage in.

Legal Issues of Foreign Investments in Ukraine

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Ukraine's integration into the world market economy is a painstaking process that is impossible without fundamental restructuring of its national economy, which needs considerable investments. Given the acute scarcity of internal means and resources, its state Treasury and home investors find it difficult, if possible at all, to inject the necessary investments. Therefore, searching for, attracting and involving some external sources of financing is assuming paramount importance.

According to the law on the Regime of Foreign Investments, the range of activities of foreign investors can vary greatly including: 1) shares in enterprises set up with Ukrainian physical and juridical persons or shares of currently operating enterprises; 2) the setting up of enterprises that will be entirely owned by foreign investors or the purchase of currently operating enterprises; 3) the acquiring of real estate and personal property which is not forbidden by Ukrainian legislation (i.e., buildings, houses, apartments, equipment, transport facilities and other property may be obtained directly in the form of real estate or in the form of shares, bonds, certificates, and other securities); 4) the acquiring of the right to make use of natural resources and land on the territory of Ukraine both as an independent owner and as partners of Ukrainian juridical and physical persons.

The difference between the previous law and the present law is the establishment of a national regime of investment that creates equal legal opportunities for both foreign investors and home investors. Foreign investors do not enjoy any special privileges. Granting privileges is assumed to negatively influence the competition between internal and external enterprises and to lead to considerable expenditures from the budget. In addition, it creates a basis for corruption, since decisions on privileges are made by governmental authorities. Rejection of special privileges for foreign investors does not imply that the state declines to support certain industries and enterprises involving foreign capital. According to the law, businesses undertaking investment projects involving foreign capital in the frame of state programs, whose goal is to develop some sections in the social sphere and industry as well as some territories of primary importance, enjoy a privileged regime of investment. First and foremost are investments in energy- saving technologies, fuel and power complexes, agriculture, the metal industry, aircraft-building, transport, and communications.

Determination of the appropriate mix in Ukraine's investment policy is a complex problem and the Law on the Regime of Foreign Investments is not an absolute remedy. Foreign investments are still scarce, as investors are afraid to take risks because of frequent changes in Ukrainian legislation. One of the main reasons why, despite some positive developments in legislation, Ukraine is considered by many potential investors to be a high risk country is the imperfection of the Ukrainian business legislation. The existing set of laws is far from perfect.

Thus, in the present situation Ukraine needs a critical improvement of the legal mechanism which could promote foreign investments in Ukraine. In particular, to make the law operate effectively and to the full, the Laws on Concessions and Intellectual Property should be supplemented. Up to now, Ukraine has not developed a legislative base allowing foreigners access to natural resources. Intellectual property rights are still poorly defined and routinely ignored. Ukraine needs to develop additional regulatory acts to arouse and stimulate foreign investors' interest, reorienting them toward areas which are important to Ukraine, though still unattractive to them.

Appropriate legislation is necessary, but it is not the only condition for attracting foreign investments. The main factors restraining inflow of foreign capital in Ukraine's economy are the deficit in the state budget, high taxes, a prohibition on purchasing land by foreigners and subsequent transactions with land, bureaucracy, corruption, and unsatisfactory discipline. To attract more foreign investments, it is necessary to achieve a higher level of economic stability and to develop better legislation which will not only proclaim private ownership but also will regulate disputes involving investments.

The Movement to Improve Quality in Higher Education in the United States

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Since 1980, quality improvement methods have been widely adopted by corporations and government agencies in the U.S. Quality improvement methods have been shown to produce superior financial returns in the private sector and more efficient government in the public sector. In 1996 pilot studies were conducted to create quality awards for educational and health care institutions in addition to the current awards for corporations and government agencies. Quite a few universities in the U.S. now have quality improvement efforts underway. Conferences are regularly held among coordinators of campus Quality Improvement efforts. Listserves and websites have been created for people to share experiences. The ability to measure quality of instruction and a culture of experimentation and innovation are thought to be very important as educational institutions continue to incorporate new information technologies into their operations. Quality improvement methods are a way to engage in control and communication and are based on a pragmatic philosophy.

The Origins and Purposes of Several Traditions in Systems Theory and Cybernetics

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The story of systems theory and cybernetics is a story of several research traditions, all of which originated in the mid 20th century. Systems ideas emerged in a variety of locations and for different reasons. As a result the ideas were developed in relative isolation and emerged with different emphases. This paper discusses the books and people, conferences and institutes, and politics and technology that have influenced the systems movement. The schools of thought presented are general systems theory, the systems approach, operations research, system dynamics, learning organizations, total quality management, and cybernetics. Three points of view within cybernetics are discussed. Total quality management is a new addition to the list, but we feel it is appropriate because of its extensive use of systems ideas. This paper does not address artificial intelligence, complexity theory, family therapy, or other traditions that might have been included.

A Three Year Quality Improvement Effort in a School of Management

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The 1996-1997 academic year was the third year of a quality improvement effort in the GW School of Business and Public Management. In the first year we worked on achieving visible results early and conducted training using in-house instructors. Also, speakers on quality improvement were brought in from other organizations.

In the second year, the effort was expanded and institutionalized. Issues we encountered were how to coordinate training with process improvement and how to clarify what quality improvement is and is not. There were a number of issues related to integrating the quality effort into other initiatives in the School, for example, broadening the mission of the school, assisting a reaccreditation effort, and expanding the use of information technology. In addition, we became more involved with other people in the University who are also engaged in quality improvement efforts.

During the third year the quality improvement effort was expanded from three committees to four committees. We completed a survey of how the faculty uses technology in research and teaching. We established an electronic suggestion box. We are expanding and revising a web site for the quality effort. In addition, we are giving more thought to the role of data collection in promoting organizational change.