

**METHODS FOR IMPROVING UNIVERSITIES:  
ABSTRACTS PREPARED BY 2005-2006 VISITING SCHOLARS**

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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 2005-2006 academic year, the Research Program hosted 11 visiting professors. Ten were part of the Junior Faculty Development Program, which is funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. One visiting scholar was from Bulgaria. These abstracts were prepared by professors and visiting scholars associated with the Research Program.

Paper 1 was presented at the annual meeting on Community Research and Learning at American University, April 29, 2006. Paper 3 was published in the *Journal of the Washington Academy of Sciences*. Paper 4 was presented at the annual meeting of the Washington Area Finance Association at The George Washington University, March 17, 2006. Abstract 5 describes the transcript of a workshop during the Mid-Semester On-Line Conference of the Junior Faculty Development Program, March 29, 2006.

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## **OBSTACLES TO THE ADOPTION OF SERVICE LEARNING IN OTHER COUNTRIES**

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Service learning has proven to be an effective means both for education and for community development. It seems logical to assume that service learning would be similarly effective in other countries. However, universities in other countries operate quite differently from universities in the U.S. Discussions with professors from the former Soviet Union and Southeast Europe produced a list of obstacles to transferring service learning to other countries. The paper suggests some ways to reduce the obstacles. As service learning is implemented in other countries, opportunities for people in DC to learn from the experiences of others will increase.

**ASSISTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF  
THE GLOBAL NETWORK OF UNIVERSITIES**

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The internet and educational reform efforts are creating a global network of universities. The ability of faculty members and students to communicate with each other independent of location has dramatically improved. In terms of administration, universities still function as separate entities. However, efforts to share information and to collaborate on research and teaching now encounter few barriers once personal computers and networks are available. This paper reviews the technical, political, and administrative changes that have created this global system for learning. It suggests some implications for research and teaching, for individuals, institutions and societies. The paper also describes what universities and other organizations can do to strengthen and expand the global academic community. From a theoretical point of view the “global academic community” is compared with discussions of a “global brain.”

## **A METHOD FOR DESIGNING IMPROVEMENTS IN ORGANIZATIONS, PRODUCTS, AND SERVICES**

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A Quality Improvement Priority Matrix (QIPM) may be used for identifying priorities for improving an organization, a product, or a service. This paper reports on the use of the QIPM method by members of the Department of Management Science at The George Washington University and members of the Department of Management at Kazan State University in Kazan, Russia, in 2002. Features of a Department, such as salaries, teaching assistants, computer hardware, etc. (a total of 51 features), were evaluated on the scales of importance and performance. Recent research has significantly improved the method as a way of determining priorities, monitoring progress, identifying consensus or disagreement, and comparing two organizations. This paper discusses additional statistical improvements and ways of presenting the results of statistical analysis. The QIPM method is a way of achieving agreement among a group of people on the most important actions to be taken.

## **REFLEXIVITY IN SOCIAL SYSTEMS: THE THEORIES OF GEORGE SOROS**

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We can think of the process of social change as consisting of four steps. Ideas are invented by one or a few people. Groups of people who support the idea then form and attempt to persuade others. Eventually they achieve enough influence to produce some noticeable change in a social system, for example the passing of legislation or a new industrial product. This event has some effect on the character of the social system, which can be measured by variables, such as average level of education, life expectancy, or level of pollution. By studying these variables, a new idea for change or reform is formulated and the process repeats. The usual conception of science focuses primarily on the last step, from variables to ideas. However, the process whereby science affects society involves all four steps: ideas, groups, events, and variables. This paper compares a narrow, seemingly objective conception of social science with a broader, participatory conception. Reflexivity theory includes the participant in the action and the observer in the description. Although other versions of reflexivity theory will be mentioned, this paper will focus on the work of George Soros. His work provides a connection between cybernetics and economics, finance, and political science.

## **TWO METHODS FOR INCREASING FACULTY GOVERNANCE IN UNIVERSITIES: TRANSCRIPT OF AN ON-LINE WORKSHOP**

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Two methods useful for starting a quality improvement program in an organization are a group planning activity and a “quality improvement priority matrix.” 1) A group planning activity can, in a short period of time such as two days, produce a definition of an organization’s vision, define obstacles to achieving the vision, develop strategies for removing the obstacles, and then create actions to implement the strategies. 2) A quality improvement priority matrix begins with a list of features of a product or service or an organization. Customers or employees rate the features on importance and performance. Attention is then focused on features that are rated high in importance and low in performance. This method of “data-driven decision-making” is very easy to use. It requires no special knowledge of statistics.

A quality improvement priority matrix (QIPM) can be used to increase the role of faculty members in the governance of departments, schools, and universities. Rather than having decisions be made by one or a few administrators, the judgments of faculty can be combined to reveal the faculty judgment on priorities. Or, students could be surveyed to reveal their combined sense of needed actions. By focusing attention and improvement efforts on the subjects of greatest concern to faculty and students, available resources can be used most efficiently. Also, morale will improve more quickly.

This [transcript](#) of an on-line workshop for JFDP Fellows in the U.S. in spring 2006 contains links to papers and websites.

**IDENTIFYING AND MONITORING ORGANIZATIONAL PRIORITIES: A  
COMPARATIVE STUDY OF AN AMERICAN AND A RUSSIAN ACADEMIC  
DEPARTMENT**

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The Quality Improvement Priority Matrix (QIPM) method is a way of achieving agreement among a group of people on the most important actions to be taken. It may be used for identifying the priorities of an organization. This paper reports on the use of the QIPM method in two academic departments: the Department of Management Science at The George Washington University in Washington DC, USA, and the Department of Management at Kazan State University in Kazan, Russia. Features of a department, such as salaries, teaching assistants, computer hardware, etc. (a total of 51 features), were evaluated on the scales of importance and performance in the years 2002 and 2006. The departments' priorities are identified and the amount of consensus among the faculty members is measured. In addition, how the priorities of the departments changed between 2002 and 2006 is discussed.

## **TWO SYSTEMS OF QUALITY STANDARDS AND THEIR IMPACT ON SMALL BUSINESS**

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The main goal of the research is to study the impact of the internationally recognized quality standards on small business. The reason for this interest came from the challenges, which those standards pose to the enterprises of the former socialist countries from Eastern Europe in respect to economic globalization. After the expected European Union accession, Bulgarian enterprises will have more opportunities for production co-operation and specialization. The minimal condition for such co-operation, however, will be compatibility with the internationally recognized quality standards.

The present research is based on an intensive literature review. The main sources are the relevant publications in the last 15 years, chosen from GWU databases. The paper is organized around three major tasks. The first task is a comparison of the two internationally recognized systems of quality standards -- ISO 9000 and the Quality Awards for Excellence. The second task is a description the general market effects of quality standards implementation, and the third task is a description of the specific effects those standards produce in small businesses.

The research is a modest contribution to the understanding of why the quality movement entered the 21st century with two systems of quality standards – ISO 9000 and Quality Awards for Excellence. It defends the idea that those systems reflect the two concepts (or two sides) of quality. Further it reveals that the quality standards implementation creates both a threat for low quality enterprises, and a chance for other businesses to renew their processes if they wish to stay in the market. The conceptual framework bears on the capacity of small business to transform into learning organizations. In terms of the two internationally recognized systems of quality standards, this means a move from ISO 9000 to the Criteria for Excellence, and embracing the idea of continuing improvement. This process, however, requires the development of a culture of learning and innovation, supported by local institutions. It is suggested that better understanding of small business quality behavior can be achieved through the linkage of those issues with other research on small business orientations to growth and internationalization.

## **ANOMIE AS A SPECIFIC CULTURAL SITUATION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT SCIENCE**

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At the end of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century the French sociologist Emile Durkheim introduced the concept of anomie (from the Greek word *anomos*, which means normless). With this notion he tried to explain the transition situation of French society from an agrarian to an industrial economy. In France this transition was very difficult because of the continuing weight of the former nobles and an agrarian mentality. The overall modernization toward industrialization, urbanization, paid work, etc., resulted in a strong social disintegration. New conflicts emerged among workers and employers, urban poor and rich, urban and village populations, etc. The former community life had been broken and many people found themselves trapped in a situation without stable reference points. The notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice, acceptable and unacceptable etc., changed their meanings. The problem was not in the cultural transformation itself, but in its speed and the lack of preparedness of the people for it. Thus, the anomie can be described as a social situation where people have lost shared values, norms, beliefs, and models of behavior. The society itself seems to disintegrate into many sub-societies with different cultures, which have nothing to do each other.

On the personal level this situation manifests in the increased number of broken social ties, broken family ties, an increase in solitary people, and even an increase in the number of suicides. As a rule, anomie continues until new forms of social cooperation appear, until the majority of people start to feel that they belong to significant groups, until a new meaning of life is found and generally accepted.

## **ECONOMIC AND EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES IN TRANSITION COUNTRIES**

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The collapse of the Soviet political and economic system in the late 1980s, epitomized by the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, culminated the dramatic economic slowdown experienced by the Soviet bloc countries over the preceding three decades. The subsequent transition process has been difficult and not as well performed as expected by many policymakers. In this paper we focus on the transformation process in transition countries starting from the educational system – a ground up strategy.

In recent years several Participatory Strategic Planning exercises have been conducted at The George Washington University with visiting scholars from the former Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia. The purpose of these exercises has been both to demonstrate the group facilitation methods called the Technology of Participation and to develop plans to guide the improvement of the home universities of the participants. The results suggest several directions for improving universities in transitional countries. The suggestions include internal reorganization, introduction of new university structures and services, increasing the efficiency of faculty, staff and students, and influencing the external environment.