

**External Examiner's Report
Ternopil Academy of National Economy**

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1. On May 23-27, 2003 I visited the Ternopil Academy of National Economy (TANE). I talked with the Rector, the President, a Vice-Rector, the Dean of the Ukrainian-Dutch Faculty, several lecturers, and students.
The meetings have been very informative and I am grateful to those willing to share their views with me. I was happy to observe that in particular TANE's president appeared to be conscious of the Ukraine's general problem of corruption and initiated an open discussion about it. I applaud this, since it is a necessary step for fighting corruption.
It can be expected that the problems, which teachers and students at TANE face, will continue for many years, since they are closely linked to the economic situation of Ukraine. However, it is admirable what TANE has achieved despite the very difficult financial and economic conditions. Obviously, TANE is very committed to its students, while the students are well motivated to study.

2. In 2002, bachelor students were required to submit a paper based on their internship. This has been replaced with a term paper in the framework of the course in *International Economics*. I have read the term papers of the 29 students of groups 41 and 42 who submitted their papers on time.
I observed that the students have been provided with improved guidelines for writing a term paper. This is consistent with one of the recommendations presented in 2002 and it stresses TANE's commitment to progress and improvements. It encourages me to continue my work for TANE.
Some of the students submitted a preliminary draft of their term papers and received feedback from their supervisors on how to improve it before submitting the final version. I applaud this approach, because it couples writing the term paper to an educational effect. However, plagiarism continues to be a problem.

3. Generally, both teachers and students have done good work. Nonetheless, some further improvements seem possible. I observe a great potential to realize this and I am very confident that the gradual process towards implementing western standards at TANE will continue.

4. The following points need to be addressed to continue the ongoing process of further improvements:
- (a) Unlike TANE's President most students fail to identify corruption and bribes as impediments to a healthy business climate. Generally, the awareness of this major problem among students seems limited, since they pay very little attention to it.
 - (b) The substance of the papers can be further improved.
Students sometimes present value judgments as if they were positive judgments or they pose normative questions (for example: "How should international trade work?"). Also, they sometimes make statements without providing arguments supporting these statements.
Other examples of poor substance are mixing up marginal and variable cost and confusing structure and (annual) changes. The evaluator did not mention this in the evaluation. This may imply that (1) the evaluator did not read the paper (carefully), or (2) the student simply reproduced what had been (erroneously) taught in the classroom. The second possibility is most worrisome.
 - (c) The format of the term papers can be further improved. I observed a number of shortcomings including:
 - Tables lacking headings and containing statistics that are incomplete, not up-to-date and fail to specify the years they pertain to.
 - Footnote numbers in the main text, while the footnotes themselves are lacking.
 - Poor English. The language often needs to be improved though supervisors do not always seem to be aware of this. For example, I observed that one supervisor praised the English in the evaluation even though the language that the student used was not always understandable.
 - (d) Plagiarism remains a growing problem and the Internet remains tempting. I had already read one of the papers. It had been published on the Internet and had been copied by one of the students. Obviously, the evaluator had not noticed this.
 - (e) The quality of the questions in the examinations can be improved. In particular some of the multiple choice questions contain alternatives that are obviously the right answer even for someone who did not study the course materials.
 - (f) The level of some of the staff members needs to be improved. I am aware of the difficult circumstances (see point 1 above). In particular the very low salaries for academic staff are a bottleneck. Therefore, the possibilities to improve qualifications of staff members are limited. However, human resource management is always needed no matter the circumstances.
 - (g) Administrative matters can be improved. This is possible in the domain of personnel management as well as in the domain of student affairs.

5. On the basis of my discussions with the staff I am convinced that TANE is able and willing to work on addressing the problems observed above. My reading of the papers and my discussions with staff and students give rise to the following concrete recommendations that may assist TANE in its ongoing efforts to improve its educational level.

(a) I value the (improved) written guidelines that are available for students writing a term paper. However, few students appear to follow the guidelines, while supervisors tend to neglect that students neglect the guidelines. I observed that supervisors rarely address this point in their evaluations.

Recommendation 1:

Instruct supervisors to pay attention to the guidelines both in their guidance of the students and in their evaluation of the papers. To this end TANE may consider designing a standardized evaluation form to be used by supervisors.

(b) The quality of the term papers varies widely. This pertains both to the substance (see point 4b above) and the format (see point 4c above). In addition, the grading by supervisors can be improved.

Recommendation 2:

Encourage supervisors to provide students with feedback so as to enable the students to learn from their efforts to write term papers and to improve their papers before they are graded.

(c) It should be made clear to students that plagiarism is wrong for two reasons. First, it is wrong from the ethical point of view. Second, it is wrong from a practical point of view, since students do not learn anything by simply copying a text.

Recommendation 3:

*a. Add to the guidelines a statement about plagiarism.
b. Design a form to be signed by students in which they declare that their paper is their own work. See the attached form as an example.*

(d) The English of most of the students needs to be improved. In some cases it is unclear what the student is trying to say. In addition, the English of supervisors needs to be improved witness the language of their evaluations.

Recommendation 4:

Improving language skills could be made part of the English curriculum. TANE may consider requiring students to improve the language of their papers under the guidance of an English teacher and to resubmit the revised papers. However, the language used should not affect the evaluation or grading of a paper's substance.

(e) The quality of the examinations needs to be improved.

Recommendation 5:

- a. *Encourage teachers to check each other's draft examination questions. Experience shows that teachers tend to have a blind spot for mistakes or shortcomings in their own examinations.*
- b. *Organize a course "Drafting examinations" for teachers.*

(f) Human resource management is necessary for an organization to function properly. Evaluations of personnel are a regular component of personnel management. Crucial is that the evaluations of staff are carried out transparently and by using the same method for all categories of personnel. Note that evaluations of staff are a form of two-way traffic. It is not only the department head who evaluates a staff member, but also the staff member who evaluates the working conditions. For example, it gives a staff member the chance to signal the lack of certain materials, or the occurrence of certain conditions affecting the quality of their work, or the need to take courses, etc. The evaluation should be considered a staff member's right.

Recommendation 6:

- a. *Department heads evaluate their staff members on an annual basis, while they report to the dean.*
- b. *Design a standardized form for this purpose so as to ensure that all staff members will be evaluated in similar ways and by using the same method.*
- c. *A personnel officer assists department heads in making and administering these evaluations.*

ANNEX

SUBMISSION OF COURSEWORK, TERM PAPERS, AND DISSERTATIONS

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the misrepresentation of the work of others as one's own. This applies whatever the source (for example, the Internet, or the work of another student, etc.). Plagiarism is a form of academic misconduct and will be penalized accordingly.

Declaration

I certify that I have submitted my own work and that I have properly and fully acknowledged the use of materials from other sources.

I understand that the consequences of committing plagiarism may include failure in my course or removal from the Academy.

Student's name:

Student's signature:

Place:

Date: