From Pessimism to Optimism

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machines suffered from the chronic shortage of paper and spare parts. Finally, many students saw no reason to study since graduation with good grades did not necessarily lead to a good job because jobs were often given to those with connections and not to those with ability.

As the semester has progressed, however, my initial pessimism about the prospects for the school has changed to guarded optimism. An economics library has begun with the hope that old edition books will be sent from abroad to the point where every student will have their own book. Students who have a strong desire to work with personal computers have an opportunity to do so. Graduate students are actively seeking contacts abroad with a few actually planning to study in another country. To the best of my knowledge, the monopoly on the granting of a doctorate degree that Moscow State University has will soon be eliminated. Male students can now refuse to waste two years of their lives in the Soviet army without fear of being thrown in jail. Finally, as a symbolic act, the statue of Lenin has disappeared from the entrance to the school.

As the school moves toward becoming an accredited business school, I would like to point out several other problems that need to be resolved. First of all, the rigidity of the curriculum needs to be done away with. Students should have more decision making as to what courses they would like to take. Further, a student should be able to change his or her area of interest without having to lose one or more years of course work because the courses were in a different department. Secondly, all courses on such subjects as the ideology of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union should immediately become elective courses. Because of bureaucratic inertia, some students now find themselves taking courses that they have no interest in. The major cause of this, from my point of view, is the inability of professors to change what they have been teaching for the past 20-30 years. Unfortunately, Lithuania does not have the luxury of waiting for these professors to change their thinking or retire. The shortage of trained economists is too pressing a problem. I would recommend creating as good a retirement package as the very limited resources allow, and then shifting the remaining “old thinking” professors to administrative duties away from the students.

How do we know if a professor has responded to these incentives to change? Let the students decide. Western experience shows that student evaluations which are required at the end of the semester for every course taught are a good indicator of a professor’s performance in the classroom. Professors at my university who have consistently shown themselves to be excellent teachers also can be nominated to receive a $1,000 award for their efforts.

As a final note, a few of my Lithuanian students who are attending my lectures have shown they have “the right stuff” to become economists in the future. Three of these students have written short pieces which appear below. A fourth student has collected some interesting data that could be used in an economic analysis. I can only hope that these students will maintain their interest in economics in the future and that the Lithuanian government will recognize that the shortage of specialists trained in such fields as economics is inversely related to the money allocated for education in the state budget. No amount of political posturing by some members of parliament can substitute for the lack of expert economic analyses necessary for decision making.

Lithuania Needs Its Own Money

by Arvydas Eigirdas
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ingly, it is known that Estonia prints money in Austria.

Data on the Panevėžys Autocompressor Plant

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I still have found that their is deep suspicion about revealing any data at the level of the firm in some