

Conclusion

The private students scheme has regenerated Makerere University in record time—about 10 years. In order for this process to continue, the university should move quickly to implement the new Universities and Tertiary Education Act, which enhances its autonomy and puts it in control of its own affairs. Furthermore, the university as a whole and the schools, institutes, and colleges need to become more cost-conscious and adopt a business planning approach in course design and determining fees. Finally, the restructuring study and others have emphasized the ongoing need to review and evaluate the university's delivery system and organization and determine whether further amendments to the act are required.

Education Reform in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania

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The human resources of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are these countries' most valuable assets. As small countries with comparatively limited natural resources, the Baltic states' future will depend on the knowledge and skills of their people. Education reform has therefore been a priority of each country since regaining independence.

Differences among the Countries

The Baltic states are often grouped together, but the significant differences among them are reflected in education policy. Each country has a unique history and relations with other nations and cultures that have ongoing influence on national perspectives and policy. Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian, for example, are three highly distinct languages.

Phases of Reform

Education reform in the Baltic states is best understood in terms of phases, beginning in the late 1980s. Each country's reforms can be traced to initiatives in 1988 (if not earlier) undertaken in the spirit of the new awakening, *perestroika*, and the deterioration of Soviet institutions, during which each country experienced unprecedented grassroots engagement of educators in exploring new possibilities.

In the 1990–1992 period all three countries reestablished independence and established constitutions (based largely on earlier constitutions) and the initial legal framework for education. Enacted in the rapidly developing cir-

cumstances of 1991, these initial laws would require refinement in later years.

In the 1992–1994 period, each of the Baltic states faced extraordinary challenges in gaining economic stability and establishing new legal frameworks and institutional structures. Nevertheless, each country continued to make progress on basic elements of education reform: eliminating ideologically oriented elements within universities; developing new curricula, textbooks, and teaching materials; and developing new links with Western donors and partners.

The 1995–1996 period brought a temporary pause in the positive developments since reestablishing independence, as banking crises and economic instability drew attention and energy away from education reform. Each country attempted to shape new state policies to provide a degree of order to the previously largely decentralized and often fragmented reforms.

In the 1996–1998 period, all three countries experienced their strongest periods of economic revitalization and growth since 1991. Each country broadened the conceptual foundation for education reform and developed the second generation of legal frameworks. The laws on education first enacted in 1991–1992 were either replaced or amended significantly to reflect an increased maturity in each country's education reforms.

In late 1998, the Russian economic crisis, beginning with the devaluation of the rouble on August 17th, 1998 slowed economic growth as well as the pace of education reform of the previous two years in all three countries. Yet the commitment to reform remained strong.

Common Themes

All three Baltic states have made great strides in restructuring their higher education systems since the major changes began in 1988. Democratic principles and processes were instilled throughout the universities. A new legal framework providing for university autonomy was established, as well as a new research infrastructure, the framework for quality assurance, and a differentiated higher education system.

Previous restrictions in content and pedagogy were eliminated, especially in the social sciences and humanities, as was military training as a compulsory part of the curriculum. Dramatic shifts in academic programs were carried out, in response to changing student demands and the need to generate additional revenue from fee-paying students to offset limitations in state funding.

The narrow Soviet degree structure gave way to an award structure that is not only more flexible but also consistent with Western models and rising expectations (e.g., the Bologna Joint Declaration) for common structures across Europe and the world. The academies of science were abolished as research organizations and re-

constituted as honorary societies. Research was integrated into the universities, resulting in substantial gains in research and greatly strengthened universities. Graduate education was strengthened, especially through the integration of research and teaching at the doctoral level in contrast to the location of doctoral programs outside the universities in Soviet times.

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A number of issues still need to be addressed. Ways will need to be found to accommodate the escalating demand for university-level education—including alternatives such as nonuniversity “colleges.” Quality assurance requirements need to be tightened, including stronger requirements for nonpublic institutions. Reforms will need to be introduced in the financing of higher education, including the highly sensitive issue of student fees. Degree structures should be made compatible with international expectations. The changes should encompass new modes of delivery including open and distance learning and greatly expanded use of information technology throughout the higher education system. Solving the problem of retraining current professors and developing the next generation of faculty and researchers will require a variety of strategies, including strengthened doctoral programs and international affiliations. Finally, university programs in teacher education are still in need of reform.

Having granted universities substantial autonomy at the time of reestablishing independence, all three countries are now debating a stronger role for the state in setting priorities to increase the responsiveness of institutions to public priorities.

Broader Challenges

Frequent changes in governments and ministers of education, limited resources, and underdeveloped civil service laws have created serious problems in sustaining national policy leadership for education reform, and in implementing new concepts, strategies, and laws. While the Baltic states have made strong commitments to civil liberties and to narrowing the gaps in access and opportunity, there remains a need for progress on disparities between urban and rural areas, ensuring that special needs students are served,

and addressing the needs of language and ethnic minority populations

Finally, progress in education reform in the Baltic states depends on reform in other areas of public policy. These areas include reforming public administration, civil services policies, and aligning state finance policies with education reform. The ministries of finance play critical roles in education policy although not always in a way consistent with or supportive of education reform goals.

Conclusion

Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania provide excellent case studies of how states in Eastern and Central Europe emerged from the policies and ideologies of the former Soviet Union to established new education policies and institutions appropriate for democracy and market economies. Continued progress on the tertiary education reforms of the past decade will be the key these states’ ability to participate fully in Europe and the global knowledge economy.

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Note: This review is based on reviews of education policy in each of the Baltic states undertaken in 1999-2000, by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Undertaken at the request of national authorities, the OECD reviews were in-depth analyses of policy affecting all education levels and sectors – from early childhood and pre-school education through the doctoral level. Aims McGuinness served as general rapporteur for all three reviews.

The full reports on the reviews can be obtained from OECD at <http://electrade.gfi.fr/cgi-bin/OECDBookShop.storefront/> Reviews of National Policies for Education: Estonia, Code 142001041E1 ISBN 9264189963 Reviews of National Policies for Education: Latvia, Code 142001071E1 ISBN 9264192476 Reviews of National Policies for Education: Lithuania (forthcoming late 2001).

