

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ACCOUNTING EDUCATION IN UKRAINE AND THE USA

This study compares and contrasts the accounting education provided by Ukrainian universities with that given at American universities. Two typical universities were chosen for comparison purposes, one Ukrainian and one American.

Their curricula were compared and evaluated. Ukrainian accounting educators were also interviewed. The information gathered during the course of those interviews is also discussed. It was found that Ukrainian accounting students spend a significantly longer amount of time studying both accounting and other subjects during the course of their university attendance

INTRODUCTION

Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine and the other Soviet republics had a more or less uniform accounting educational program in the universities. Accounting actually formed a very minor part of the university curriculum. Students often studied accounting as part of the economics major. The main emphasis was on the chart of accounts. There was also something about cost accounting, although cost accounting in Soviet times did not involve prices, since all prices were arbitrarily determined and were not used to allocate resources or measure profits. Financial statements consisted mostly of what would be called a funds flow statement in the west.

Many universities did not have any auditing courses. Indeed, many did not even have one accounting course, since Soviet universities often specialized in one or a few related disciplines. For example, there might be a geological institute or a physics institute. Such institutes would not offer any accounting courses because accounting was not within their educational mission. American universities, on the other hand, are more comprehensive and almost always offer programs in business and accounting.

Since Ukraine became an independent nation that is making the transition from a centrally planned economy to a market economy, it has had to adopt an accounting system that is more in tune with a market economy. Perestroika has caused major changes in the economy and those changes have filtered through to the Ukrainian accounting system.

Ukraine has adopted International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and is now in the process of implementing them. However, this implementation is far from complete.

One of the major impediments to converting from the accounting system Ukraine had under central planning to the system they need for their emerging market economy is that there is an insufficient number of accountants in Ukraine who are trained in the new system. Before 1998 International Accounting Standards (IAS), which are promulgated in the UK and used in dozens of countries worldwide, were not available in the Russian language. A Ukrainian translation became available a few years ago but many Ukrainian accountants do not own a copy. The Russian translation has been criticized for being mediocre in spots, or even downright incorrect (Preobragenskaya and McGee 2004). Perhaps the Ukrainian translation suffers from similar flaws, although the authors did not attempt to get an answer to this question during the course of the interviews.

There is sometimes a problem with using Russian texts in Ukrainian universities. Some Ukrainians, especially in the Western part of the country, prefer to use Ukrainian rather than Russian. Another problem with using translated U.S. texts, whether they are in Ukrainian or Russian, is that they are based on U.S. GAAP, not International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). If Ukrainian students need to learn IFRS, they must find another way to do it, since the U.S. texts they are using say little or nothing about IFRS.

The problem of using translated texts is not as bad as it once was and the problem is becoming smaller over time, as Ukrainian professors publish texts in the Ukrainian language that incorporate IFRS.

Another impediment to fully adopting and implementing IFRS is the lack of professors who are familiar with the subject. It is difficult to teach IFRS and western audit techniques to the new generation of Ukrainian accounting students if the professors themselves are not familiar with these subjects. Professors who graduated from a Soviet university before 1990 or so had little or no exposure to the accounting concepts they are being called upon to teach. Many of the Ukrainian professors who graduated after 1990 also have not had sufficient exposure to IFRS and the International Standards on Auditing (ISA) to give adequate lectures, unless they learned IFRS and ISA on their own.

That being the case, the authors wanted to learn what Ukrainian universities are doing in the area of accounting education. Specifically, they wanted to learn what is being taught to accounting students in Ukrainian universities. A comparison was then made to the accounting curriculum offered by a typical university in the United States.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A wealth of literature exists on accounting education in the United States. However, most of this literature is irrelevant for purposes of the present study, which focuses on accounting education in Ukraine.

A second category of literature pertaining to accounting education addresses accounting education in transition economies in general. The International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) provides some guidelines that are being adopted in several transition economies (IFAC 2003a-h).

The third category of literature addresses accounting education in Russia (Anon. 2001, 1994; Coyle and Platonov 1998; Enthoven et al. 1998; Kobrak and Feldman 1991; Smirnova et al. 1995; Preobragenskaya and McGee, 2003; McGee and Preobragenskaya, 2005a). There is also some literature that discusses accounting education in other former Soviet republics and East European countries. McGee discusses accounting education in Armenia (2003; 2005a) and Bosnia (2005b). This literature was also examined, since the accounting education in other Soviet republics was more or less the same as the accounting education received by Ukrainian accounting students, although accounting education has been evolving in different directions in the various former Soviet republics since the demise of the Soviet Union. Unfortunately, most of the literature on accounting education in Russia and other former Soviet republics has become dated, since it was published before the recent changes.

Practically nothing has been published in the English language about accounting reform or accounting education in Ukraine. McGee and Preobragenskaya (2005b) conducted some research on accounting reform in Ukraine and wrote a book chapter about accounting education in Ukraine (2006). However, no study of a comparative nature has ever been done. Thus, there is a gap in the literature, which the present article is intended to fill.

METHODOLOGY

After reviewing the literature on accounting education in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet republics, the authors developed a tentative list of questions to ask Ukrainian accounting educators. A sample of accounting educators representing state universities and accounting firms was then selected and contacted. Interviews were scheduled and held during the summer of 2004 in Odessa and Kiev. Interviews were held at the following universities and organizations

All About Accounting (newspaper, Kiev) www.vobu.com.ua

Ukraine Accounting Reform Project (Kiev) www.capcipa.biz/

Deloitte & Touche (Kiev) www.deloitte.com.ua

Ernst & Young (Kiev) www.ey.com/ukraine

KPMG (Kiev) www.kpmg.com.ua

Auditorckoe Agentstvo Margo (Ukrainian accounting and audit firm, Odessa)

Odessa State Economic University (Odessa) www.oseu.odessa.ua

Odessa National I.I. Mechnikov University (Odessa) www.odnu.edu.ua

KIMI (Kyiv Investment Management Institute) (Kiev) www.kimi.edu:

Interviews were held with deans, accounting department chairs and other accounting professors and practitioners. Materials describing their accounting programs were gathered as well.

ACCOUNTING EDUCATION IN UKRAINE

Many new accounting departments have been started since the breakup of the Soviet Union. Accounting was not such a popular subject before the breakup (Enthoven et al., 1998) and many universities did not offer accounting programs. The growth of accounting departments in universities is the result of the increase in demand for accountants in the private sector. It is now fair to say that most Ukrainian universities have accounting departments.

The number of accounting journals has also increased in recent years and they are very popular. They tend to be practitioner oriented rather than scholarly, in the American sense of that term. Stated differently, the gap between practitioner journals and scholarly journals in Ukraine is not nearly as wide as is the case in the United States.

Ukrainian universities have started to incorporate IFRS and ISA into their accounting curriculums. However, they face several problems in this regard. One problem is the lack of good course materials. Local language materials were not available in the early stages of the transformation from central planning to a market economy. However, this problem is being alleviated in two ways. Initially, accounting course materials were provided by translating books from English into Ukrainian and Russian. However, some of those translations were mediocre. The translation problem can be overcome by having local professors write texts in the local languages. Such texts did not exist in the early stage of the transformation but such texts are now becoming more common. Some texts are available in both Russian and Ukrainian.

Some of the texts have become out of date, due to the rapid changes in Ukrainian national accounting standards and the adoption of IFRS. The universities deal with this problem by assigning readings from accounting journals and newspapers as supplementary material.

One complaint some practitioners have about accounting education in Ukrainian universities is that the lectures are too theoretical and not sufficiently practical. This problem is prevalent where the professor giving the lecture does not have any practical experience. This problem is being partially overcome by hiring professors who are practitioners and by allowing full-time professors to engage in accounting work outside of the university.

The practitioners interviewed in Odessa perceived the professors to be up to date as far as course material and content were concerned. The professors and administrators interviewed at two of the top accounting departments in Ukraine also said that professors are up to date with recent developments in accounting. However, some of the practitioners interviewed in Kiev did not hold this opinion, at least when it came to lectures delivered as part of continuing education courses.

Some of the most prestigious universities in Ukraine still do not have a course devoted just to IFRS. IFRS is inserted into the course on foreign accounting.

Sixty or seventy universities in Ukraine participate in the accounting Olympics each year. These Olympics consist of conferences where students present their papers. Sometimes there are competitions between teams in the third year. These events are highly competitive and serve to create friendships between students and improve their view of accounting. Such competitions serve to make the material less dry and boring and make it come to life.

The prestige of accounting has increased in recent years, according to the university professors and administrators interviewed, because enterprises need tax specialists and people who can create and interpret accounting information. Directors are starting to recognize the importance of accounting.

This enhanced prestige is having an effect on students and the way they study and view themselves. Students now read extra articles that are not required reading and discuss them. Most students are enthusiastic about their studies, which is a relatively recent phenomenon.

Every university has its own approach toward accounting education. However, there are only so many ways to reform the accounting curriculum or to teach accounting, so there are many common features.

Odessa State Economic University is a case in point. It now offers a four-year bachelor's degree in accounting and a fifth-year master's degree. The State gave them the option of offering either a fifth-year specialist degree or a master's degree, so they chose the master's degree for prestige purposes. Almost everyone who completes the bachelor's degree goes on for the master's. It also has a one year specialist designation for people who have already completed a bachelor's degree in another field. In contrast, many universities in Russia now offer a four-year bachelor's degree, a fifth-year specialist degree and a sixth-year master's degree (Preobragenskaya and McGee, 2005).

The accounting curriculum has undergone major changes in recent years because of the changes in national accounting standards and the adoption of IFRS. Before, the university used to offer just a course in the theory of accounting and some specialized accounting courses, such as agricultural accounting. They now offer a fuller range of courses, including financial accounting, financial reporting, management accounting, accounting for international enterprises and accounting for foreign countries. Starting in the 2004-2005 academic year they offer a course in tax accounting and reporting.

Formerly, the tax course was offered as part of the financial accounting course but it will now be a separate course. There is no special course in IFRS. However, there are courses about international companies. The university also now offers electives. Under the former Soviet system, there were no electives. All students in accounting had to take the same exact courses throughout their program.

There is a special course in the fourth year that requires students to work with accounting documents for three weeks. The documents replicate the documents that exist in a real accounting department, from original invoices through the various stages of the accounting process. The documents are posted to ledgers, with the end result being the preparation of financial statements. Students must work in all areas of accounting.

In the fifth year students receive practical training. They work with real documents from real companies. Each student works in a certain area, with some of the documents. The end result is the production of financial statements. The work involves more documents and more transactions than was the case in the fourth year. Students also make tax declarations based on their work.

The curriculum is as follows: 1st year - general subjects 2nd year- basic accounting 3rd and 4th year - other accounting – all the main accounting subjects. 5th year - advanced financial accounting and analysis.

Students also write a diploma project in the fifth year after they have received practical training in real companies. They do their diploma project after getting experience. They must defend their diploma project like a thesis.

The delivery format is a combination of lectures, seminars and case studies. Students also study using computer software and there are special courses in computer software. All examinations are written and usually take the form of practical exercises. Some exams require students to produce financial statements. This practice differs from that used during the Soviet era, when some exams were oral.

The language the lectures are delivered in depends on the students. At the start of the semester each professor asks the class whether they would prefer the lectures to be in Ukrainian or Russian. The lectures are delivered in whichever of the two languages the majority of the class prefers. Such an option may seem strange, or at least interesting, to an American audience, since American professors never give such options. But apparently this option is not so unusual in Ukraine. Some Swedish universities have a similar option, except that in the case of Swedish universities the professor asks the students whether they would prefer the lectures to be in Swedish or English.

The accounting faculty does not specialize to the extent of accounting faculties in other countries. Most of the accounting professors at Odessa State Economic University can teach any of the accounting courses. They do not teach just financial accounting or just managerial accounting or just auditing. One benefit of this approach is that they are forced to keep current on developments in all areas of accounting. The drawback is that they have to spend more time preparing their lectures. Also, they cannot become specialists, although that is probably not necessary at the undergraduate level.

The university does not have difficulty finding people to teach. Accounting professors earn about \$200 a month, which is considered adequate. They also qualify for better pensions – 90 percent of salary – compared to about \$32 a month for the majority of the population. Some people become professors for the prestige. It is also possible to do consulting and many professors have businesses or consulting practices outside of the university.

About 45-50 percent of their students receive full tuition scholarships, which means that their education is free. Scholarships are awarded on the basis of merit. Students not receiving scholarships have to pay tuition of 3600 greven per year, which is about \$700. Such an amount may seem small to people from developed economies, but to many Ukrainians it is a large amount.

Students do not have difficulty finding jobs after graduation because most of them already have jobs. The fact that the university is prestigious also helps them in the job search. Salaries for new graduates are about \$100 a month. Experienced accountants can earn up to \$800 per month.

Odessa National I.I. Mechnikov University also has a strong accounting program. Some members of the faculty there are trying to spread the idea that accounting can be used as a tool for decision making, an idea that most managers and even many teachers still do not understand.

In the two years prior to the interviews, the university instituted some major changes to its accounting and business curriculum. New courses were offered for the first time. This change was motivated by the appearance of new kinds of enterprises. Courses like financial management, insurance, the stock market and management accounting were taught for the first time. However, there is no special course in IFRS. This topic is incorporated into their course on accounting in foreign countries.

Tax accounting is another new subject. All enterprises are now required to compute taxes, so the university offers a tax course to meet market demand. The emphasis is on the ability to solve tax problems.

The professors and administrators interviewed at Odessa National I.I. Mechnikov University confirmed some of the statements made by practitioners and the professors and administrators at Odessa State Economic University. They also agreed that the prestige of the accounting profession has increased because businesses are starting to realize how important accounting information is for them. Managers are starting to recognize how much value a good accountant can add to their business.

Many of their students also work in the field of accounting during the course of their studies, which gives them an opportunity to earn income while gaining practical experience. Their students do not have difficulty finding jobs after graduation because of the practical experience they have gained and also because Odessa National I.I. Mechnikov University is one of the more prestigious universities in Ukraine. Their students participate in the accounting Olympics and often score well. At the beginning of the semester professors ask their students whether they would like to have the lectures delivered in Russian or Ukrainian.

Odessa National I.I. Mechnikov University offers three levels of accounting credentials – the four-year bachelor's degree, the fifth year specialist designation and the sixth year master's degree. Practically all of their students study for five years and earn the specialist designation.

Many of the accounting texts they use in their classes were written by Prof. Butenyetz Franz Franchevich, a Ukrainian professor. Thus, there is no need to deal with books that were translated from English, eliminating the problems that invariably result from mediocre translations. His books filled the gap that was created when the Soviet Union collapsed but before the new accounting system took hold. The professors like his books, but they supplement his books with newspaper and journal articles when

preparing their lectures. Professors who write textbooks also often incorporate material from articles into their text books. Many books have been translated from English into the local languages, which enables students and professors to have access to the accounting literature of other countries.

Table 1 summarizes the curriculum an accounting student would take for the four-year bachelor's degree program at Odessa State Economic University. Accounting and other professional courses account for 2,349 hours, or 31 percent of total university studies. General business and economics account for 3,179 hours, or 41.9 percent of total study. Humanities account for the other 2,052 hours and 27.1 percent.

Table 1. Four-Year Bachelor Degree Curriculum Odessa State Economic University

	Hrs.	%
Humanities	2052	27.1
General business and economics	3179	41.9
Accounting and other professional	2349	31.0
Totals	7580	100.0

Table 2 provides additional details.

Table 2. Detailed Curriculum Four-Year Bachelor Degree Odessa State Economic University

	STUDYING (hours)					% of Total
	TOTAL	In class			Self-study	
		Total	Lecture	Seminars		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
General Humanitarian and Social Economic Disciplines	2052	1120	450	670	932	27.1
Federal Component	1512	840	278	562	672	19.9
Foreign Languages	324	210		210	114	4.3
Physical Training	216	140		140	76	2.8
Logic	54	28	18	10	26	0.7
Ukrainian Language (Speech)	81	40	8	32	41	1.1
Ethics and Esthetics	54	28	18	10	268	0.7
Science of Culture	81	40	24	16	41	1.1
Law	108	54	30	24	54	1.4
Religions	54	28	18	10	26	0.7
Philosophy	108	54	30	24	54	1.4
History of Ukraine	108	54	30	24	54	1.4
Sociology	81	40	24	16	41	1.1
Ecology	54	28	18	10	26	0.7
Political Science	81	40	24	16	41	1.1
Health	54	28	18	10	26	0.7
Educational Psychology	54	28	18	10	26	0.7
REGIONAL (UNIVERSITY) COMPONENT	270	140	82	58	130	3.6
Philosophy of Science	54	28	18	10	26	0.7
Psychology of Business Communication	54	28	10	18	26	0.7
Labor Law	54	28	18	10	26	0.7

Continuation of the tab. 2

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
History of Ukrainian Culture	54	28	18	10	26	0.7
Regional Science	54	28	18	10	26	0.7
ELECTIVES	270	140	90	50	130	3.6
History of Ukrainian State System	54	28	18	10	26	0.7
Philosophy Problems of Globalization	54	28	18	10	26	0.7
International Communications	54	28	18	10	26	0.7
Social Ecology	54	28	18	10	26	0.7
Political Psychology	54	28	18	10	26	0.7
General Economics Disciplines	3179	1608	862	746	1571	41.9
Federal Component	3017	1524	816	708	1493	39.8
Audit	54	28	18	10	26	0.7
Cash, Loans, Banks	81	42	22	20	39	1.1
Civil Defense	54	28	18	10	26	0.7
Econometrics	81	42	22	20	39	1.1
Economic Analysis	81	42	22	20	39	1.1
Economics of Entrepreneurship	162	82	50	32	80	2.1
Economics of Labor and Social Relations	108	54	30	24	54	1.4
Finance	108	54	30	24	54	1.4
Finance of Entrepreneurship	81	42	22	20	39	1.1
History of Economic Studies	108	54	28	26	54	1.4
History of Economics	81	40	24	16	41	1.1
Informatics and Computers	270	140	60	80	130	3.6
Insurance	81	42	22	20	39	1.1
International Economics	108	54	30	24	54	1.4
Investment	81	42	22	20	39	1.1
Macroeconomics	108	54	30	24	54	1.4
Management	108	54	30	24	54	1.4
Marketing	108	54	30	24	54	1.4
Mathematics	216	108	54	54	108	2.8
Microeconomics	108	54	30	24	54	1.4
Patent Law Fundamentals	54	28	18	10	26	0.7
Political Science	182	84	48	36	98	2.4
Probability Theory and Mathematical Statistics	108	54	28	26	54	1.4
Programming	108	54	28	26	54	1.4
State Law	81	42	22	20	39	1.1
State Regulation of Economy	81	42	22	20	39	1.1
Statistics	135	68	34	34	67	1.8
Work Force Allocation and Regional Economy	81	42	22	20	39	1.1
REGIONAL (UNIVERSITY) COMPONENT	108	56	28	28	52	1.4

Continuation of the tab. 2

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Small Business Accounting	54	28	18	10	26	0.7
Office Work	54	28	10	18	26	0.7
ELECTIVES	54	28	18	10	26	0.7
Foreign Countries' Economy	54	28	18	10	26	0.7
PROFESSIONAL DISCIPLINES	2349	1208	666	542	1141	31.0
FEDERAL COMPONENT	1188	600	312	288	588	15.7
Financial Accounting 1	378	182	92	90	196	5.0
Financial Accounting 2	108	54	30	24	54	1.4
Managerial Accounting	135	68	36	32	67	1.8
Organization, methods of auditing	135	68	36	32	67	1.8
Accounting in Foreign Countries	108	54	30	24	54	1.4
Information Systems and Technology in Accounting	162	84	38	46	78	2.1
The Theory of Accounting	162	90	50	40	72	2.1
REGIONAL (UNIVERSITY) COMPONENT	675	358	198	160	317	8.9
Control and Revision	108	54	30	24	54	1.4
Tax System of Ukraine	54	28	18	10	26	0.7
Industrial Statistics	135	70	34	36	65	1.8
Technology Industry	54	28	18	10	26	0.7
Technology Agriculture	54	28	18	10	26	0.7
Economics in Agriculture	54	28	18	10	26	0.7
	216	122	62	60	94	2.8
ELECTIVES	432	250	156	94	236	6.4
International Finance	54	28	18	10	26	0.7
Financial Market	54	28	18	10	26	0.7
Tax Code	54	28	18	10	26	0.7
Accounting for International	108	54	30	24	54	1.4
Industrial Accounting	54	28	18	10	26	0.7
Social Programming	54	28	18	10	26	0.7
Ecology – Project	54	28	18	10	26	0.7
The History of Accounting	54	28	18	10	26	0.7
TOTAL HOURS	7580	3936	1978	1958	3644	100.0

ACCOUNTING EDUCATION IN THE USA

Accounting education in the United States is not identical from university to university, although there is not much variation, especially at the undergraduate level. One reason for the relative uniformity is because the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), the agency that accredits some business schools in the United States, has rather rigid requirements regarding what must be taught to gain accreditation. www.aacsb.edu Although the AACSB accredits less than half of the business schools in the United States, it is very influential because the schools that are AACSB accredited tend to be the larger schools. Nearly all of the universities that offer a PhD in accounting are AACSB accredited.

That being the case, the authors decided to use the curriculum requirements of an AACSB accredited school for comparison purposes. Barry University was chosen because it is a small university, with slightly fewer than 9,000 students, and it received AACSB accreditation in April, 2003, so, presumably, its accounting curriculum meets the current AACSB standards (although some AACSB standards are in the process of changing, but those standards do not relate to curriculum). Barry University is representative of the schools that most recently became AACSB accredited. When the AACSB first began accrediting schools, it was mostly the larger schools that applied for accreditation. Now it is mostly the smaller schools that apply for AACSB accreditation.

Table 3 shows the breakdown of curriculum for the four-year bachelor's degree in accounting. There are separate categories for accounting, other business and nonbusiness. Barry University uses the semester hour system. Each semester hour represents 15 academic hours of class meetings. One academic hour consists of 50 minutes. However, for purposes of simplicity, we have defined one academic hour as 60 minutes. For comparison purposes, we have estimated that 1.5 hours is spent in study for each hour spent in class.

Table 3. Breakdown of Curriculum by Category Four-Year Bachelor's Degree Barry University

	<i>Sem. Hrs.</i>	<i>Hrs. in Class</i>	<i>Study Hours</i>	<i>Total Hours</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
Accounting					
Financial Accounting	3	45			
Managerial Accounting	3	45			
Intermediate Accounting I	3	45			
Intermediate Accounting II	3	45			
Intermediate Accounting III	3	45			
Cost Accounting	3	45			
Federal Income Taxation	3	45			
Accounting Information Systems	3	45			
Advanced Accounting	3	45			
Auditing	3	45			
Total Accounting	30	450	675	1125	23.8%
Other Business					
Introduction to Business	3	45			
Microeconomics	3	45			
Macroeconomics	3	45			
Applications of Statistics in Business	3	45			
Introduction to Information Systems	3	45			
Organization Behavior and Management	3	45			
Operations Management	3	45			
Marketing Concepts and Applications	3	45			
Business Law I	3	45			
International Business	3	45			
Financial Management I	3	45			
Strategic Management	3	45			
Business Electives	3	45			
Basic Computer Applications	3	45			
Precalculus Mathematics for Business	3	45			
Elementary Probability & Statistics	3	45			
Social & Ethical Issues in Business	3	45			
Total Other Business	51	765	1148	1913	40.5%
Nonbusiness	45	675	1013	1688	35.7%
Totals	126	1890	2836	4726	100.0%

There was some arbitrariness in the categorization of some subjects. For example, Barry University lists macroeconomics as a social science but we have listed it as a business course. Barry University classifies precalculus for business and elementary probability & statistics as mathematics courses. We listed them as business courses. Barry lists basic computer applications as a nonbusiness course. We classified it as a business course.

COMPARISONS

It is difficult to make a strict comparison between the university curriculum that a Ukrainian accounting student would follow and the curriculum an American student would follow. For one thing, the courses they take are much different. Their entry level backgrounds are also different. Various international standardized exams that allow student achievement to be compared between and among students in different countries uniformly show that American students are at or near the bottom of the scale in terms of math and science skills. Ukrainian students, on the other hand, have a reputation for having strong math and science skills. Thus, one might conclude that the average first year student at a Ukrainian university is better prepared for academic work than is the average American student. If true, Ukrainian universities would be able to demand more from their first year students than would be the case for American universities.

This initial view was confirmed by interviews one of the present authors has had with a variety of students from East European countries over the years. They generally felt that American universities did not challenge them as much and that some of the courses they took at American schools consisted mostly of material they had already learned when they were high school students. However, that general view did not extend to some of the accounting courses they took at American universities. Intermediate accounting seemed especially demanding, although none of the students interviewed said that intermediate accounting was any more rigorous than some of the courses they took at their East European university.

But that is not the only difference between the attributes of first year students in Ukrainian and American universities. A higher percentage of high school graduates enter universities in the United States than in Ukraine, so even if the average Ukrainian high school student were the rough equivalent of the average American high school student, the average Ukrainian first year university student would be superior to the average American first year student because Ukrainian universities tend to accept only the best high school graduates, whereas some American universities will accept almost anyone who graduates from high school. Some American universities will even accept high school dropouts who are over the age of 23, the rationale being that they have acquired some work experience and maturity by then. Taking all these factors into account would take us too far afield from the main area of investigation, which is a comparison of the university accounting curriculum of Ukrainian and American universities, so we will leave discussion of these other items for another day.

There are other reasons why comparing the accounting curriculum at a Ukrainian university to the accounting curriculum at an American university may be difficult. For one thing, the period of study may be different. At American schools, the total curriculum consists of between 120 and 128 semester hours, with each semester hour being the equivalent to 15 hours spent in class. But each class hour consists of just 50 minutes. The curriculum can be completed over four years by a full-time student.

The time period for Ukrainian universities is not so uniform. Some Ukrainian universities have a curriculum that stretches over four years, while others have a five-year program. Some Ukrainian universities also have a sixth year, which often results in a master's degree. Also, in Ukrainian universities, study is not measured only in terms of hours spent in class. Other factors are included, such as study time, laboratory time and time spent working as an intern or practicing accountant. Also, some lectures are given in big lecture halls by full professors, whereas other sessions are given in smaller groups and are conducted by assistant professors, so there may be some qualitative differences between the lectures received in small universities and large universities, if one believes that the quality of instruction declines as class size increases. There is the perception that smaller classes result in a better educational experience than large classes held in lecture halls. Students tend to pay more attention, do not talk to each other as much and can hear the professor's lecture better in a small classroom. This same format is used in some of the larger American universities, at least in the first year or two of instruction, but it is not used in the smaller universities.

In an attempt to equalize these differences, we have made some assumptions regarding the American system. For comparison purposes, we have assumed that the average American student spends 1.5 hours studying outside of class for each hour in class, and we have treated each hour as if it consisted of 60 minutes, for simplification purposes, although an academic hour consists of just 50 minutes.

For comparison purposes, we decided to compare the Ukrainian four-year program to the American four-year bachelor's degree program.

Table 4 compares the accounting curriculum of the Ukrainian and American universities. Ukrainian accounting majors spend more time studying accounting and business subjects than do their American counterparts, both in terms of total hours and as a percentage of the total curriculum. Ukrainian students also spend more time studying nonbusiness courses in terms of hours, although not as a percentage of the total curriculum.

Ukrainian students spend about 60 percent more time in various study activities than do their American counterparts (7580 hours compared to 4726 hours). Of course, this is based on the assumption that American students spend 1.5 hours in study for each hour in class and that Ukrainian students actually spend 3,644 hours in self-study, as the official university curriculum plan calls for. If either of these assumptions is not accurate, then the figures would change. However, it might be pointed out that the official Ukrainian curriculum plan calls for just 1.08 hours of outside study for each hour of lecture or seminar [$3936/3644 = 1.08$].

Table 4. Comparison of Ukrainian and American Accounting Curricula

	<i>Ukrainian University (Table 1)</i>		<i>American University (Table 3)</i>	
	<i>Hours</i>	<i>% of Total</i>	<i>Hours</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
Accounting Courses	2349	31.0%	1125	23.8%
Other Business Courses	3179	41.9%	1913	40.5%
Nonbusiness Courses	2052	27.1%	1688	35.7%
Totals	7580	100.0%	4726	100.0%

The evidence seems overwhelming, on the surface at least, that the average Ukrainian accounting graduate is better prepared than the average American accounting graduate. Ukrainian universities are more selective regarding whom they allow into their programs and Ukrainian students study many more hours in total as well as in accounting. Ukrainian students spend xxx 31.0 percent of their time studying accounting, compared to 23.8% for American students. Ukrainian students spend 3179 hours studying other business courses, compared to 1913 hours for American students. That's an extra 2490 hours, or 82%.

However, there are other factors to consider. For example, the quality of Ukrainian textbooks and other study materials may not be as good as those used by American students. Ukrainian accounting texts do not have nearly as many examples as American textbooks. There are no Ukrainian texts that are closely comparable to an American intermediate accounting book in terms of depth or breadth of coverage. One reason is because American intermediate accounting texts provide coverage of U.S. GAAP, which consists of more than 140 FASB Statements, whereas IFRS consists of a mere 40 some standards. Furthermore, although some American texts have been translated into Russian, the Russian translation may be 8 or 10 years old and the quality of the translation may be less than perfect.

Another point to consider is that many Ukrainian students, perhaps the great majority, do not own many (or any) accounting textbooks. They are too expensive for the average Ukrainian student. They compensate for this factor by going to the library and reading the books the library has. This approach to study is quite common in Ukrainian and Russian universities. The problem is that Ukrainian university libraries sometimes do not have enough books for all the students who want to read them. However, some people interviewed thought that the libraries had a sufficient number of books for the students, so perhaps it cannot be said that there is any widespread shortage of textbooks.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The Ukrainian universities visited seemingly have a solid accounting program. Their students spend more time studying accounting and other subjects than do their American counterparts.

The present authors would be the first to admit that the comparisons made in this study are not the only comparisons that could be made. Choosing different American and Ukrainian universities would produce slightly different results. Choosing a non-AACSB American school would perhaps produce somewhat different results as well. Choosing a Ukrainian university that has a longer (or shorter) accounting program would produce different results. Thus, there is room for further research, which could either replicate the present study or differentiate itself from the present study.

Studies could also be made comparing some American university to a university either in some other former Soviet republic (there are 15 of them) or to some university in the former satellite countries such as Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, etc. Other studies could be made that compare the accounting curriculum in a Ukrainian or Russian university to that of one of the other former Soviet republics. It would be interesting to see how curricula have evolved in these former Soviet republics since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and to speculate as to why the accounting curricula in the different countries are evolving in different directions. Or maybe they are evolving in the same direction, which is a distinct possibility, given the increased influence and spread of International Financial Reporting Standards throughout both the EU and transition economies. Only additional research would reveal in which direction these universities are evolving.

Another possibility would be to replicate the present study in two or three years. Examining the curriculum at the same universities in a few years might produce different results, since the curriculum in Ukrainian universities is in a state of change. Although the general movement is toward IFRS, it is a movement with a Ukrainian flavor. Ukrainian accounting standards are not going to disappear overnight. Indeed, they are likely to be around for a long time. The Ukrainian tax authorities are not interested in looking at financial statements or footnotes prepared using IFRS or GAAP. The tax law requires tax liability to be computed using Ukrainian Accounting Standards and it is unlikely that this rule will change in the near future. So some Ukrainian companies will have to use two sets of accounting standards in the normal course of business.

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