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The Policy Fellows Program: In-Service Training in Public Policy for Russian Local Government Officials

Kristin Morse, Raymond Struyk *

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Abstract

The Policy Fellows Program seeks to strengthen the policy development skills of local government officials and NGO representatives. The course consists of a series of four workshops, each offered over two or three days. Each workshop uses a problem-solving format, and groups of participants comprised

of government officials and NGO analysts work together on exercises that are a core part of the course. Participants are introduced to analytical decision-making methods and taught how to monitor and evaluate programs. The course also covers key concepts in policy making, such as considering the distributional aspects of policies (who benefits/pays), developing explicit decision-making criteria, balancing political and technical factors, defining public goods and services, and introducing competition to the public sector. In evaluation forms completed during the course, participants reported that the course provided them with new and valuable information that would assist them in their current and future work. Follow on interviews were conducted with a random sample of 25 graduates approximately five months after completion of the course to further evaluate the impact of the course on professional performance produced similar results. The results of the evaluation of the Policy Fellows course indicate that it fills a definite training need for local officials and staff at advocacy NGOs in Russia.

Introduction

The responsibilities of local governments in the former Soviet republics for the delivery of public services have been utterly transformed since the beginning of the transition period. While the extent varies, in all countries there has been substantial decentralization of responsibility from the center to localities.¹ Russia is no exception. Local governments were ill prepared for their new task, particularly in terms of policy-making capacity. The situa-

¹ For a discussion of decentralization in the former Soviet bloc, see, for example, Kirchner (1999); Wallich (1994); Bird, Ebel, and Wallich (1995); Freinkman, Treisman, and Titov (1999); Horvath (2000).

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tion has improved modestly, mostly through a learning-by-doing process. Nevertheless, policy analysis, program formulation, and program monitoring and evaluation skills remain very limited.

At the same time local advocacy NGOs, including think tanks in some cities, have emerged to champion specific causes and to promote more efficient and open government.² In a number of cities, there is active cooperation between local government and certain NGOs, including NGOs acting as service providers under contract to the city, as well as those being involved in the policy making process. Nevertheless, there is still significant wariness by many local officials to NGOs. Overlaying this scene is the general lack of public policy skills at the local level. The result is that the quality of decision making is impaired compared to its potential.

The course described and assessed here is designed to improve local decision making by raising skill levels. A second objective is to strengthen working relationships between NGOs and government bodies through the inclusion of persons from both groups among the students. The course consists of a series of four workshops, each of two or three days devoted to strengthening policy analysis skills. Each workshop uses a problem-solving format, and groups of participants composed of officials and analysts work together on exercises that are a core part of the course.

During the spring of 2002 the course was offered in three municipalities in European Russia: Cheboksary, Kirov and Saratov. A workshop was offered in each city about once a month. The information presented is based on this experience. The course is now being presented in other cities.

The balance of the article consists of four parts. First is the course overview, which begins with a statement of principles that underpinned the development and teaching of the curriculum. Next, the contents of the curriculum are outlined. Finally, the issue of institutionalization is briefly addressed. The second part of the paper describes the participants and gives information on the share that

passed the course. The third part reviews the findings of two evaluations of the course – one taking place during and at the conclusion of the course and the second five months after its conclusion. The third section offers some conclusions and addresses the possibility of using the curriculum in other countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Course Overview

At a general level, we followed the conventional approach to teaching policy analysis in the U. S. – to equip students “with intellectual tools to aid practitioners in the identification and specification of policy problems and the development of sensible, useful, and politically viable solutions” (deLeon and Steelman (2001, p. 164).³ A consistent market-oriented paradigm was employed.

Four Principles.

The following principles guided the team in designing the curriculum and teaching the classes.

Maximize the use of problems and case studies.

Participants are adults, often persons approaching or already middle-aged. Most have not taken a formal class for years. Many hold senior positions and are used to frequently expressing their views. These points argue for classes that minimize formal lecturing and maximize the time devoted to working on concrete problems, case studies, and role plays in order to sustain student interest (Lynn, 1999, p. 33). The majority of problems and examples were drawn from Russia.

Decide at the outset on the main analytic skills and policy principles to be conveyed and build the course around these.

The team first determined the set of about ten skills and policy principles that students should master through participation in the course that are summarized in Table 1. These topics were selected based on the experience of the Urban Institute (UI-Washington) and the Institute for Urban Economics (IUE-Moscow) in working with Russian local and national

² For a comparative overview of developments in Russia, see USAID (2002); Charities Aid Foundation (1997).

³ This is consistent with similar views expressed by Lynn (2001) and Romero (2001).

officials on policy issues over the past decade, combined with our knowledge of public policy curricula.⁴

The ultimate objective is critical thinking.

Many officials – in Russia and elsewhere – tend to operate at what might be termed “the descriptive level.” In other words, in discussing a problem they can describe a situation and outline a proposed policy, but they seldom reach the “analytic level” where the problem and potential solutions are analyzed in terms of incentives that affect behavior. Hence, the task of the course in general, and the faculty in particular, is to constantly challenge participants to defend their statements in terms of hard analysis of incentives, behavioral relations, and consistency with general principles of good management. For example, when discussing the structure of a program that provides income support and training to unemployed individuals, one must address the issue of the incentives on program participants’ effort to look for work embodied in the way the subsidy is structured. Or, when proposing to hold competitions to acquire certain services now provided on a monopoly basis by municipal firms, what are the incentives to support the initiative on the part of various municipal and private entities, and how could these affect the final outcome of the competitions?

Rigorous scoring of homework and tests, and a minimum total score to pass the course.

As seasoned administrators, the participants are used to attending seminars and conferences. Tests are seldom given, and certificates are distributed to all attending regardless of the level of participation. This can create a relaxed attitude about the necessity of applying one’s self to learning the material. The Policy Fellows course seeks to create greater commitment of students by increasing the value of receiving a certificate at the conclusion of the course.

To encourage mastery of the skills being taught requires that rules be announced and

enforced. The class is informed of the scoring procedures at the outset: the minimum passing grade is 40 points out of total of 65 possible.⁵ Tests are administered at the end of each workshop and three homework assignments are distributed. Students receive continual feedback on their performance in the form of graded tests and homework assignments. Strong homework assignments are reviewed in class. The faculty discusses the general quality of the work submitted and is straightforward in their criticism where this is appropriate.

At the conclusion of the course, students who passed the course were awarded certificates at a graduation ceremony. It is not clear what value the certificates themselves may have towards graduates future career advancement. To further increase the value of successful course completion, graduates are eligible to participate in an alumni association. This association of professional policy makers receives periodic newsletters and other interesting policy materials. The initial plan for the alumni association envisioned periodic events for graduates, but it proved too difficult to assemble enough representatives from each city.

The Curriculum.

The course outline is shown in Table 2. The order in which topics are covered is designed to help students accumulate skills. One session builds on the knowledge developed in the previous sessions. Therefore, it is extremely important for students to attend regularly. The final workshop – devoted to writing concise, effective policy recommendations – presents students with policy problems similar to those they have encountered in previous sessions. In each policy problem/case study, the policy issue is stated, its political context outlined, and options for addressing it developed. The student is then charged with the task of preparing a short (two-to-three page) recommendation – and to defend the recommended action. This strong emphasis on writing skills and preparation of policy recommendations is consistent with

⁴ An idea of the extensiveness of the experience can be gained from IUE’s *Annual Report* and other items on its web site, www.urbanecomics.ru and from the descriptions of UI projects in Russia presented at www.urban.org/TPN.

⁵ The 65 points are made up as follows: up to 10 points for each of four tests; up to 7 points for each of three homework assignments; and 1 point for each of five evaluation forms that the student submits.

Table 1
Course Objectives: Policy Principles and Skills

<p>Subsidies. Different forms of subsidies; strengths and weaknesses of each. Illustrate various principles, e. g., consumer primacy.</p> <p>Targeting. Strengths and weaknesses of alternative structures. Actual examples.</p> <p>Incentives. Identifying and taking proper account of incentives to stakeholders as a key determinant of success in policy and program design. Stakeholder analysis.</p> <p>Basic policy analysis process. This builds on the topics already discussed. An advantage of this order is that the students are exposed to immediately useful material before getting the more didactic presentation on the process of policy analysis. Includes defining the problem and weighting policy options against well-defined criteria.</p> <p>Efficiency in the production of goods and services. Presentation of the basic economic concept. Stress proper role of government as setting the right environment (e.g., enforceable contracts) for most production but with a highly minimized actual production role. Introduce contracting out as an alternative to direct government delivery of services. Make arguments about the virtue of competition, etc.</p> <p>Program monitoring. Rationale for program monitoring; give specific examples of use of monitoring information being useful to program management. Introduce modified log-frame for use in deciding what information should be collected and what reports to be produced for whom.</p> <p>Data assessment techniques. Quality control in data assembly. This may be thought of as a sub-topic under monitoring or evaluation but the experience is that local officials do not review statistical tables for obvious errors that simple logical checks would identify.</p> <p>Program implementation evaluation. Types of questions that can be addressed with process evaluation and why the answers are important for good program management. Examples of good practices. Class exercises for defining such evaluations.</p> <p>Writing policy recommendations. Hones ability to analyze problems and clearly present Recommendations. Opportunity to practice writing and critical thinking skills. Analyses of case studies require participants to use concepts from previous workshops.</p>

what is generally viewed as good practice in policy analysis courses.⁶ (Examples of policy problems are provided in the annex.)

The curriculum is the result of collaboration between Russian and American policy experts. The team jointly identified the core topics based on their experience of working with local and national government officials and numerous think tanks in the region since 1991. These are topics that arise frequently in actual policy development in these countries and where officials and analysts often lack a basic grounding. The course is in keeping with the basic discipline of policy training as taught

at American universities, with a heavy emphasis on international best practices and examples from Russia. The Russian team ensured that the materials and ideas were relevant to participants by adding numerous local examples of policies, social and economic problems, and current practice.

The curriculum was prepared in English and Russian, complete with instructor's notes, exercises, class handouts and problems, tests and evaluation forms.

Course format.

Each workshop was offered over two-full days or three-half days, with cities given the opportunity to select the schedule that best met

⁶ See, for example, Musso, Biller, and Myrtle (2000).

their needs. The course was spread over four months with one seminar offered in each city each month.

The primary language of instruction was Russian. The American instructor spoke in English with one of the Russian instructors serving as a translator. Formal presentations were limited to no more than 45 minutes, with ample time allotted for group discussions, exercises, and student presentations.

pursue social or economic reforms. Letters were sent and/or meetings were arranged with the mayors of the selected cities. One large city was not interested in the training, with local officials claiming that their staff already understood the topics. The course received strong support from the administration of the selected cities. This support was very important and signaled to participants that city leaders valued the skills and ideas and had expectations for the time spent in the course.

Table 2
Policy Fellows Course Outline

<p>Workshop 1: Critical Thinking about Public Programs and Subsidies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of policy actions– focusing primarily on targeting and subsidies • Stakeholder analysis – evaluating the interests/influence of different parties • Policy Analysis Model– a six step process for analytical decision making <p>Workshop 2: Efficient Public Programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The roles and responsibilities of different levels of government • Models for carrying out government functions: direct provision, contracting out, and divestiture/ privatization • Designing contracting out for a concrete municipal service <p>Workshop 3: Program Monitoring and Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program monitoring– what to track, why, how? • Program evaluation– assessing the implementation process and/or outcomes • Using data effectively <p>Workshop 4: Preparing Policy Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing and presenting policy recommendations <p>This workshop also serves as an opportunity to review the Policy Analysis Model covered in the first workshop and allow participants to practice and demonstrate skills and ideas from throughout the course.</p>

City Selection.

The course is part of a broader initiative to strengthen local governments in the Volga Federal District (VFD) – and all cities selected to participate were VFD cities. The Institute for Urban Economics identified a handful of cities to approach about the course. The criteria for city selection were: cities with whom the organization had some prior experience, those that would not have a mayoral election within the next year (which would make it very hard for officials to attend the course), and those that had demonstrated some willingness to

Institutionalization.

A critical objective of the Policy Fellows program is to insure that a Russian institution will be fully capable of teaching this course in the future. The project was conceived as a joint undertaking of the Urban Institute and the Institute for Urban Economics. Work was facilitated by the fact that the two organizations have worked closely together since IUE was founded in 1995.

In addressing institutionalization, the project team has the advantage that the Policy Fellows program begins with a three-

year funding commitment and program plan. During the first year, UI took the lead on curriculum development and provided the lead instructor for the workshops in the three cities. The curriculum was refined with the help of two IUE staff who also team-taught the workshops with the UI instructor. In project Year Two, IUE is teaching the course with some input and monitoring by UI. In the third year, IUE will teach the course on its own.

In the last year IUE will also search for continued funding for the course. By that time the relation between a version of the Policy Fellows course for national officials and the version for local officials will be better defined, as will be alternative institutional arrangements for possible further dissemination of the course.

Participants and Graduates

Sixty-seven students participated in the course. Participants from the municipal governments in each city were appointed through a process directed by a deputy mayor. Most of the city officials held senior administrative positions, including that of deputy mayor, department chief, and deputy department head. We believe that most students had little information on the course before they attended the first class, despite the team providing descriptive materials to the deputy mayor. To ensure strong support from the city administrations, city officials comprised more than three-fourths of participants. NGOs were recruited by IUE with some input from cities.

The NGOs were a small minority in each class. The curriculum mostly describes policymaking and program development from the perspective of local government, with the understanding that this is relevant to NGOs with an interest in participating in public policy and that sections on program management and monitoring are relevant for any organization. The expectation was that adding some NGO representatives to a course largely for public administrators would elevate the policy skills of NGOs, help government officials recognize the potential role for NGOs, and provide a few NGOs with access to public officials.

The group exercises helped to facilitate interaction between the NGOs and govern-

ment officials. The small groups often provided an informal environment where good ideas prevailed and position did not appear to matter much. Willingness to participate was a significant factor, and several NGO representatives clearly saw the course as an opportunity for them to engage local officials as much as possible. Others made smaller contributions, which seemed largely driven by their limited skills and experience. In one city, NGO representatives were simply not as experienced as the city officials.

Nearly 72 percent of participants successfully completed the course requirements. Unlike many professional training programs in Russia, Policy Fellows required participants to submit work and demonstrate mastery of the skills/materials covered in the course.

That certificates were not guaranteed to participants provided incentives for students to attend and apply themselves. The majority of those that failed the course attended only one workshop – seeming to select out of the course. Others that failed the course were those that were unable to make the necessary time commitment to attend the workshops and complete the work. Only a few participants who applied themselves failed to accrue the points required to complete the course. Government officials and NGO representatives seemed to pass or fail at similar rates.

The course received strong support from the administration in each city. IUE staff met with the mayor or vice mayor in each city during the city selection process and the city leadership cooperated by appointing vice mayors and department heads to participate in the course. Cheboksary and Kirov organized press conferences during and at the end of the course.

Evaluation

The team conducted two types of evaluation of the course. First, at the conclusion of each workshop, students were requested to complete an evaluation form tailored to that workshop. To encourage submission of the evaluations, students received one point toward graduation for each evaluation submitted. In addition to inquiring about the format and quality of the presentations and materials, the form also asked questions about whether

Table 3
Number of Participants and Graduates

City	Participants			Graduates			
	Government	NGO	Total	Government	NGO	Total	% successfully completing course
Cheboksary	14	5	19	13	3	16	84.2%
Kirov	15	3	18	12	2	14	77.8%
Saratov ⁷	23	7	30	14	4	18	60.0%
Total	52	15	67	39	9	48	71.6%

the material covered on specific topics was new to the student and how relevant students judged the topic to their work.

Second, to obtain further information on the impact of the course, the team tried to interview a random sample of students and their bosses in each city about five months after the completion of the course. The objective was to determine if the students had been able to use the materials they learned in their daily work. The interviews also asked the students for their views about topics that are appropriate for the course.

First Evaluation

As noted, participants completed evaluation forms at the end of each workshop and a final evaluation at the close of the course. Based on these forms, participants reported that the course provided them with new and valuable information that would assist them in their current and future work. They also praised the structure of the course and stated that the group discussions and exercises provided a unique opportunity to interact with their colleagues, to better understand the ideas presented, and to connect the course material with the problems currently confronting their cities.

Quality of Course.

Using a five-point scale, participants rated the course with an average score of 4.86 (5=excel-

lent) based on the quality of the materials, organization, exercises, and presentations. Individual topics were also highly rated (no topic received a rating lower than 4.4) and the topics deemed most relevant included, in rank order:

- program evaluation
- policy analysis of public programs
- developing policy recommendations
- program monitoring
- data assessment
- stakeholder analysis
- options for carrying out local government functions
- government functions in a market economy
- targeting
- subsidies
- contracting out

We were concerned that the course might be too sophisticated or too simple and participants were asked for feedback on the level of the material/presentation of each major topic. Participants rated over 80 percent of the course topics as being presented at the right level. Ninety-eight percent of participants said that they would recommend the course to a colleague.

Participants were asked to assess each topic based on whether they deemed it useful to their current work, future work, or not relevant. These assessments are aggregated by workshop and included in Table 4. Over 90 percent of all workshop topics were judged useful to current or future work. The comparatively large percentage of participants rating

⁷ A large number of new people showed up for the second workshop in Saratov – only some of whom continued to participate in the course. Any attendee that completed a test or homework assignment was considered a participant and is included in this table.

Table 4
Workshop Ratings and Relevance

	Rating ⁸	Topics Useful to Work		
		Current	Future	Not Useful
Workshop 1: <i>Critical Thinking about Public Programs and Subsidies</i>	4.6	72.2%	27.3%	0.6%
Workshop 2: <i>Efficient Public Programs</i>	4.9	53.6	45.0	1.4
Workshop 3: <i>Program Monitoring and Evaluation</i>	4.7	71.2	19.8	9.0
Workshop 4: <i>Preparing Policy Recommendations</i>	4.9	82.6	13.0	4.4

Workshop 3, on program monitoring and evaluation, as “not useful” may well reflect the near total absence of program monitoring and evaluation by municipal administrations.

Course Impact.

The ultimate goal of the course is to improve how participants perform their jobs, specifically, that policy decisions will be made more analytically and programs will be designed and implemented more effectively. In evaluation forms completed after the final workshop, a surprising 89 percent of participants said that they had already applied skills derived from the course. Some of their specific examples of when they used the course are highlighted below:

“At the present time I work on socio-economic program development for Chuvashia municipalities. During the last three months my work was based on your course. On March 14, 2002, I led a meeting of directors of economic departments from different Chuvashia municipalities where we established a structure for policy/program development with the use of workshop materials. For the city of Cheboksary we worked out the city socio-economic program with the help of IUE experts.” (Cheboksary)

“Calculation of tuition fee for evening schools and calculation of prices for tickets to city entertainment facilities.” (Cheboksary)

“When I presented at the Cheboksary Regional Sport Committee the program on community sports facilities development ‘My yard is a sport yard.’ This program was awarded first place in the regional contest of innovative programs in youth policy.” (Cheboksary)

“Providing subsidies for housing and communal services and providing subsidies for individual housing construction.” (Cheboksary)

“Preparing a regional small-business development program.” (Kirov)

“Reexamined current programs. We also conducted a competition of social programs called ‘Kirov is a Cultural Capital for Youth’ (utilizing the following topics: targeting and stakeholder analysis).” (Kirov)

“Calculation of tariffs. Preparing socio-economic development programs.” (Saratov)

“Monitoring targeting of regional social programs.” (Saratov)

“Preparing for municipal procurement competition.” (Saratov)

The examples provided included items that were directly covered in the course (evaluation, targeting, competitive procurement, etc.), as well topics that were not specifically covered such as calculating tariffs – but for which presentations on benefit calculation, stakeholder analysis, and policy analysis may

⁸ The scale ranges from 5 (excellent) to 1 (poor).

have contributed. That participants credited the course for helping them to prepare city and regional budgets, calculate tariffs, and analyze regional problems suggests that the broader principle of the course – rigorous analytical thinking – was successfully conveyed. This is a dramatic change from early workshops when participants asked for examples specific to their fields and many seemed unable to apply key concepts or best practices to a range of problems.

Follow-on Evaluation

While the foregoing information is definitely useful in assessing the success of the course in communicating information to the students, it does not address the more important question of the sustained impact of the training on on-the-job performance. This is the case for two reasons. First, at the time of the initial assessment the students had not had much time or occasion to use the material gained through the course, although a surprising volume was reported. Second, all the information came from the participants, and they may have an incentive to overstate the utility of the course to please the instructors or may simply have inflated expectations about how they might be able to use the new techniques in their jobs.

In designing the follow-up evaluation, we generally followed the methods outlined by Taschereau (1998). In short, we planned a follow-up survey of a random sample of students and their supervisors several months after the completion of the course, with some questions specifically aimed at finding out if and how the course had been used in their work, impediments to utilizing course materials/

skills, and suggestions for improving the course. The in-person interviews were conducted by an IUE staff member familiar with the course but who had not been a teacher.

Participants were asked specifically how they applied ideas/skills from the course to their work and asked to offer specific recommendations. They were also asked if they performed any aspects of their jobs differently, or if they assumed any new responsibilities that they attributed to skills/knowledge gained from the course. A similar interview questionnaire was designed for the supervisors of course participants, and asked these supervisors if they had observed any change in staff performance after completing the course.

Table 5 shows the number of students and supervisors interviewed for the study. The research plan was to interview 7 – 10 graduates and 3 – 4 supervisors in each city. Graduates were selected for interviews randomly, with the exception that we made certain each sample included representation from the NGOs.

Supervisor feedback was extremely limited and has not been included in our analyses. Many participants were supervised directly by the mayor, and mayors were generally assumed to be unavailable for such interviews. However, several supervisors (including the deputy mayors of Cheboksary and Kirov) participated in the course along with members of their staffs. Two supervisors were interviewed and provided feedback on three participants. Although their comments were generally positive about the course and they stated that their employees had benefited from the course, they offered few specific examples.

Table 5
Total Graduates and Sample Sizes

City	Number of Graduates	Number interviewed	
		Graduates	Supervisors
Cheboksary	16	7	1 (supervisor of 2 participants)
Kirov	14	8	1
Saratov	18	10	0

Of the 25 graduates interviewed, 19 (76%) worked for government and 5 worked for NGOs. Graduates were high-ranking officials, with 84 percent serving as department chiefs or deputy mayors. Thirty-three percent had been trained as economists and the remainder held degrees in social sciences, mathematics, engineering, education, medicine, psychology, physics, or literature.

Graduates appeared to be quite satisfied with the course, rating the overall quality and usefulness of the course 4.65 (5=excellent) and 96 percent reporting that they would refer a colleague to the course. Ninety-six percent reported that they had been able to apply ideas/skills from the course to their work, with roughly half offering competitive procurement and implementing monitoring programs as specific examples (Table 6). Many participants credited the course with helping them to systemize their understanding or approach to policy issues. Sixty-four percent said that they had shared information or materials from the course with others.

Forty-four percent of graduates interviewed reported that they had encountered obstacles to their attempts to implement ideas/skills from the course. Lack of support from supervisors and colleagues were the obstacles most frequently cited.

As in the preliminary evaluation, graduates identified the group exercises as among the most useful elements of the course. When asked if they performed any aspects of their jobs differently as a result of taking the course, 28 percent reported that they were more likely to work with others.

A secondary goal of the course was to encourage collaboration among government officials and NGOs, and each class included several representatives from local NGOs. Approximately half of those interviewed reported that the course had changed their impression of how these groups might collaborate. Several mentioned that the course facilitated greater understanding and that there had been more cooperation.

Table 6
Application of Course Materials

What specific things from the course have you been able to apply to your work?	Number	Percent
Analyze public policy programs and make informed decisions (including developing new programs)	7	28
Consider stakeholder interests (how programs/ policies affect different groups)	9	36
Establish criteria (formally or informally) for making decisions	3	12
Present recommendations on policy issues	3	12
Make recommendations about how to involve the private sector	3	16
Facilitate a competition	14	56
Implement or improve monitoring program	12	48
Design or conduct an evaluation	4	16

As a final step, we decided to undertake some exploratory multivariate analysis of the variation in success in applying the knowledge gained from the course. In general terms, success can be considered to depend on three broad factors: the ability to formulate a change in policy (in our case, the student's mastery of the material), opportunities for making change (or conversely resistance to change), and the professional's motivation to introduce change.⁹ This general model was operationalized through the following hypotheses and corresponding variables.

Mastery of the material

Score for the course.

Participants who demonstrated a stronger mastery of the course materials will be better equipped to apply the newly acquired techniques in their jobs.

Education.

The course introduces a number of economic concepts. So participants with training in economics were more likely to apply the lessons of the course in their work.

Opportunities for and obstacles to introducing changes

Students from NGOs use more of the skills acquired.

The informal environment and frequently shifting agenda of most advocacy NGOs affords more opportunities to employ the new skills than the corresponding situation in government offices.

Participants in higher government positions were more likely to apply the newly acquired skills.

Persons at higher levels in an administrative apparatus have greater possibilities to apply new concepts, techniques, and skills. Perhaps most importantly, they may have the power to introduce some concepts to functions for which they are responsible.

Obstacles.

Those who reported obstacles to using the skills gained in the course, such as a lack of support from fellow workers or supervisors,

were less likely to report positively on their experience after the course.

"Reform resistant cities."

One or another of the cities may have been conservative and non reform-oriented.

Motivation for introducing reform

Negative student attitude during the course.

Students who were clearly bored, uninterested, and/or disruptive during the course would be less likely to master the course materials and to judge the newly acquired skills valuable for their jobs.¹⁰

Younger participants are more likely to apply the newly acquired skills.

Younger students are on average more open to new methods and concepts and more flexible in their thinking about how to apply them.

Among government workers, students with fewer years of service

are likely to be more open to change.

Gender.

It is possible that either women or men will systematically be more assertive introducing change. A higher share of women graduated from the course, suggesting greater interest, although they did not score higher overall than men.

We tested whether there was support for these hypotheses by using multivariate techniques to estimate a model where the unit of analysis is the participant and the dependent variable was the participant's overall rating "of the quality and usefulness of the course." Respondents gave a numerical rating, with a 1 to 5 range, 5 being the highest score. The mean value of the response was 4.65. This question was asked at the end of the interview, i. e., after specific questions on how the participant had been able to apply the course to his/her work, whether they did some aspects of his/her job differently and related questions. So the response should give a summary judg-

⁹ This model is consistent with standard textbook treatments of policy development. See, for example, Patton and Sawicki (1993), Chapter 2.

¹⁰ An analysis of the course scores for the 12 percent of students who were so classified by the instructors did not show that they scored significantly differently from other students. In fact there was little significant variation in scores among groups of students.

ment with strengths and weaknesses freshly recalled.

It is worth noting at the outset two limitations associated with the dependent variable that limit the findings. First, the variable combines rating on course quality and usefulness; this introduces some potential measurement error since the analysis is emphasizing the usefulness aspect when a respondent may have focused his or her rating on course quality. Second, there is limited variation in the scores. Respondents scored the course at 4, 4.5, and 5. The coefficient of variation for the dependent variable is about 70.

The independent variables included correspond to the hypotheses stated above. In particular they were:

- student's score for the course;
- a dummy variable indicating a participant who had appeared not to be very interested during the course;
- a dummy variable indicating the student worked for an NGO;
- the student's age (dummy variable for over 50);
- a dummy variable for the number of years government staff had worked for the government;
- a dummy variable indicating whether the student claimed education in economics
- a dummy variable indicating the student was a female;
- two dummy variables for cities; and
- a dummy variable indicating a government worker in the position of department head or higher.

So there were a total of 10 independent variables and 24 observations (a variable was missing for one respondent, and so this observation was excluded), leaving 13 degrees of freedom. This is clearly a small sample for the analysis. This factor and the measurement error in the dependent variable require that the results be treated strictly as suggestive. The model was estimated with multiple regression and multinomial logit techniques – the latter is preferred given the distribution of the dependent variable. In the event, the results for the multinomial logit models were wholly insignificant, suggesting little support for the hypotheses stated above.¹¹

Conclusions

The results of the evaluation of the Policy Fellows course indicates that it was well-received by participants and that it fills a definite training need for local officials and staff at advocacy NGOs in Russia. More specifically, the topics were relevant and useful to participants' work and the method of instruction and organization of the course were highly rated. Participants credited the course with helping to "systematize" their approach to public policy issues, suggesting that the course's ultimate objective of fostering critical thinking has been met. In addition to this general shift towards analytical thinking, many participants offered concrete examples of how the course had assisted them in developing programs, designing monitoring programs, and facilitating competitions.

Since the staff of municipal governments throughout the CIS share the problem of their Russian counterparts in being poorly equipped for many of the duties that have been thrust upon them during the transition, an obvious question is whether the Policy Fellows course could be adopted for use elsewhere in the region. The short answer is "yes, with some effort." Success will likely rest on two elements: the curriculum and the instructors. With respect to the curriculum, the course is oriented to Russia in its contextual material and examples in order to generate student interest. To be effective, even in other CIS countries, moderate changes would be needed in these areas so that the material would be immediately relevant to course participants. Indeed, one area where the team is introducing changes in the course is in widening the array of countries from which cases are drawn. Somewhat to our surprise,

¹¹ The multiple regression performed marginally better and these results can be summarized as follows. The estimated model was weak: an adjusted r^2 of .32 and significance at the .07 level. Only three of the hypotheses were actually supported, and two of these only at the 10 percent level of confidence. First, those who demonstrated a poor attitude during the course were less likely to use the results in their work or rate the course highly. Second, female participants gave higher ratings. We queried the instructors for why this might be the case, but they reported no evident differences in participation between male and female participants. Third, students in the Saratov offering gave significantly higher ratings. The city and region are known for being progressive and this fact is apparently reflected in their ability to use the course materials in practice.

students asked for a wider range – both in the sectors and the countries used as examples and cases.

Regarding the instructors, it would be wrong to assume that it would be possible for a university professor in a CIS country to take the Russian version of the course materials and effectively teach the course. Even with the large volume of notes and supplemental readings provided in the course materials, these materials are not a substitute for close study of textbooks or, even better, careful mentoring by an experienced policy practitioner. The team teaching method used by UI-IUE in the initial course offering provided the essential mentoring to two senior IUE staff members who already possessed a great deal of experience working with local officials on policy development and program implementation. Our recommendation is that this team-teaching model be followed in other countries.

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