

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL POLICY UNIVERSITY OF MACEDONIA

Friday 29, November 2013

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Introduction

I. The external evaluation committee

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) visited the University of Macedonia November 25-27, 2013 for the assessment of the Department of Educational and Social Policy.

On the first day we met with (i) the Chair of the Department, Assoc. Prof. K. Papadopoulos, the Director of Graduate Studies, Prof. V. Dagdilelis, the member of the Internal Evaluation Committee (IEC), Asst. Prof. L. Kartasidou, and a faculty member, Assoc. Prof. M. Platsidou; (ii) the Assoc. Rector, Prof. E. Alexandropoulou. On that first day, the EEC in consultation with the Department Chair agreed to slightly modify the schedule provided by the Hellenic Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency (H.Q.A.) in order to decrease the time of formal presentations and to increase the time for interviews. As a result, we began in the same day, in late afternoon with a detailed information session by the Chair, who presented and explained the following aspects of the Department:

- History, organization, infrastructure, administration, undergraduate curriculum, research activities, and academic quality.

On the second day we picked up from the previous evening with a detailed information session about the Department:

- Graduate curriculum by Prof. V. Dagdilelis;
- Teaching activities and practical training by Assoc. Prof. A. Okalidou.

The material was presented in detail with powerpoint presentations. The IEC faculty members were present and very helpful in supplying the information we needed and had prepared eight dossiers with all the necessary official documents for our perusal.

In late morning with began the individual meetings with the following faculty members: Asst. Prof. A. Sipitanou, Prof. G. Pavlidis, Asst. Prof. V. Kartasidou, and Asst. Prof. E. Valkanos. In early afternoon, we visited the following facilities:

- The Department's computer laboratory with a brief presentation by Special Lab Technician Mr. P. Chatziannakoglou and the University's general computer laboratory with a brief presentation by Prof. Dagdilelis.
- The University Library where we had a presentation by the librarian Mrs. F. Polimeraki.
- Classrooms.

In early afternoon we met with the administrative staff where we had presentations by the Head, Mrs. E. Papanikolaou, who also introduced us to the other four members of the Department's Secretariat, including Mrs. A. Pampouri, a Special Educational Personnel, responsible for the Graduate program. In addition, we met with Mrs. A. Tsampazi from the Office for Practical Training and Mrs. K. Notaridou, the Department's administrator for the LLP/Erasmus program. Following these visits, we resumed the individual interviews with faculty members: Prof. L. Triarhou, and Lect. C. Siriopoulou. The last meetings of the second day were with a number of the Department's students. We saw three groups: undergraduates, Master's students, and Ph.D. candidates. All years and sections were represented in the three groups, and the discussion was conducted in an overall pleasant and friendly atmosphere.

On the third and last day of our on-site visit we concluded the interviews with the faculty members: Assoc. Prof. I. Agaliotis, Assoc. Prof. G. Simos, Assoc. Prof. A. Okalidou, Asst. Prof. I. Papavasiliou, and Assoc. Prof. A. Montgomery. The morning meetings were followed by a general discussion with the entire faculty in a productive, open, and honest spirit. In early afternoon, we met with the Department's alumni, from 2001 to 2012. Our visit concluded with a brief but substantive meeting with the Rector, Prof. I. Hatzinikolaou, and a farewell informal session with the Chair of the Department and two faculty members, Assoc. Prof. M. Platsidou and Prof. Pavlidis.

Apart from on-site observations, presentations, interviews, and discussions, as well as the Report of the IEC, our knowledge of the Department was enhanced by the additional documentation provided during our visit. Specifically, we received and had access to the following documents:

- The Study Guide 2013-2014.
- A compilation of the CV's of the faculty and the administrative staff.
- Official legal documents regulating higher education, hires, and promotions.
- Student evaluations, 2012-2013.
- List of Master's theses, 2008-2013.
- List of undergraduate senior theses, 2008-2013.
- List of Ph.D. dissertations.
- List of invited speakers, from Greece and abroad.
- List of research projects by the faculty.
- Samples of course syllabi.
- Samples of class papers.
- List of LLP/Erasmus student mobility and training.

II. The Internal Evaluation Procedure

It is our judgment that the Internal Evaluation Report was thorough and comprehensive, covering all major aspects of the Department's functioning. Some of the information became clearer with the elaboration undertaken during the presentations. It was also useful to provide information about the five new faculty hires, and later upon request we received a detailed account for each new hire and how it relates to the Department's future development and growth. Similarly, we asked for and were provided with the necessary information regarding the plans to expand the Master's Program with the creation of at least two and up to four new graduate programs. Regarding the question as to whether the objectives of the Internal Evaluation process have been met by the Department, the EEC as a whole felt that we had an accurate and comprehensive enough view by reading this document, and we did not observe any disparities between the presentations made during our visit and the material of the IEC we had examined either prior to our arrival or during our visit.

The sources, documents, quality, and comprehensiveness of the Internal Evaluation Report meet the high standards imposed by ADIP. However, the EEC identified two areas in the Report that were lacking the appropriate clarity and precision. On the one hand, the second of the three new aims of the Department, namely "to contribute to the planning, development, implementation, and evaluation of educational policy," does not fully fit with the Study Guide and is not entirely supported by the Department's curriculum. On the other hand, the relationship between the two

sub-fields, the "Education of people with special needs" and the "Lifelong and Continuous education" is unspecified and remains unsettled. These two issues are reflected in and/or caused by the highly misleading name of the Department, which does not represent accurately the identity, mission, and vision of the teaching and research activities of the faculty.

A. Curriculum

APPROACH

The Department of Educational and Social Policy involves two majors: One in Continuing education and one in the Education of people with special needs. Students select one of these majors after the first year of studies which is common to all of them. The goals and objectives of the Department are, therefore, geared on these two programs of study. That is, to educate specialists in lifelong learning and adult education and in special education, contribute to the advancement of the two fields, and to the solution of problems in society at large which are associated with these two directions. It is also reported that the Department aims “to contribute to the planning, development, and evaluation of institutions and structures of educational policy.”

The main means for the achievement of these goals are:

- (i) the course of studies as represented in the curriculum of each field,
- (ii) the research and development that go on in the department, and
- (iii) various activities aiming to provide services to society.

Obviously, the objectives were decided at the early years of the formation of the Department by the academic staff appointed then and they were approved by the administrative bodies of the University, primarily by the Council of the Department and the Senate of the University. It needs to be stressed that there is a serious discrepancy between the mission and goals of the Department as implied by its title and most of the goals implemented in the curriculum. Specifically, the Department does not involve any program related to educational and social policy. Therefore, the goal “to contribute to the planning, development, and evaluation of institutions and structures of educational policy” is not met at all. However, the curricula of the two majors above are, by and large, consistent with their goals. Moreover, given the needs for specialists in continuing education and in special education these two programs are consistent with the requirements of society. This is clearly attested by the fact that the employability of the graduates of the program in special needs is very high upon graduation. To a lesser extent, the graduates of continuing education are also employable, suggesting that they meet societal requirements.

The curriculum was decided at the Department’s council according to the relevant regulations in force at different times. It was also clear that stake holders were consulted when the curriculum was decided or revised. Revisions in the curriculum are more related to changes in the academic staff employed rather than to a systematic ad hoc revision process. That is, changes in the curriculum occur to accommodate appointment of new academic staff. This is due to the fact that this is a relatively young department that expands gradually.

The Department offers two postgraduate programs at the Masters level and a doctoral program. The Masters programs fully match the two specializations of the Department, that is, special education and continuing education. The doctoral program is more flexible in research subjects. Thus, in a sense, the comments above about the relations between goals and realities in the undergraduate program apply to the graduate program as well.

IMPLEMENTATION

The goals related to educational and social policy are not met at all. The goals of the two majors of the Department are only partly met. Specifically, there are some distortions that need to be removed. For example, in the first year core program which is common to both majors there are specialization courses that should come later in the context of the specialization majors (e.g., attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and learning disabilities belong to the special education major and they should follow general introductory courses). Background courses, which are basic for both majors are missing from the first year, such as principles of human development and principles of learning. In fact, the course “Ontogeny and phylogeny” which is offered in the 6th semester seems related to this background knowledge and it may be integrated into these “principles of ...” courses that need to be introduced.

In as far as the two major programs are concerned, each of them includes most of the courses one would expect to see in these programs of study. The structure of both programs approximates international norms and the underlying rationale is discernible. The special education program is more balanced than the continuing education program, although some courses (e.g., “epistemology: theories of knowledge and mind” do not seem as appropriate for this program as other more relevant courses that are missing, such as a course in cognition and its relevance to special education). Also, psycho-diagnostic methods and clinical methods of dealing with special needs should be strengthened.

The continuing education program is “contaminated,” so to speak, by the special education program more than is justified. That is, it includes courses, such as developmental psychopathology, psychopathology of adulthood, and neurocognitive disorders, that are not expected to be part of a continuing education program. In fact, one would expect to see courses dedicated to education in different work environments that are totally missing.

Also, the internship components of both programs, especially the continuing education program, must be strengthened in both time allocation and relevance of placements.

The two postgraduate programs are well organized and focused on the development of specialization skills in the fields concerned. Thus, they satisfy the needs expected for this level of studies. In fact, the alumni of each of the two graduate programs appeared fully satisfied from their studies, noting that their studies provided them with the skills and knowledge needed to deal with problems at their work as specialists, much better prepared than undergraduates.

The Department does fall short of the necessary resources. It does not have the special laboratories and instrumentation that is necessary for the appropriate training of the students in the diagnosis and treatment of various disorders, pathologies, or needs. Moreover, not all members of academic staff were trained in what they teach in the Department. It seems that in some instances courses are offered to match persons’ profiles rather the other way around, as is the case with respected institutions in Europe and the United States.

RESULTS

Although education could be improved in the two programs (special education and continuing education), the predefined goals are generally achieved. This is clear in the fact that graduates are in demand and they are easily employed. It is also notable that the students and graduates of

both programs speak very positively about both, their studies in the Department and their experience at work where they feel adequate to cope with the demands.

The Department is aware of the weaknesses in the program mentioned above. They understand that staffing and infrastructure must be improved but they ascribe the problems to the continuing economic crisis. They also understand that personal priorities may often dominate over the best interests of the Department and the studies offered.

The Department is also unanimously aware of the discrepancy between its official name and its programs of study. It also recognizes the negative implications that this discrepancy may have on the public image of the Department and its potential for further development. It was clear that this issue was discussed several times but there has not been consensus about a new title.

IMPROVEMENT

The Department understands that the programs may be restructured in some places to become more focused and that internships may become more intensive and relevant. They understand that further development of the postgraduate programs of study will enhance the scope and influence of the Department. They also understand that involving their doctoral students in activities of the Department will improve their efficiency and scope. To improve the Department's ability to notice and remove weakness in the curriculum, they might have a yearly meeting where they can discuss the courses of studies offered with the aim to improve them. Input for this discussion will have to come from the Studies Committee of the Department.

Finally, the committee proposed the following two possible titles for the Department that more accurately represent the activities of the Department than its present title:

1. Department of Learning, Education, and Rehabilitation Sciences (Τμήμα Επιστημών Μάθησης, Εκπαίδευσης, και Αποκατάστασης).
2. Department of Special and Continuing Education (Τμήμα Ειδικής και Συνεχιζόμενης Εκπαίδευσης).

The first is more inclusive and general and thus it provides room for the development of more programs of study in the future. For example, the Department might consider the possibility to develop programs in the rehabilitation of neurological disorders and aging. The second reflects accurately the existing programs of study of the Department, and it facilitates opportunities to build on its current strengths and reputation.

B. Teaching

APPROACH

All faculty members teach general, required, and elective courses in their own subfield, while a smaller number of instructors teach interdisciplinary courses with content relevant to Special Education and Life-long Learning. The pedagogical framework varies according to the undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral program respectively. Undergraduate and graduate students are enrolled in courses that are based chiefly on lectures; other formats include student-centered discussions, group projects, and oral presentations on case studies. Doctoral students conduct dissertation research under the supervision of, or in collaboration with, a faculty advisor. Accordingly, the pedagogical approach of the doctoral program consists strictly of individualized and collaborative learning. All faculty members update the content of their syllabi and pedagogical approaches in line with current debates and innovations in the fields of education of people with special needs and professional development of adults. The degree to which they have access to new literature may determine the likelihood that they update their course content on an annual basis.

Undergraduates also benefit from a community-based practicum through “service-learning” in one of the two domains: (1) Educational settings for People with Special Needs, and (2) local private and public organizations for Continuing Education. To receive a Bachelor’s Degree in their major, undergraduates are required to submit either a “degree thesis” based on empirical research, or a “composite study” based on a review of the literature on one of the department’s modules. As an alternative to a senior thesis students may register for three courses. MA students are required to complete a thesis based on primary research, while doctoral candidates submit a dissertation followed by an oral defense.

The total number of active undergraduate students in the Department is reportedly 825, indicative of 1:55 faculty student ratio. However, it is not clear how many of these students participate in the programs full- or part-time, a variable necessary to determine accurately the teaching staff/undergraduate student ratio. We understand that attendance is optional in the Greek University System, especially by undergraduates in the first two years of college. However, this condition belies any effort to determine the instructional workload of faculty.

The graduate program serves annually approximately 170 MA students and 56 doctoral candidates. The faculty/graduate student ratio is 1:15. Students have the opportunity to collaborate with faculty in research projects, especially those whose own thesis is related to the professor’s research program. Presently about 20 doctoral candidates and six graduate students collaborate with six faculty members who are engaged in a total of 10 research studies. Through such hands-on collaborations students are immersed in the research process, including qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis, writing, and dissemination of results through publications, often co-authored with their faculty.

The department has access to two “amphitheaters” conducive to lectures. Other classrooms are available for teaching; however, these are small and do not accommodate the number of students who wish or are likely to attend. Moreover, some classrooms lack the technological

infrastructure to support certain teaching modalities, e.g., power point presentations and access to websites, while others are only partially equipped.

The department possesses a small computer lab to which students that focus on Special Education gain specific skills in developing programs for people with learning disabilities. Students also have scheduled access to a university-wide classroom with computers. The number of computers available in both spaces is limited compared to the demand by the hundreds of students who rely on them to learn skills and complete course assignments. A technician is available in the computer lab that supports the students as needed. The University's library provides space for students to study individually, or to work on group projects. The teaching programs of the department benefit from additional technical laboratory personnel. These include staff who organize student placements in community agencies, help students navigate the LLP/Erasmus program, and prepare electronic editions of course syllabi in the Greek and English languages.

Faculty utilize information and communication technology in their teaching, including the department's web site (<http://compus.uom.gr/>). The majority of faculty members use ICT sources such as computers and projectors, while others include power-point, videos, and Skype technologies to enrich their teaching. More than 80% of faculty members rely on COMPUS to communicate with students, and provide them with electronic access to new course content, including notes, material for preparation of exams, and bibliographic references. Nearly half of the faculty members teach lab-based courses. The Department invests 12,000 euros to the development of ICT usage in teaching.

Examinations are distributed twice a year following six-month periods in January and September, during which students are evaluated in approximately 80 courses. In 2012-13 the number of students who took exams rose to about 70%, and of these, approximately 88% passed the exams. While the department relies on multiple criteria to measure student learning, e.g., projects and practicum papers, examinations constitute the measure of student's progress to the next grade level in the university.

IMPLEMENTATION

In a Department of 15 regular faculty, three degree programs, and more than 1000 active students, the teaching load for each professor is significant and demanding. At least 50% of the faculty workload is dedicated to instruction and related activities. In the undergraduate program each faculty member teaches typically two course each semester or four courses during the academic year. In addition, faculty members serve as mentors to all undergraduate majors who complete senior theses and practicum papers. The duration of studies for the vast majority of the graduates of the Department of Educational and Social Policy is 4 years. The majority of students graduate in 8 or 9 semesters.

Instructors also teach one or two graduate courses each year depending on student demand. Advisement of graduate students and directorship of MA theses may account for about four hours each week. Faculty who serve as primary advisors to doctoral students, or are chairs of dissertation committees, may devote another couple of hours to mentorship each week. In fact, the demand for instruction is so high, that the department is forced to hire 28 part-time or adjust

instructors who offer required or elective courses to strengthen the curriculum for each degree program. In addition, about 30% of Ph.D. candidates teach in the undergraduate program. Given the large number of students, instructional time constitutes the heaviest component of their academic workload. This commitment, while necessary given current conditions, invariably interferes with productivity in research, which ultimately hinders the career trajectory of faculty, and the quality of graduate education in the Department.

The EEC acknowledges that the participation of Ph.D. candidates to undergraduate teaching is critical, and ought to be an integral component of the doctoral program. We recommend that the department, with the support of higher administration, reduce the number of adjunct faculty, and instead hire new tenure track faculty who will strengthen the department's teaching and research programs, as well as share the heavy load of service commitments. While adjunct instructors cost less and contribute to the number and variety of courses in the curriculum, they are not in a position to serve the students consistently with respect to their academic, intellectual, and professional development.

Faculty and student mobility is facilitated by exchange programs with 18 international universities. Approximately 40% of faculty members collaborate with colleagues in educational centers abroad. Of these, 60% participate in conferences and lectures, 20% in exchanges Erasmus, 20% serve as members for three-member doctoral committees and 20% as Visiting Scholars. In the last five years through the LLP / Erasmus faculty exchange program two faculty members travelled abroad and 12 faculty members of foreign institutions visited the Department. The student exchange program involved 56 outgoing students to foreign countries, and 16 incoming students. The foreign students have the option to register in three courses taught in the English language. The department promotes mobility further through the dissemination of information to students and faculty on programs for vocational placements. An "information day" is organized by the Central Bureau LLP / Erasmus University for all interested students. Students receive scholarships and grants for studies abroad under the EU Erasmus and Lingua Programs. To be eligible for mobility grants for studies and practical training abroad, students in the Department of Education and Social Policy must complete one year of studies at the U of M, meet the requirements of the syllabus, and complete at least one course in the foreign institution. Faculty and student mobility initiatives are increasingly important as the University of Macedonia, and the department, seek internationalization. However, presently such activities are limited due to lack of financial support by the department and the University. Furthermore, presently the university does not employ any "quality control procedures" to determine the direction and prospective growth of mobility programs. If the university wishes to enhance its international image, an initiative as important to its faculty and students as to its own status as an institution of higher education, it must implement evaluation criteria of efficacy, and direct funding accordingly to support its mobility programs.

RESULTS

Commitment to the quality of teaching is high among all faculty members. Instructors update the course material regularly by keeping up with publications in their field, which they in turn distribute to students electronically and in print. Education materials are available through the "Eudoxus" system, from which faculty acquire about 80% of their teaching materials. However, assessment of teaching efficacy and relevance is measured principally by student evaluations at

the end of the course. Students respond anonymously to written questionnaires as defined by the Quality Assurance Unit of the University of Macedonia. In 2012-13 faculty received highest scores in “presence” (4.45/5.0), “preparation” (4.37), “encouragement” of students (4.11), and “overall performance” (4.3). These scores are impressive; however, a more accurate measure of teaching efficacy would be students’ evidentiary learning outcomes—that is, evidence of what students actually have learned in class and through their practicums, in addition to their experience in the course and affective responses on the instrument.

While faculty members rely on students’ ratings to maintain or improve the quality of their instruction, there is no indication that the chair consults these evaluations and uses them in annual overall evaluation of faculty. Moreover, student evaluations are only one mechanism of evaluating teaching effectiveness, and not necessarily the most reliable mechanism. Faculty’s teaching is also measured by the quality of content in the curriculum that he or she teaches, the exams and exercises that students complete in each course, and the pedagogical theories and methods that one employs in the classroom.

The department may wish to adopt the practice of maintaining an electronic “teaching portfolio,” in which each faculty member files all his or her teaching materials, including syllabi, assignments, lecture notes, and images of each course. This component of his/her dossier may be maintained and updated more easily, as well as be evaluated and improved.

The teaching programs are enhanced through faculty engagement in research programs and collaborations with colleagues in other universities. While research productivity may be evaluated as a separate area of faculty workload, we note that research-active faculty members are in the privileged position to enhance their teaching with empirical data and intellectual insights that they produce through their own investigations.

IMPROVEMENT

The department is thoroughly aware of the strengths and limitations with respect to their educational programs. Faculty members and administrators, individually and collectively, expressed intention to improve the learning experiences and achievements of their students by increasing their own academic knowledge in their respective fields; improving the design, implementation, and evaluation of practicums through which students acquire professional skills; and pursuing innovative and effective pedagogical strategies and methods related to particular sub-disciplines, content area, and settings.

The faculty is also aware of the constraints that the state imposes, including fiscal cuts and educational policies that undermine the progress of the department, which prohibit optimum realization of their potential and success as teacher-scholars. The institutional bureaucracy, and its continually changing policies and budgetary restraints, paralyzes efforts of the department’s faculty and staff to construct a realistic vision and a mission for the unit’s growth and development.

Collectively committed to improving its teaching programs in a historically precarious sociopolitical and economic climate, the Department seeks above all to maintain the resources and capacities that it possesses. However, the faculty and their administrators are dedicated to improving the quality of the department by (1) working collaboratively to identify and

implement a more unified and productive profile as an academic unit, (2) building their own profile as scholar-teachers to facilitate both their personal career and meet the needs of their students; and (3) hire five new faculty to build the unit's areas of strength. The EEC encourages the current faculty to integrate the five anticipated new hires in a culture of specialized researchers and teachers who also contribute collectivity to the sustainability of a developing and cohesive department.

C. Research

APPROACH

The Department does not have a special policy for research other than it is expected that each member of the academic staff is active in carrying and publishing research in his or her field. In this respect the Department is implementing the European approach that professors are free to pursue their interests in research. Also, the Department does not have any specific internal standards for assessing research other than the general specifications and standards for election/promotion to the various ranks.

IMPLEMENTATION

Neither the University nor the Department has any resources to support research. Thus, research in the Department is either supported by external funding (which does exist but it is not impressive) or the involvement of postgraduate students, especially the doctoral candidates. The infrastructure for research is clearly not adequate, but in some domains, the EEC observed that the computing technology is sufficient for the needs of a given study (e.g., research involving blind individuals). That is, there are no laboratories that would support high level research in most of the fields of activity of the Department.

It is commendable that there are collaborations both between members of the Department or with external researchers. This is reflected in both common research projects and common publications. However, there is room for improvement in this regard in both directions, internally and externally at the national and the international levels (see below).

RESULTS

All members of the academic staff are active in research, some more than others. Specifically, all members of the staff do have some international publications (close to the European average for the fields concerned) and some publications in Greek. International publications are not always published in top tier journals of the field concerned. This is reflected in the citations earned. Most members have some citations which reflect some visibility but none has a truly impressive citation record (citations vary from about 2300 for one professor to less than 100 for most members and the *h* index varies from 21 to 1, according to Harzing's Publish or Perish). No applicable discoveries of patents were noted. Also no awards were reported.

IMPROVEMENT

The composition of the Department is very variable, including philosophers, education specialists, psychologists, neuroscientists, mathematicians, and engineers. This situation may be a weakness or a challenge. On the one hand, it is a weakness in that each member operates under conditions of relative isolation from his or her field, causing low productivity or distortions concerning subjects researched and standards sought. On the other hand, it is a challenge in that it provides possibilities for inter-disciplinary research that might be difficult in more homogeneous departments. This possibility must be motivated by the Department in various ways. For example, research for doctoral dissertations may be directed to inter-disciplinary themes that would bring together members of the academic staff from different disciplines.

It is also suggested that the Department introduces new postgraduate programs with tuitions fees. This would avail funding for research that can be spent to support policies for the development of research in the directions chosen by the Department.

4. All Other Services

The administration of the Department (Secretariat) works professionally and effectively although it is understaffed and has limited resources. The division of labor and the distribution of responsibilities are carefully planned and follow rational rules under the supervision of an experienced supervisor, Mrs. E. Papanikolaou. The services provided to students and faculty successfully have shifted to electronic processes, reducing time and paperwork and simplifying administrative procedures. The staff is attentive to the needs of the academic community and is flexible in undertaking duties that go beyond the regular, such as staying longer hours when necessary despite the fact that the secretary and administrative staff seem to be overloaded with work due to the sheer number of students that, in advanced institutions in the US and Europe, belong to the central Registrar. It is the opinion of this committee that the University must implement a policy of central registry in order to more efficiently serve the students, thereby allowing the departmental staff to have more time to serve the teaching and research needs of the faculty and students of the Department.

A negative point came to our attention concerning the service of graduate students, which is seriously understaffed, with only one person for 126 students (MA's and doctoral candidates)! Finally, we were struck by the fact that there is no specialized service to support undergraduate students to clarify and attain their professional goals and to familiarize them with the job market, especially in relation to the needs of the sub-field of Lifelong Education. A Career Service is seriously needed.

We had the opportunity during our visit to see the University library that has a decent size of holdings that seem to support the faculty and students' research activity, although we believe that the University should be more ambitious in its aspirations, for example, by updating the library's access to databases. In addition, it is recommended that the faculty actively seek information about new titles and to communicate this information to the librarian.

The Department should, as soon as possible, be provided with much better premises, more classrooms, space facilities, and labs.

Finally, the EEC was disconcerted by the rather weak participation of graduate students in the intellectual life of the Department. For instance, the colloquia are not sufficiently attended by doctoral candidates and in general there is a lack of esprit de corps that inhibits mentorship, intellectual exchange, and critical discussion, which are necessary components of a successful graduate program.

5. Strategic Planning

From the outset, the EEC recognized the difficulty of its assignment in that whatever assessment it was to make would be compromised by the constitutive uncertainty that characterizes the situation of university education in Greece at the present time. The severe economic crisis plaguing every aspect of Greek society and the endemic bureaucracy and slowness of the state produce a troubling situation that it is nearly impossible to imagine how, when, and what of the EEC's assessment and recommendations will be addressed.

Having said that, the EEC was surprised to discover a serious and healthy academic environment in the Department of Education and Social Policy at the University of Macedonia. Most striking, from the beginning, was a bona fide spirit of collegiality, civility, cooperation, and mutual understanding among the current faculty, on all functional matters of the Department, even while it is composed of two not entirely symmetrical or compatible components/subfields, largely because of different disciplinary, epistemological, and methodological characteristics intrinsic to the fields involved.

This very good climate has been achieved with serious effort over the last years on the part of the Chair and faculty, who had to account for the various asymmetries between the two subfields, and their different approaches because of differences in the fields. This collective effort was evident in the way the faculty approached the EEC and the academic review process in general - without any suspicion or reluctance, but rather with an open mind, transparency, and accountability, willingness to respond to all questions regardless, and exceedingly thorough preparation and presentation. It is specifically this general willingness to improve and grow that grants this Department enormous potential, as reflected in the strategic planning of the IEC.

This potential, however, is hampered by a series of inhibiting structural factors at the State level:

- The poor budget of the Department. How the Department can contribute to perform its service at a high level with such a budget seems nearly impossible to this Committee.
- The undergraduate program continues to be over-enrolled against the explicit wishes of the Department. The Department assesses that it can operate at high levels of performance and responsibility with approximately 80 new students per year. Yet, the current year's freshman class numbers 137 students. The EEC believes that if budget cuts of some sort are necessary given Greece's economic conditions, then at the very least, the number of students admitted needs to be cut accordingly.
- We have already mentioned that the faculty in this Department is seriously understaffed overall. The EEC feels particularly strong-minded about the urgent need to appoint as soon as possible the five new hires, since our overall assessment is that this is one of the highest growing Departments with a consistent upward development and with even greater potential, which is entirely achievable because of the willingness and commitment of the faculty present. The EEC found it remarkable that a rather small unit and relatively new Department (only 16 years old) has succeeded to increase its admissions criteria from 14,500 to 17,200-17,500, its application rates from 460 to 762, its registered undergraduate students from 506 to 825 while at the same time the graduation rate is 4 (77%) to 5 (91%) years with the majority of students employed in large numbers in the first 6 months post-graduation (90 out of 141), and all this within the context of high national unemployment rates, especially for the youth. Similar upward indicators

characterize the Department's graduate program (M.A. and Ph.D.) that has a growing trajectory in both quantity and quality. For this reason, the EEC applauds the Department's decision to create two to four new Masters' programs.

In addition to inhibiting factors at the State level, there are at least three major factors at the departmental level that must be immediately rectified:

- The current name of the Department needs to be changed.
- The two subfields have to be better integrated with each other.
- Excessive service to committee membership, especially for junior faculty.
- Lax application of promotion and tenure criteria.

6. Final Conclusions and Recommendations

The EEC's recommendations include short and long term proposals as well as cost-effective and cost-prohibitive suggestions. The aim is to build on the Department's existing strengths, capitalize on its growing trajectory, and rectify its limitations

- Identify a new name for the Department that reflects its academic programs of study.
- Craft a vision and a mission of the Department to facilitate organization and cohesion.
- More clearly define the content and foci of each subfield and coordinate better their relationship by highlighting the common ground between them.
- Consider the sequence of courses, including prerequisites for upper-division courses with courses with advanced specialized content.
- Increase research activity, apply for external grants, and seek more visibility.
- Reduce the number of committees and consolidate the work.
- Minimize reliance on bureaucracy; avoid using bureaucracy as an obstacle to moving forward.
- Revamp the major in Lifelong Learning for focus, clarity of knowledge base and skills, placements for internships, potential employment venues, and invest through better website description.
- Write departmental By-laws to help with the daily operations of the Department.
- Implement strictly the criteria for promotion and tenure in accordance with existing legislation in order to enhance the excellence of the faculty.
- Consider requiring graduate student to participate in departmental colloquia.
- Secure and maintain more adequate lab spaces and equipment.

In conclusion, we reaffirm our optimism for the potential of the Department to grow and develop further in the future. Our overall assessment is that we met commendable faculty and an enthusiastic student body. We believe that even under the present adverse circumstances, the Department of Education and Social Policy offers very good programs of study and carries adequate research, striving for excellence. This Department is an asset for the University of Macedonia and to higher education in Greece and it must be supported by any means possible. Finally, the EEC wants to reiterate its appreciation for the spirit of collaboration that the faculty demonstrated during our visit. We are also grateful for the opportunity to have contributed to the Department's improvement and sustainability.