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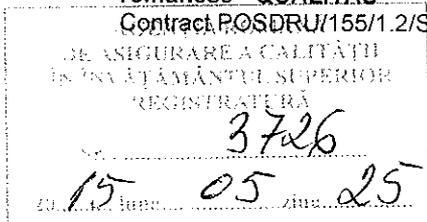
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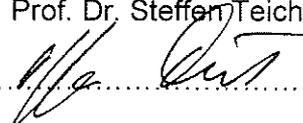


REPORT of the foreign evaluator for the Universitatea Politehnica Timișoara

Date: 2015/05/20

ETS – FOREIGN EVALUATOR EXPERT

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1. Introduction

This report summarizes my impressions as foreign expert from the visit of the Universitatea Politehnica Timișora (UPT) during an external institutional evaluation by ARACIS from May 7 to 9 in 2015. Although I have experience for many years in evaluation procedures of different universities on an international level the visit in Timișora was the first one as foreign expert for ARACIS in Romania. Consequently, the observations I made can be seen only as a limited personal view on a complex situation at the UPT and should be considered as such.

2. Organizational Details of the Visit

The evaluation process included both the evaluation on an institutional level as well as the valuation of a number of study programs. In total the evaluation team was formed by 22 persons including the technical secretary from ARACIS as well as myself.

For the preparation of the visit the internal evaluation report (institutional self-evaluation) of the UPT was provided through ARACIS by April 9 in 2015. The report contained all major information on the UPT as well as on the quality assurance system installed at the university.

According to the internal rules of ARACIS it was possible to plan an own time schedule for the visit of the UPT. The time schedule was set as described in the following table:

Thursday, May 7	Topic
09.30-10.00	Meeting with the Management of UPT (whole ARACIS team)
10.15-11.45	Visit of UPT (whole ARACIS team)
11.45-13.00	Meeting with representatives of the UPT
14.30-17.00	Meeting with representatives of the deans (faculties) and department heads.
17.00-18.00	Meeting with graduates
18.00-19.00	Meeting with students
19.00-20.00	Meeting with Stakeholders (whole ARACIS team)
Friday, May 8	Topic
9.00 – 10.00	Discussion with representatives from the Service Centers: ID/IFR & E-learning Center; Teacher Training Center
10.15 – 13.00	Discussion with Profs. & Teachers
14.30 – 15:30	Discussion with representatives of the heads of research centers
16:00 – 19:30	Visit of selected students labs, library and research centers
Saturday, May 9	
11:00-12.00	Meeting with representatives of the management for summary

branches. It might be considered to strengthen the participation of the department heads in the administration of resources, e.g. in the council of administration.

The discussion in different meetings has shown that not all of the corresponding persons in the university understood the details and the expected advantages of the matrix organization into faculties and departments. Also the web pages of the university - particularly on faculty level - does not clearly indicate the function of the structure. It could be found a description like "Departamentele cu care cooperează facultatea" pointing to the matrix structure of departments independent of faculties. However, other faculties indicate that the departments are an integrated part of the faculty. As mentioned above this inhomogeneous understanding of the structure is reflected not only on the web sites but also by the discussion with staff from different levels of the university.

5. Quality Management System

According to the self-report of the UPT all of the instruments formally needed for the quality management of the university are installed. The focus of the visit was set to the discussion of a specific point of the quality management system: the continuous improvement process of the education. As usual as a part of the improvement process students have to fill questionnaires rating the teaching staff at the end of the semester. The results are collected anonymously, the information is supplied from a central office to the deans. The deans send the collected information to the department heads. If an improvement is needed the corresponding action is taken from the corresponding department head.

Comments:

The discussion with different groups of the described process showed that not all of the involved people know the whole process. Some of the teachers never got any kind of feedback from the student's evaluation. Students indicated that the procedure of filling the questionnaires is not very liked by a fraction of the students.

The university may consider to close the feedback loop always, also in case of good success of a teacher. The teachers should be informed on their own evaluation results in any case. Furthermore, also the students should get a certain feedback on their comments and the consequences. It might be considered in addition that particularly positive results can be published in a suitable format to encourage further improvements.

6. Teaching Activities

The number of available study programs especially at the Master level is rather large. However, the available teaching staff seems to be mostly qualitative and quantitative adequate for the offered study programs. However, the industrial environment of Timișoara results in some challenges. The excellent employment opportunities in the industry reduce the interest in an academic career particularly in the mostly demanded study fields. This may create in future severe gaps in the teaching staff of UPT. The typical university career is a long term multi step way where typically only the final position of a full professor gives benefits comparable to industry positions. It should be noted in addition that the usual academic career is still for most of the

persons an in-house development. The mobility of the academic staff between different universities in Romania during the academic career seems to be rather an exception.

The UPT has a number of supporting centers such as teacher training center and the center for ID/IFR and e-Learning. The teacher training center gives didactic courses for teachers at the entire level of the academic career. In addition courses are provided for persons of the education system outside of the university. The e-learning center supports mostly live-long learning activities as well as the teaching at the UPT.

Comments:

The discussion with several groups - particularly also with students - showed that the motivation of the teaching staff is currently an issue and may become a larger issue in future. One of the reasons is the fact that the salary level of positions below of a full professor is too low particularly in comparison to similar jobs in the surrounding industry. The influence on this objective fact by the management of UPT is limited by different factors. However, motivation is not only related to salary. A key factor is the behavior of persons in all management levels. A culture of esteem, mutual respect and understanding driven from all management levels may improve the situation to a certain extent. Also small steps of improvements should be recognized. Such activities may be based rather on personal communication than on formal instruments.

The discussion with several groups also showed that any type of external experiences of the teaching staff results in a significant increase of activities in teaching and research. The UPT should consider any possibility to motivate the creation of external experiences. A number of programs supporting those activities are already installed for different levels at the university. Nevertheless this part of the development of the next academic generation should be in the focus of university promotion activities.

The e-learning activities are well developed already at the UPT. The university may see the e-learning activities as a way of increasing the total number of students in the long term future. This becomes particularly important considering the recent trend of reduction of presence students at UPT and the finance system related to the number of students. Therefore a strong further development of the e-learning is suggested.

It may be considered to link the didactic teaching activities closer to the results of the quality management of the teaching. A strong link of both activities can be beneficial for students and teachers of the UPT.

7. Research Activities

The research activities of the UPT are concentrated within research centers and research institutes. Typically, the research activities are driven by individual persons which have developed visible local, national and international networks. A common key factor for research activities is the successful application for funding from different external sources. The university provides support for funding applications in addition to administrative support in the project management. The visit allowed me to get impressions from many different research activities which can not be listed here. It should be allowed to me to emphasize the recently installed research institute for



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renewable energy. The tangible assets of the institute can be considered as state of the art on an international level.

Comments:

As mentioned already research activities are mostly driven by individuals. Nevertheless the university may consider to strengthen the support of cooperation within the university to utilize as much as possible existing research resources like e.g. in the research institute for renewable energy. Although the university cannot provide substantial internal research funding it might be possible to promote strategic cooperation within the university to improve the desired visibility for the stakeholders of funding sources.

8. Final Remarks

The Universitatea Politehnică Timișoara plays an important role in the educational, social, cultural and industrial life in the surrounding area. This is reflected by strong activities of the stakeholders of the university as well as by the fact that many employees of leading companies in the region are alumni of the UPT. The main challenge for the long term future of the UPT is to keep this position and to be a driver for the further local development. On one hand side the UPT is obviously in a key position for the local industry. On the other hand the industrial growth accompanied by a substantial increase of incomes and price levels in the area is the largest challenge for the long term development of the university. The currently rather instable and limited financing of the university requires a number of measures besides the key operations in education and science. The key factor for the successful long term development will be a sufficient balance between the inside and the outside conditions of the university. This balance can be created only by a mutual consent on the situation from all relevant groups i.e. the side of the government as well as the industry together with the management of the UPT.

9. Acknowledgement

I would like to express my thanks for the interesting discussions to all of the colleagues I met during my visit at the UPT. Especially I am very grateful to the local organizers of the visit namely the rector Prof. Serban and the prorectors Prof. Popa and Prof. Davidescu. In addition I like to thank Prof. Dragomir for the excellent local support. It was a pleasure to enjoy the hospitality and the open atmosphere to exchange opinions on a large number of different topics. Furthermore I would like to thank the ARACIS team for giving me the opportunity to be part of the evaluation team. Last but not least I would like to thank especially Dr. Luiza Roman for the excellent translation assistance during my visit at the UPT.

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