

Effecting Meaningful Educational Cooperation with Overseas Institutional Partners: Lessons Learned from the Delivery of an Intensive Course in Development, Education and Peace at the Arctic University of Norway, Tromso in February-March 2017

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《 研究ノート 》

Effecting meaningful educational cooperation with overseas institutional partners:

Lessons learned from the delivery of an intensive course in Development, Education and Peace at the Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø in February - March 2017

James Daniel Short

In continuation of the discussion presented in an earlier 2017 paper focusing on the professional relationship formation and institutional background to the creation of an intensive course in Development, Education and Peace in cooperation with partners from the Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø (UiT), the current paper presents observations drawn from the actual delivery of that course in February - March 2017 and the variety of lessons that have been learned as a result of that process. The second cycle of this ongoing international initiative is scheduled to take place in February 2018. It is hoped that the conclusions presented in this paper will contribute towards the more effective delivery of forthcoming cycles of this initiative and may shed light on more general good practice which can be utilised in other comparable contexts of educational cooperation undertaken with overseas institutional partners.

Introduction

The various interrelated personal, professional and administrative processes which over the course of five years between 2012–2017 led to the creation of an intensive course in Development, Education and Peace at the Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø are elucidated in a preceding paper published in December 2017⁽¹⁾. The paper

at hand examines the course of events which occurred following the actual commencement of the course on February 10th, 2017 and which ran until March 2nd, 2017. This discussion examines the following elements: i) the travel to and from Norway; ii) the accommodation arrangements in Tromsø; iii) the educational content and method of study undertaken at the University of Tromsø (henceforth referred to as UiT); iv) the three-day residential excursion to Finnmark; v) other activities carried out in Tromsø; and vi) the post-programme follow-up period. The paper concludes with a summary of the various lessons that have been learned as a result of the delivery of what it is hoped will be an ongoing initiative and suggestions as to how these lessons may potentially be applied in other comparable contexts.

In order to elucidate a clear picture of the events that occurred during the programme in the general chronological order in which they occurred, in many cases the discussion departs from a more formal academic style and is written in the first rather than the third person, thereby utilising the pronouns 'I', 'me', 'my' and 'we', 'us', 'our' in a number of sections.

1 . Travel to and from Tromsø, Norway⁽²⁾⁽³⁾

As will be swiftly confirmed by visitors who have travelled from Japan to the city of Tromsø in northern Norway, the 'Paris of the North'⁽⁴⁾ represents a location that is not

(1) Short, J. (2017), *Initiatives to promote internationalization in Japanese higher education: Prospects and difficulties encountered during the creation of an intensive course in Education, Development and Peace in cooperation with partners from the Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø*, 東洋法学第61巻第2号.

(2) This section will depart from the chronology followed in the remainder of the paper by describing both the outward and return journeys (Narita, Japan to Tromsø, Tromsø to Narita, Japan) here.

(3) The travel of the four female students who joined the programme from Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (TUFS) to and from Tromsø will not be discussed in this section since they travelled separately from the party from Toyo University without a chaperone and via a different route on different airlines. Their outward route was as follows: Tokyo, Helsinki, Oslo, Tromsø; their return route which took place one day later than the Toyo party was Tromsø, Oslo, Helsinki, Tokyo.

straightforward to reach from the Land of the Rising Sun. In principle, three flights are required to reach Tromsø from Japan; therefore the standard routes are to travel to the Norwegian capital of Oslo via either Copenhagen, Denmark or Helsinki, Finland and then to take a further flight to the city itself. These routes are offered by either Scandinavian Airlines (SAS) or Finnair. In the case of our party from Toyo University, during the planning phase for the February 2017 programme which took place during the latter half of 2016, at an early stage a decision was taken to travel via Copenhagen and Oslo on Scandinavian Airlines since this had been the route that I had taken without incident on three previous visits to Tromsø.

To a large extent, despite the long and arduous nature of the travel which naturally required two changes of aircraft, both the outward and return journeys proved to be relatively smooth and uneventful. The party of eight students (five female and three male), some of whom had never previously travelled outside Japan, generally coped well with the various immigration procedures, transiting through foreign airports, changes of time zone and the fact that they needed to be inside aircraft for a total of fifteen hours. On arrival in Tromsø at 10 pm on the night of the first day of the programme (February 10th), the students showed themselves to be in good spirits and looking forward to studying and experiencing life in the Norwegian Arctic during the winter. In general there were no problems with the outward travel as far as Tromsø Airport and the level of service provided by SAS was satisfactory. A difficulty did arise following our arrival at the airport since the bus that had been arranged to transport us to the hotel failed to arrive. It later transpired that this had occurred due to a misunderstanding between our Japanese travel agent, STA Travel, and the local travel agent in Tromsø which had been tasked with arranging this final section of the journey. This situation necessitated a number of students travelling to the hotel by taxi (to be

(4) Since the 19th century in various literary and journalistic sources the city of Tromsø has periodically been referred to as 'the Paris of the North': <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Troms%C3%B8>; <https://nextstopnorway.com/destinations/tromso-travel-guide/>

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later reimbursed by me) and others travelling in the car of the UiT Programme Coordinator Professor Vidar Vambheim who had come to the airport to welcome us.

The return journey to Japan which spanned two days on March 1st - 2nd was similarly relatively uneventful and on this occasion the pre-arranged bus that was to take us from the hotel to Tromsø airport arrived with plenty of time to spare with a thoroughly professional concierge who offered apologies for the earlier misunderstanding both in words and in writing. The travel on three aircraft with SAS was once again largely smooth and efficient, and all of the students arrived in Japan feeling understandably rather tired but again in good spirits. The luggage of some members of the party (including mine) had sustained some damage during transit; however, this problem was swiftly attended to by the ground crew staff of SAS at Narita Airport. Overall, aside from the damaged luggage issue that occurred during our return journey, I was generally satisfied with the service provided by SAS and would choose this route and airline for future cycles of the programme.

2. Accommodation arrangements in Tromsø⁽⁵⁾

For the majority of our stay in Tromsø⁽⁶⁾, the students and I were lodged at the Sydspissen Hotel which is located at the southern tip of Tromsøya Island⁽⁷⁾. Several months earlier this hotel had been selected and reserved on our behalf by the Chief Administrator of the Centre for Peace Studies at UiT, Ms. Elisabeth Sandersen. The hotel proved to be highly satisfactory for a number of reasons. Firstly, with regard to

(5) The following sections of the paper (sections 2–7) refer to the experiences of both the eight students from Toyo University and the four students from Tokyo University of Foreign Studies who from day two of the programme merged to become one group of twelve under my supervision until the end of the programme. Therefore subsequent references to 'the students' should be taken to mean this merged group of twelve people.

(6) This period excludes the three day excursion to Finnmark which is described in section 4 below.

(7) Tromsøya is the long, thin island located in the centre of the Tromsøysundet strait in northern Norway which contains much of the city of Tromsø. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Troms%C3%B8ya>

price it was considerably cheaper than the more upmarket accommodations located in the centre of the city and was therefore appropriate for our budget. Secondly, its location, while somewhat removed from the city centre and university (the latter being located towards the northern end of Tromsøya), proved very convenient since both places could be easily reached by one bus which could be caught only five minutes' walk from the hotel⁽⁸⁾. Furthermore, as the garden behind the hotel on the southern side ran almost to the shoreline of the fjord, it was a very pleasant natural environment, and also one of the best locations on Tromsøya to view the aurora borealis (Northern Lights). The hotel was also within walking distance of the Tromsø History Museum which we visited during the first weekend of our stay.

Regarding the rooms, these were fairly spacious with sufficient storage space, and those on the south side of the hotel had beautiful views of the fjord. The Toyo University students were divided into three rooms in the following configuration: room 1 - two girls; room 2 - three girls; room 3 - three boys. The Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (hereafter referred to as TUFS) students had two rooms with two girls in each⁽⁹⁾. The students' rooms were all of the same size with the two rooms housing three people having an extra bed; during our stay none of the students commented or expressed dissatisfaction that their rooms were too small or that they had insufficient storage space. Other commendable features of the Sydspissen Hotel were the breakfast which was available every day and was included in the price of accommodation. This was excellent with a wide selection of foods all delivered in plentiful quantity; the extended hours that the breakfast was available at the weekend also proved helpful. In addition, the staff at the hotel were most welcoming and friendly and were keen to

(8) The journeys from the bus stop located near the hotel to the city centre and university took approximately 15 and 25 minutes respectively. Travelling on the same bus in the opposite direction took you to the large Jekta shopping centre in approximately 25 minutes.

(9) In keeping with the less formal style of the paper, the terms 'girls' and 'boys' will henceforth be used in place of 'female' and 'male students'.

assist in response to a wide range of queries.

A few difficulties were experienced by the students relating to evening meals. These were not available at the hotel and so the students had the choice of eating at the university cafeteria, at an inexpensive restaurant in the city centre or purchasing food at a nearby supermarket and then eating it in their rooms. If they chose the latter option and purchased food which required hot water to prepare, while this was available in the foyer of the hotel, the quantity of water was sometimes insufficient and also not of a high enough temperature to prepare a good meal. Therefore if in future one or more kettles were available to the students and perhaps also the use of a microwave, this would provide more options for their evening meals. An additional difficulty was experienced with the washing machine and tumble dryer located on the basement floor for the use of hotel guests. On some occasions (particularly the weekends) these facilities were unavailable and lacked operating instructions in English. Despite these relatively minor problems, both the students and I were generally very satisfied with the facilities, food and customer service provided by the Sydspissen Hotel. Therefore considering these positive features, coupled with the hotel's outstanding location and ease of access to other places on Tromsøya, I would be willing to recommend staying there on subsequent cycles of the programme.

3 . Educational content and method of study at UiT

This element of the programme clearly represented its educational heart and the partners on both the Toyo and UiT sides were well aware that to a large extent its success would determine the overall success of the endeavour as a whole. During the aforementioned planning stages, the basic educational strategy designed by Professor Vambheim and myself was that over the course of two weeks of intensive study at UiT the students would receive lectures delivered by Vambheim in English in the mornings, which would be supplemented by seminars directly related to the content of these lectures delivered by me in Japanese or English in the afternoons. This was the strategy

that was actually implemented at UiT during the first and second weeks of the programme and considering a number of factors it proved to be a largely successful one.

The evidence to support this assertion is as follows. Firstly, throughout the period of study at UiT I was continually monitoring the students' behaviour and general demeanour during both the lectures and seminars, and also during breaks between the formal sessions. This included obvious factors such as levels of attendance and timekeeping, and also levels of in-class concentration, engagement and overall body language. Prior to the programme I had been concerned that due to the fact that Vambheim's lectures would be delivered entirely in English and much of the content could well be new to the students, some of the participants whose levels of English were less proficient than others might struggle to follow the thrust of the lectures and thereby lose some interest and motivation. The monitoring on my part revealed that at certain points during the lectures there were indeed topics or points of argument that proved difficult for some of the students to follow. However, the stimulating nature of Vambheim's delivery, the fact that I was present in the classroom for each lecture and could offer supplementary explanations in Japanese where necessary, the daily structure of lecture followed by seminar which covered the same content, coupled with a consistently outstanding level of engagement and attentiveness displayed by the whole group of students created a classroom environment in which lively and substantive discussions took place on each day of the two weeks of intensive study at UiT.

To elaborate on this issue, the lectures delivered by Vambheim addressed the following topics:

- 1 . Introduction - Education, Development and Peace;
- 2 . Education as an agent of change;
- 3 . Education and psychological modernity;
- 4 . Education and the politics of Norwegianization of the Sami minority in the North;

- 5 . Bullying - characteristics, mechanisms, consequences and research;
- 6 . Inter-group bias, inter-group cooperation and inter-group peace.

Over and above the fact that the students' in-class demeanour clearly demonstrated that they found the content of the lectures stimulating, Vambheim must be given considerable credit for the engaging and flexible approach which he employed to deliver this content. The atmosphere in the lectures, which on several occasions included regular students from UiT from a number of countries, was consistently light-hearted and stimulating, and Vambheim's clear enjoyment and passion in addressing these topics, about which he is an undoubted national expert, was quickly communicated to the students. As a result, they were consistently drawn into his explanations and made great efforts to understand the thrust of the lectures, even if on occasions their English ability had difficulty in keeping up. However, Vambheim's and consequently the students' engendered enthusiasm served to overcome most of any language difficulties that did arise.

There were additional factors which contributed to the overall success of this aspect of the programme. A Japanese student from Waseda University who was studying at UiT on a one year exchange programme joined the whole cycle of lectures and seminars, thereby adding personal and intellectual momentum to our group. The timetabling of the lectures was conducive to the promotion of overall levels of understanding since most of them began early in the morning at 8:15 am and the subsequent seminars began in the afternoon at 2 pm. This created a long period of recess time following the lectures in which the students could discuss the topics addressed by Vambheim and confirm their understanding amongst themselves before they addressed the topics and developed their own responses to them in the afternoon seminars with me. An educational technique that I employed in each seminar which proved successful was to ask one group of students to provide a summary of that morning's lecture in Japanese to all of the seminar members before our detailed discussions in relation to it began. These groups had been created by me on the second

day of the programme with the intention of integrating the students from Toyo and TUFS more effectively; the groups were named after three of the locations that we would visit on the excursion to Finnmark during the third week - Alta, Karasjok and Kautokeino. The three groups gave a summary of Vambheim's morning lecture to their counterparts in the seminar that took place later that day on two occasions each.

A further factor which pointed towards the success of this aspect of the programme relates to the accommodation arrangements in Tromsø. Due to the fact that I was staying at the same hotel as the students, had frequent opportunities to eat and speak with them and also travel with them to UiT every morning, I had numerous other chances to gauge their overall enjoyment and engagement with the programme. As a consequence, if there had been consistent levels of dissatisfaction with the educational content or the method of study utilised at UiT, or if there had been problems with overall levels of understanding, I am confident that I would have become aware of it and could have made changes accordingly. However, this situation did not arise for either the students of Toyo or TUFS.

Regarding areas of improvement for the educational content and method of study at UiT, at the end of the programme the students commented that had they been aware of the content of the lecture that was to come on the subsequent day, they could have prepared for it more effectively and addressed any potential difficulties with vocabulary or terminology prior to entering the classroom⁽¹⁰⁾. In addition, for each of the seminars I faced the challenge of creating an appropriate lesson plan in the intervening hours following Vambheim's lecture which hopefully developed logically from the content just studied, taking into consideration the students' own knowledge coming from a Japanese context and their levels of English ability. Clearly this rather last minute preparation on my part was not a recommendable educational strategy.

(10) On our final day at UiT the students were asked informally to give their impressions of the programme as a whole and suggest areas for possible improvement.

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Therefore for subsequent cycles, more systematic seminar planning is required on my behalf which appropriately matches the topics addressed in the lectures delivered by Vambheim in the mornings.

4 . Three day residential excursion to Finnmark

This excursion was a three day, two night bus tour which took place during the third week of the programme and despite some logistical difficulties represented one of the highlights of our stay in northern Norway. During the two weeks of study at UiT the students consistently displayed highly creditable levels of engagement and maturity throughout the course of classroom-based lectures and seminars; in fact, the attendance of the whole group of twelve students achieved a perfect score of 100% for these learning activities. However, by the end of this section of the programme the students were looking forward to moving from the classroom into a more relaxed learning environment offered by the excursion, as were Vambheim and myself. The main objective of the excursion was to visit a number of locations that are central to the lives and culture of the indigenous Sami population, some of which are located in the heart of the tundra in Norway's northernmost region, Finnmark. The schedule, locations, travel and accommodation had all been arranged by Professor Vambheim and Ms. Elisabeth Sandersen, and prior to our departure from Tromsø on February 20th, I was in the same position as the students since I had not visited any of the locations before and so was seeing them for the first time. As a result, in terms of a management or supervisory role during the three days my responsibility was fairly limited and focused on assisting Vambheim with logistics and providing Japanese explanations of descriptions given by him and the staff members at the various sites we visited.

An important difference from the learning activities that had hitherto taken place at UiT was that during the excursion several regular UiT Masters students joined our party as well as the Japanese exchange student from Waseda University⁽¹¹⁾. This meant that we became a multinational study group with members of varying ages from Japan,

Norway, Holland, Brazil, Nepal, Egypt and the UK. On the first day there was something of a gap between the Japanese students and their UiT counterparts; however, over the course of the three days this steadily diminished and by the end of the excursion a number of friendships had developed which were to continue throughout the remainder of our stay in Tromsø (and perhaps beyond). We also had the benefit of a highly entertaining and enigmatic bus driver who became an integral member of the party. The following section provides an overview of the locations visited during the excursion.

Day 1 - Monday 20th February

After an early departure from the hotel, we visited a folk handicraft centre and the Centre for Northern Peoples at Kåfjord where we ate a lunch of reindeer stew that had been prepared for us by the staff. Next we received a guided tour of the Centre's museum, gallery and library and then had a 30 minute lesson in the Sami language. Following this we visited the site of the annual indigenous Riddu Riddu festival which is located behind the Centre and watched a film about its organisation. Leaving Kåfjord in the late afternoon, after a long drive through a heavy blizzard we arrived at the city of Alta where we stayed for the first night.

Day 2 - Tuesday 21st February

Following breakfast we drove south from Alta into the heart of the tundra to the small village of Masi which had been saved from submersion by a hydro-electric project by Sami activism in the 1980s. Next we drove to the Sami political capital of Karasjok and were given a guided tour of the Sami television and radio station. After lunch we visited the Sami Parliament and were guided around this impressive site by

(11) The regular Masters students were able to participate in the excursion thanks to the fact that additional funding had been provided for them by the Faculty of Education at UiT.

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the Speaker of the Parliament. After enjoying the charming environment of the large adjacent library, we visited the nearby Sami Cultural Centre to purchase souvenirs. Following this we headed west across the tundra to the Sami cultural capital of Kautokeino, arriving at the hotel where we were to spend our second night at around 7 pm. The whole party then enjoyed a delicious salmon dinner all seated around one long table, after which the students spent the remainder of the evening talking with their counterparts from UiT and others who had joined us from the nearby Sami University.

Day 3 - Wednesday 22nd February

After breakfast we visited the Sami High School in Kautokeino and were shown around several parts of the school by two teachers; during this tour we received an impromptu *joik* performance from the staff librarian which was very moving⁽¹²⁾. We had a chance to speak briefly with some of the students at the school who were attending a class focusing on ski maintenance. Next we visited the Sami University where we had a brief introductory meeting with the Director, and following lunch were given a comprehensive guided tour of the university's impressive facilities. After leaving the university we began the long return journey to Tromsø, passing through parts of northern Finland and Sweden. Four stops were made during this ten hour journey for rest and refreshments and it was made enjoyable by rounds of international karaoke on the bus that involved nearly all the members of the party including the driver. After re-entering Norway we also enjoyed a beautiful view of the aurora borealis which was reflected in a fjord as we drove past. We arrived back in Tromsø just after midnight.

For a number of reasons the excursion proved highly meaningful and enjoyable for both the students and staff, particularly from an educational and cultural point of view, and as a consequence will almost certainly remain an integral part of future cycles of

(12) Joik is the traditional form of song of the Sami people; <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joik>

the programme. During the course of the three days a number of issues came to light which have highlighted areas where improvements could be made for future excursions. Suggestions for improvements are as follows:

- ◆ Prepare and communicate to the students a more detailed plan about the locations to be visited on the excursion, the specific purposes for doing so and the approximate length of time that will be spent at each location.
- ◆ Arrange the overall time more effectively so that there is a sufficient opportunity to view the places of interest without being overly concerned about having to move to the next location.
- ◆ Provide clear instructions to the students about when and where meals are to be taken and whether or not these are included in the cost of the excursion.
- ◆ If possible, reduce long non-stop sections of the journey since these are clearly a burden for people who suffer from travel sickness.
- ◆ Spend more time at the Centre for Northern Peoples at Kåfjord in order to explore the site more thoroughly.
- ◆ Spend more time at the Sami High School in Kautokeino and increase opportunities to interact with the students and staff there, if appropriate.

Many of these suggested improvements relate to the amount of time spent at each location during the excursion and the importance of obtaining the maximum educational benefit there. As a consequence, a more comprehensive approach would be to increase the overall length of the excursion by one day to a total of four days which would potentially free up more time at each location and would likely reduce the amount of time that needed to be spent in the bus each day. Clearly this proposal will increase the overall costs of the excursion and is therefore currently under discussion between Professor Vambheim, Ms. Sandersen and myself.

5. Other activities carried out in Tromsø

During the programme both before and after the excursion a number of locations

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were visited within Tromsø with the purpose of enhancing the students' overall educational and cultural experience. Visits were made to the following locations: the Polaria Arctic Aquarium, the Tromsø University Museum and the Arctic Cathedral⁽¹³⁾. At Polaria the students had the opportunity to view the variety of fauna and flora that live in the arctic regions of Norway and the various adaptation strategies that these organisms utilise to survive in this harsh natural environment. The students watched films explaining the scientific process behind the creation of the aurora borealis and the nature of life in Norway's northernmost region, Svalbard, on a giant 180° screen. At the Tromsø University Museum they viewed a variety of exhibits explaining the traditional lifestyle of the Sami and the ways that they have adapted to living in regions of extreme cold over many centuries. The students also viewed an exhibition explaining the recent history of the Sami, including how they have struggled to maintain their unique customs and way of life in the face of periodic oppression and discrimination suffered at the hands of invading forces during the Second World War and other people across northern Scandinavia during the periods prior to and after 1945. At the Arctic Cathedral the students had the opportunity to experience the atmosphere of a large place of Christian worship which is housed in a unique and evocative building.

In addition to these quasi-educational visits, the students and I also took some outings for entertainment purposes. On the second Saturday during our stay we took the Fjellheisen Cable Car to the top of the mountain overlooking the city to enjoy the night view. This visit coincided with a spectacular display of the aurora borealis directly above us which made the evening truly memorable⁽¹⁴⁾. On other free days during the weekends some of the students went skiing, snowboarding, outdoor ice-skating, dog-sledding or shopping at the Jekta shopping centre; on a number of these occasions they went together with the UiT Masters students who had joined us on the

(13) Polaria Arctic Aquarium: <http://www.polaria.no/>; Tromsø University Museum: <https://en.uit.no/tmu>; Tromsø Arctic Cathedral: <http://www.ishavskatedralen.no/en/the-arctic-cathedral/>

(14) Fjellheisen Cable Car: <https://fjellheisen.no/en/>

excursion to Finnmark. Another leisure activity enjoyed by the students was playing basketball and indoor football at the large university sporting complex located near to the main UiT campus.

A final highly memorable event was the farewell party which was kindly organised in our honour by the staff and students of the Centre for Peace Studies and held at the Árdna Sami Cultural House located within the UiT campus⁽¹⁵⁾. At this event the students enjoyed eating and drinking with UiT students and staff, watched a live performance from a musical ensemble, listened to speeches from various academic staff involved with the programme and then presented their own musical and dance performance as thanks to their hosts for what they had learned and experienced during the programme. In recognition of the students' efforts in the educational aspects of the programme they were then presented with Certificates of Programme Completion by the Dean of the Faculty of Education, Dr. Ellen Karoline Dahl.

6 . Post-programme follow-up period

Following our arrival back in Japan on March 2nd 2017 the post-programme follow-up period began. This period continued for about two months; however, the exact timing of when it came to an end is somewhat surprisingly rather difficult to determine. The reason for this is that during March and April a misunderstanding arose between the partners on the Japanese and Norwegian sides in relation to the follow-up assignments that the twelve students were expected to submit. The background to this misunderstanding is as follows:

During our final days at UiT on February 27th and 28th Professor Vambheim and I explained to the students that following their return to Japan they would be expected to submit an assignment related to the content they had studied prior to a deadline of

(15) Árdna - the Sami cultural house of UiT, the Arctic University of Norway:

https://en.uit.no/om/enhet/artikkel?p_document_id=200709&p_dimension_id=88182

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April 1st. At that time the assignment questions had yet to be decided, but following our return to Japan on March 8th these were agreed between Vambheim and myself via e-mail and were then promptly communicated to the students. The questions addressed the following five themes:

Theme 1 - Education and development

“Describe how changes in the education policy of a country can affect its overall development, both positively and negatively.”

Theme 2 - Indigenous people in modern society

“Considering the excursion to Finnmark, do you think there are possible lessons for Japan to learn from the current condition of the Sami in Norway?”

Theme 3 - Experiential learning

“From your experience in northern Norway, describe your opinion of education that takes place outside the classroom. What are the advantages and disadvantages?”

Theme 4 - Bullying

“In order to reduce bullying in schools, how can education policy contribute towards increasing the number of "Defenders" in school classrooms?”

Theme 5 - Prejudice and stereotypes

“From your experience on this programme both inside and outside the classroom, describe your thinking about prejudice and stereotypes. Has your thinking changed? If yes, in what way? If no, why not?”

The students were given the choice of selecting one question from the list of five and had permission to write their assignments in Japanese. The reason for this was that I wished to elicit detailed and sophisticated responses which would not be encumbered

by the added challenge of having to write in a second language. In such circumstances it was clear that Vambheim and his colleagues would be unable to read assignments written in Japanese, but I gave the assurance to partners on the UiT side that I would provide a summary in English of each student's response. In accordance with these criteria, all of the Toyo students submitted their assignments as directed in time for the deadline of April 1st.

In the case of the TUFSS students the situation played out rather differently, and subsequently I have been unable to determine the exact reasons for this. What transpired was the four TUFSS students also submitted their assignments in time for the deadline, but they answered not one but *all five* of the questions and wrote their responses in English. It is possible that my instructions for the submission of the assignment had not been explained clearly to them or that the coordinator of the programme on the TUFSS side, Dr. Masanori Kashiwazaki, had stipulated independently that they should answer all five of the questions and should write in English⁽¹⁶⁾. The reason that I didn't query the fact that the TUFSS students' responses were received in a different format from their Toyo counterparts was that at the same time as this process was occurring, negotiations were simultaneously taking place between senior officials at Toyo and TUFSS with the intention of establishing coordinated support for future cycles of the programme at UiT on behalf of the two Japanese partners. Ultimately, these negotiations have led to the signing of an Academic Cooperation Agreement between Toyo and TUFSS which relates not only to the provision of ongoing support for this programme, but also to a wide variety of other educational activities at the two institutions.

The misunderstanding which arose between the partners on the Japanese and Norwegian sides related to the means by which the assignments should be submitted to

(16) By stating this I am in no way offering criticism of Dr. Kashiwazaki of TUFSS whose support for the first cycle of the programme and subsequently has been quite invaluable.

UiT. By early April I had received submissions from all of the twelve students and was preparing summaries for those that had been written in Japanese. During this process Vambheim contacted me to say that the exam administration at UiT had been enquiring of him as to why none of the Japanese students had submitted their assignments via UiT's online exam submission system called Wiseflow. This situation surprised me a great deal because I had previously heard nothing about this system and was similarly unaware that the exam administration at UiT was expecting that the assignments should be submitted in this way. In retrospect, it is highly likely that the cause of this problem was a serious misunderstanding on my part in relation to the *final product*, that is to say the written output, of the programme which the authorities on the UiT side were expecting to receive following its completion. In the end, the unfortunate result was that the students' assignments were not formally submitted to UiT via Wiseflow and as a consequence some decision makers at UiT were disappointed by the fact that there was no measurable final product that could be archived to demonstrate the educational success of the programme to other Norwegian colleagues.

7 . Lessons learned from the 2017 programme

As the preceding discussion has illustrated, the actual delivery of an intensive course in Development, Education and Peace at the Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø (UiT) offered a wide range of opportunities to develop and implement effective strategies for facilitating cooperative international education initiatives of this type. In fact, as the programme itself was a pilot project in what is hoped by the three participating institutions to be an ongoing venture⁽¹⁷⁾, it can be seen as something of a large-scale cooperative experiment from which lessons can be learned on a number of levels. During the three weeks in northern Norway and in the subsequent follow-up

(17) The three partners being Toyo University, the Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø (UiT) and Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (TUFS).

period it is undoubtedly the case that several difficulties were experienced and mistakes made. However, on the strength of the responses of the students both inside and outside the classroom, the evaluations of the institutional partners involved, coupled with my own observations, I am of the firm opinion that overall the programme represented a success and should therefore be continued in future years. Clearly, the most telling evidence of its success is the fact that decision makers on the Japanese side (both at Toyo University and TUFUS) have given their approval for the second cycle of the programme to take place in February 2018, and that the partners on the Norwegian side have once again agreed to host it. Indeed, at the time of writing⁽¹⁸⁾, a total of nineteen students (fourteen from Toyo and five from TUFUS) are scheduled to leave Japan for Tromsø, Norway on February 4th 2018. The task now at hand is to identify effective ways to overcome the difficulties experienced and avoid the mistakes made in 2017 in order to deliver a higher quality programme for future cycles. Moreover, it is hoped that from this process it will be possible to extrapolate broader lessons for comparable cooperative international education initiatives that take place in other contexts.

The following section of the paper will elucidate lessons that have been learned from the delivery of this programme that relate to five specific areas.

1. Logistics

As described above in sections 1 and 2, no significant difficulties were experienced with regard to the travel to and from Norway and the accommodation arrangements in Tromsø. Consequently, I would be willing to recommend travelling on Scandinavian Airlines once again and staying at the Sydspissen Hotel. If some additional provision could be made at the Sydspissen Hotel which makes the students' evening meal arrangements more straightforward (for example, by providing one or more kettles or the use of a microwave), this would certainly be helpful.

(18) This paper was written in November - December 2017.

2. Educational content and method of study

The educational content of the programme as designed by Professor Vambheim was received very positively by the students and should therefore form the core content studied in future cycles. Towards the end of the two week period of intensive study at UiT due to scheduling difficulties Vambheim was unable to deliver two lectures that he had prepared focusing on Peace Education; therefore it is hoped that forthcoming class schedules can be arranged in order to accommodate this additional content. The method of study utilised at UiT - that of Vambheim's lecture in the morning followed by a seminar delivered by me focusing on the same content in the afternoon, also proved largely successful and so will likely be followed in future. A major adjustment which does need to be made concerns my planning for the seminars which should be coordinated more systematically with the content of Vambheim's lectures in order to improve the students' overall in-class learning experience. Additional improvements could also be made by providing students with a more concise reading list prior to their departure from Japan, arranging their prompt access to UiT's online reference service called Fronter, and, once the lectures and seminars have begun at UiT, informing them ahead of time of the content of the next lecture in the cycle in order for them to check any potentially difficult vocabulary.

3. Residential excursion to Finnmark

As stated in section 4 above, this element of the programme proved highly successful and so will very likely be repeated in future cycles. The principal drawback of the excursion was its very tight schedule into which visits to a number of locations, all of which proved very valuable from an educational and cultural point of view, were confined into a total period of three days and two nights. The long distances that needed to be travelled to reach the remote locations of Karasjok and Kautokeino in the heart of the tundra in central Finnmark, coupled with the challenging winter weather conditions served to compound this difficulty. As a consequence, it is proposed that in

future cycles the excursion should be extended by an additional day and night in order to provide sufficient time to obtain the maximum educational benefit at each location and to reduce the amount of time that needs to be spent in the bus on each day. An additional positive feature of the excursion was the shared experience of embarking on it in the company of several regular Masters students from UiT of a number of nationalities, and therefore if budgetary conditions allow this should also be repeated.

4. Post-programme follow-up period

It is likely that the difficulty that arose between Toyo, TUFs and UiT during the follow-up period of March - April 2017 came about due to a breakdown in communication, and also to a lack of understanding about the expectations of the other partners vis-à-vis the final product that the students were expected to submit following the completion of the programme. It is undeniable that this situation unfortunately caused a fair degree of consternation, especially on the UiT side. Therefore in order to avoid similar difficulties in future it is essential that the expectations of the partners regarding important elements of the programme such as this are clearly understood on all sides, particularly in cases where face-to-face meetings between key people are not possible due to the considerable intervening geographical distances and different time zones. It is clear that failing to address such issues could have serious negative repercussions for the continuation of the programme, both on a budgetary level and in terms of strategic support, should a situation arise where senior decision makers find themselves unsatisfied with its tangible, measurable outputs.

5. Additional observations

One of my principal concerns prior to departure from Japan was whether the students would have difficulty acclimatising to the Arctic environment of northern Norway during winter. During our stay in Tromsø daily temperatures were usually around -10 ten degrees with frequent snow, and when we visited central Finnmark

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(especially Kautokeino) it was much colder with the temperature almost going down to -20. However, this concern proved largely unfounded since both the students and I soon found ourselves able to adapt to the temperature and weather conditions and were thus able to enjoy the outdoor environment on several occasions. In my pastoral role as course coordinator, meaning my responsibility for the students' physical and emotional health during the programme, I must admit to being more concerned for the girls' overall conditions than the boys⁽¹⁹⁾. However, over the course of the three weeks I learned that physical difficulties such as jet lag, minor illness, general tiredness and a lack of vitality can affect boys just as much as girls. As a result, I came to the realisation that as a general rule it is unfair to treat the boys differently or to expect them to endure rather challenging circumstances when the girls would perhaps not be asked to do the same.

Another of my concerns centred on whether some of the students whose English ability was not as proficient as others would struggle to follow the thrust of the lectures delivered by Professor Vambheim. However, as mentioned above in section 3, on occasions when this did occur they made a very creditable effort to understand the discussion or to quickly catch up with the content of the lecture by consulting with their classmates during the breaks and lunchtimes. I think this behaviour demonstrated a high degree of diligence and maturity. Overall, I believe that it would be fair to say that language difficulties did not undermine the sum total of the students' learning on the programme to any great extent.

An additional area of learning that occurred on my part, which was brought home particularly strongly during the excursion to Finnmark, related to a realisation of the importance of the coordinators on programmes like this maintaining a regular and detailed supply of information to the students regarding a number of issues. This

(19) It is likely that this situation came about due to the fact that I had never previously escorted a party of students on a residential programme, let alone one in which the destination was to a foreign country with such a potentially challenging natural environment as the Norwegian Arctic during winter.

includes information on the nature of the current situation or task, what is planned to happen next and its objective, and also what the coordinators' expectations are for the students regarding current and forthcoming activities. This information should include not only detail relating to specific learning activities and locations of educational and cultural interest, but also that concerning more prosaic matters such as upcoming travel times, the location and timing of meals and rest periods, and also potential costs that the students may incur. If this steady flow of information is maintained it will support the overall learning process and also bolster the morale and enjoyment of the students.

Possible broader lessons for other contexts

From a personal point of view, taking on the role of the coordinator of this programme on the Japanese side represented a significant professional challenge on a number of levels. Whereas hitherto my professional responsibility for the educational welfare of the students in my classes ostensibly had come to an end following their departure from the classroom, in this case I was fundamentally responsible for both their educational and personal welfare for a period of three weeks in another country. In my teaching career up to this point it has never been my policy to limit my interest in students' educational and personal development solely to a classroom environment. As a myriad of educators around the world know, one of the joys of teaching is witnessing and supporting the development of both individual and groups of students in a much broader context, which often involves sharing their joys in success as well as commiserating with their pains in disappointment. However, taking a leadership role on a residential programme such as this in a foreign location clearly raises the level of responsibility incumbent on an educator considerably. In mentioning this I make no claims to the effect that it is in any way a novel revelation, but instead highlight the fact that during the programme it was difficult for me to take a step back and view it critically from the outside in order to identify areas that required improvement or redesign.

The preceding discussion has highlighted a number of areas directly related to the programme which proved successful and so warrant inclusion in future cycles, as well as others that require adjustment to a greater or lesser extent. The final observations presented here reflect more general lessons that have been drawn from the experience of February 10th - March 2nd 2017 and the two month follow-up period which could offer potentially valuable insights to other programme coordinators in comparable contexts of cooperative international education initiatives. Two perspectives will be presented: i) a strategic perspective taken from the viewpoint of the coordinators, and ii) a personal perspective taken more from the viewpoint of the participating students.

1. Strategic perspective

The first observation offered here concerns the importance of the coordinators possessing and communicating accurate information to all of the concerned partners⁽²⁰⁾ relating to the minutiae of the programme both before, during and after its completion. On the surface this may seem a very obvious point, but on the strength of the various experiences from the 2017 programme I believe it warrants restating. Firstly, as has been explained, the February - March 2017 programme was a pilot project and so to some extent it was unavoidable that prior to its inception there were a number of important aspects that remained unclear or existed in outline form at best. Most of the grey areas that existed prior to February 10th, for example, the nature of the accommodation at the Sydspissen Hotel, the method of study to be utilised at UiT and the locations to be visited on the excursion to Finnmark, over the course of the three weeks proved to be acceptable or successful, and thereby added value to the programme as a whole. However, in the current run-up to the second cycle of the programme, the fact that these aspects are *no longer* unclear and that detailed information on each is readily available which can be quickly shared between the

(20) In this case I am referring to both the institutional partners and the participating students.

partners, particularly the new round of participating students, places the coordinators in a much stronger position vis-à-vis their overall planning and their ability to respond to queries that may arise from the students. With regard to the pre-departure guidance sessions for the second cycle that are continuing at this time⁽²¹⁾, the more comprehensive information that is now available creates a situation in which the students will likely be far better prepared for the start of their studies when they arrive in Tromsø than their predecessors were a year ago. This naturally bodes well for the overall success of their learning in northern Norway on both an educational and cultural level.

The importance of the possession and communication of accurate information is relevant to two additional issues which have been alluded to above. Firstly, regarding the excursion, if the students possess a clear picture of the various educational objectives and logistical arrangements relating to this key element of the programme, this will aid the overall achievement of these objectives and the effective management of the excursion as a whole. In addition, regarding the misunderstanding which occurred between the Japanese and Norwegian partners that cast something of a shadow over the follow-up period in March - April 2017, if the institutional priorities and specific expectations of the partners regarding key aspects of the programme are clearly understood and communicated to each other, then this will reduce the chance of unfortunate circumstances like this occurring again.

A second observation concerns the value of maintaining a strategic perspective vis-à-vis the programme itself and also the broader relationships that exist between the institutional partners during the actual delivery of the programme. As stated above, due to the many responsibilities that I had as programme coordinator in February - March 2017 it was difficult for me to step back and try to 'see the wood from the trees'. It is

(21) A total of five guidance sessions were planned for the 2018 cycle of the programme involving both the fourteen participating students from Toyo and the five from TUFS.

clear that there is a finite limit as to how much can be achieved in this regard. However, if such a perspective can be maintained to a certain extent, this presents opportunities to envisage improvements to the programme which could potentially involve the inclusion of new learning elements, partners or locations. In theory, this will serve to contribute towards both the sustainability of the programme by establishing a process of continual improvement, and also to identify possible opportunities for enhanced cooperation, perhaps in other educational or research fields, between the institutional partners.

2. Personal perspective

From a more personal perspective, an important lesson learned during the 2017 programme was the importance of periodically pausing during the schedule of activities in order to take stock of the overall situation and not feel that the group should continually be rushing on to the next planned activity. I came to this realisation during the excursion to Finnmark in which, despite the tight schedule and long distances that had to be travelled between locations, periods of 'down time' were included (some of which came about by chance), and which ultimately proved very valuable. It is doubtless the case that the students only have a limited amount of time in northern Norway and it is therefore incumbent on the coordinators that they make every effort to ensure that the students receive the greatest educational and cultural benefit. However, I believe that activities such as spending time in a more relaxed atmosphere in company with UiT students and staff and the many other people we had the opportunity to meet from this unique region also had considerable value on a different, more human level. Consequently, it is important not to be overly controlled by a tight and packed schedule, and that adequate time should be allocated to allow the students to experience human and environmental interactions which are not led by the coordinators or adversely influenced by what can sometimes become a rather draconian list of dates and times.

Closely related to this observation is the undoubted value of eating and drinking together in a relaxed and conducive environment. One of the highlights of the Finnmark excursion was the dinner that the students and staff shared around one long table in the hotel in Kautokeino on the second evening. This was followed by an extended period when the students were able to interact freely in the hotel lounge with their UiT colleagues and students from the nearby Sami University who had come to join us. All of the participants on the excursion agreed that this was a thoroughly pleasant and stimulating experience. Therefore it is my opinion that whenever possible, opportunities for such unstructured and unhurried personal interactions should be included as an important supplementary element to the programme as a whole.

Two final observations: Reference was made in section 5 to the pleasant event that brought our stay in northern Norway to a close: the farewell party held on the final evening at the Árdna Sami Cultural House on the UiT campus. One of the reasons why this was such an enjoyable experience was that the party of students from Toyo and TUFs had the opportunity to make their own unique contribution to the event by presenting a musical and dance performance. In this way they were able to express their thanks to their hosts and new friends at UiT at the same time as expressing their own energy, enthusiasm and initiative through the introduction of aspects of Japanese popular culture. I believe that cultural exchange of this type which takes place in a non-scholastic environment also has considerable value in international education initiatives such as this.

Finally, another important lesson which can likely be applied in other comparable contexts is that on residential educational programmes the participants, both students and staff, only have so much available energy on any particular day, and therefore at times it is acceptable and possibly even advisable to call a halt to proceedings and continue them on the following day. Clearly, as has been stated, time represents a limited resource and efforts should be made to obtain the maximum educational and cultural benefit from the various learning opportunities at hand. However, ultimately

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humans are not robots and so if on occasion it appears that a degree of real tiredness is starting to set in, it should not be seen as a sign of failure that the current round of activities is brought to something of a premature close and is then restarted once sufficient rest has been taken by all of the parties concerned.

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