

Education export at the University of Helsinki: First steps 2011–2012

Mika Hietanen

Universitetslektor i retorik, Doc.
Uppsala universitet, Avd. för retorik
mika.hietanen@littvet.uu.se

Kauko Hämäläinen

Director, Professor
University of Helsinki,
Palmenia Centre for Continuing Education
kauko.hamalainen@helsinki.fi

Tea Seppälä

Development manager
University of Helsinki,
Palmenia Centre for Continuing Education
tea.seppala@helsinki.fi

Introduction: The Start-Up of the Education Export in Finland

The export of education is a major business in several English-speaking countries: Australia and the United States currently export education to the value of some 20 billion dollars, and the figure for the United Kingdom exceeds 10 billion euros. The revenue comes from selling university degrees in the host country,

establishing local branches in target countries, and offering distance learning and other services. Although the trade in education services is now global, English-speaking countries dominate the market.

According to an OECD estimate, some 3.34 million students studied at universities outside their native countries in 2011, a number that is projected to increase by 4–6% annually. English universities currently strive to raise a part of their budget by charging tuition

fees for international students, and to maintain a 10% market share of the growing student numbers.

Finland has similarly high expectations of the income to be made from education. Some years ago, a working group headed by Heljä Misukka outlined the vision that education should become one of the country's major export products, generating hundreds of millions of euros in trade activity. The major obstacle preventing Finland from generating such revenue is that current legislation prevents the sale of degrees. In contrast, other Nordic countries already charge students from outside the EU for their university degrees. In Finland, the export of education has grown in the form of continuing education sold to international groups.

Until now, the teaching sector has been the most important area of educational trade. Finland's excellent performance in PISA studies has led to Finland serving as a benchmark in international comparisons, and Finns have become sought-after providers of teacher education and continuing education to various teacher groups. Some countries, particularly in the Arab world, have also shown interest in establishing schools based on the Finnish curriculum.

In recent years, several Finnish universities have employed full-time staff to promote the export of education, and trade has occurred with China, Saudi Arabia, Singapore and South Korea, among others. In Russia, collaboration has often been based on funding from the EU or other third parties. In the early stages, universities have also cooperated with each other in submitting tenders and implementing training.

The current situation at the University of Helsinki

Based on an internal committee report regarding the opportunities of education export, the Rector of the University of Helsinki set up a three-year education export project, starting in September 2010. The responsibility to coordinate the project was given to the Palmenia Centre for Continuing Education, which has broad experience with international projects and various commercial educational enterprises. Three full-time workers have been attached to the project. In order to bring in business know-how, the director for the project was recruited from outside of the university.

Within the university, the focus of the project has been on spreading information about education export, starting up co-operation with the faculties and institutions, creating products suitable for export together with relevant marketing material, and on creating the necessary financial models as well as templates for other key documents. The projects is overseen by a steering-group, led by Vice Rector Ulla-Maija Forsberg. In April 2011, the University of Helsinki joined the national education export cluster, Future Learning Finland (FLF). The project has founded and chaired the FLF sub-cluster for research based education.

The following examples from the first full calendar year of the project, 2011, gives an idea of the activities during the start-up phase. Among signed agreements for different kinds of educational projects, the following can be given as examples. With the Department of Computer Science and the IMAM Uni-

versity in Saudi-Arabia a wireless networks and sensors lab project, with the Principals Academy in Singapore a MOU towards education for teachers and school principals, and with Mid Sweden University, a Letter of Intent towards education for school principals.

Within education export, the first two important development-projects supervised by Palmenia have been with the Division of Atmospheric Sciences at the Department of Physics, for which a coordinator was recruited for two months, and, with the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, a three year EAKR-project, "Food Safety Project for China and Russia". The project has also participated as an associate partner in applications hosted by the Finnish Consulting Group (FCG), of which the University of Helsinki is a shareholder.

The high number of important visitors to Palmenia has facilitated the launch of trading. The project has hosted visits by international delegations, e.g. from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Minister of Higher Education), the Sultanate of Oman (Minister of Education), Thailand (the Office of the Higher Education Commission, OHEC), China (The Open University of China , and Sweden (Mid Sweden University, University of Linköping). The project has visited international exhibitions and potential partners, e.g. together with Finnpro and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Finland.

Most important are, naturally, the first agreements towards concrete pilot projects. Four projects have so far been agreed upon. First, the above mentioned project on starting up a laboratory for wireless networks and sensors at the

IMAM University. Second, a graduate diploma in early childhood education, ordered through an open bid competition by the Pre-School Education Branch, Education Programmes Division of the Singapore Ministry of Education, and in co-operation with the Academy of Principals (Singapore). Third, a teacher training programme in Finland, ordered by the Shanghai Municipal Education Council and planned together with the University of Jyväskylä and coordinated by EduCluster Finland Ltd. And, fourth, a short teacher training programme for teachers of English in South Korea. In the following section, this lastly mentioned project is presented as a case study.

Foreign Language Teaching Methods: A Trump Card of Finnish Exports?

In January 2012 a group of 15 South-Korean teachers of English participated in a short term teacher training course at Palmenia. The course is an example of a pilot course within the new wave of education export within Finnish universities. As a case study, it also provides an educating example of export to an Asian country.

Towards an Agreement

As is typical for Asian affairs, there is considerable prelude of negotiations and arrangements before the actual business. The final product, a ten day long course in Helsinki in the didactics of English as a foreign language, was preceded by ten months of emails, phone-calls, and an on-site visit in Helsinki by a delegation from South-Korea. Through these interactions, a relationship of trust was built

up and both parties learned about the needs and wishes of each other.

This particular pilot-course had a background in a visit by the director of Palmenia, prof. Hämäläinen, in South Korea a few years earlier. That visit led to an agreement signed in Seoul in 2007 and one short-term course in Helsinki in 2008. Now, three years later, the original agreement had expired and the South Koreans contacted prof. Hämäläinen towards rekindling the relationship.

Within the Asian culture, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) typically marks the beginning of a business relationship. A MoU is a testament of good will, a loosely binding agreement of a general character where both parties agree to the framework and goals for their mutual cooperation. Although a MoU is not legally binding, the signing of the document is preferably a solemn occasion, and a fair amount of time was used relating to the MoU. The main South Korean parties, the director of the Chungnam Provincial Office of Education and the director of the Chungnam Institute of Foreign Language Education, wanted to visit Helsinki for the signing ceremony and during a two day stay in Helsinki, the delegation visited a few outstanding Finnish elementary schools in Helsinki and were given presentations about the Finnish school and about teachers' education in Finland. The signing ceremony was arranged in October 2011 as a formal reception by the Vice Rector of the University of Helsinki and the occasion was documented and reportedly publicised locally in Chungnamdo (a short video can also be found on www.helsinki.fi/palmenia/english).

*Some of
these requests
were unusual...*

After the visit of the delegation, began the drafting of the specific agreement for the course. After several drafts, and delays typical for these types of ventures, it was signed in December. During the negotiations all aspects of the course were discussed, such as the content of the course, tutors, location, transportation, spare-time activities, dates, and, of course, the price for the whole package. It is worth noting that the Koreans had very specific requests. Some of these requests were unusual from the university's perspective. Regarding the academic content, professors usually prepare their tuition activities quite autonomously, without input from prospective students. It is true, however, that at the beginning of and during a course, Finnish students are often encouraged to express their wishes, which are then taken into account, if possible. Finnish lecturers usually aim at dialogue-based, interactional lectures. In education export, however, if the client's understanding of how a certain subject should be taught diverges with the professor's or the institution's, the university cannot compromise its integrity for the sake of business.

In this case, during the drafting of the course agreement, the client requested that memorising techniques

needed to be included throughout in the course. It was also requested that the participants should have the opportunity to give actual lessons in English as a foreign language at local schools in Helsinki. The latter request could not be met due to Finnish qualification regulations for teachers and for those training to become qualified teachers. Finnish teaching practice is done within the framework of teachers' pedagogical studies run by the Departments of Teacher Education, leading up to teacher's qualification. Regarding the former request, we knew from informal discussions with the Korean delegation that the director of the office of education had himself studied English by reciting English texts by heart on his way to and from work. Consequently, this method of learning English by walking was deemed exemplary. (During our meetings, however, all members of the Korean delegation for the most part used an interpreter, which was surprising since they were senior or former senior teachers of English.) One of the two principal lecturers of the course, Professor Seppo Tella, agreed to touch upon the subject of memorisation from the viewpoint of research on focusing on learning strategies in western and eastern cultures. He would not, however, include memorising as a suggested method for language studies, as this would not have given a correct picture of the current state of the art within English and foreign language didactics in Finland.

In parallel with the negotiations of the course agreement, practical arrangements, e.g. for housing and school visits, were undertaken. Originally, home-stay accommodation was requested, but this is unusual in Finland and mostly used

*Fluidity is
typical for
Asian
business.*

for high-school exchange students. Hotel accommodation would have been too costly and a middle ground was found in the university's own apartments. In negotiations regarding the cost of the course, the customer considered not only the cost for the actual tuition, but also for travel, accommodation, sustenance etc. Not many universities offer all-inclusive visiting services but an expansion of the offering of these types of courses for education export would probably require these services to be provided.

Even though the preparations and negotiations were all conducted in a positive atmosphere of trust, there was throughout uncertainty regarding whether or not the venture would go through in the end. At several points the dates were postponed. Originally, the course was planned for August 2011, but in the end it was held in January 2012. Only two weeks before the planned start of the course did Palmenia receive final confirmation. All aspects of the course were revised several times, often accompanied with a request that the changes in all relevant documents would be implemented as quickly as possible. As we have learned from other clients, fluidity is typical for Asian business. Certainly, the aspect of customer service is important at centres for

continuing education, but may prove challenging for other university actors among the former state universities in Finland which are accustomed to conducting matters in a more robust and systemic manner.

An Intensive Course in the Didactics of English as a Foreign Language

In discussion with the course participants, it turned out that a course in the didactics of English as a foreign language at a Finnish university is a coveted prize in South Korea, awarded to only the most distinguished teachers. In a country where competition is extremely tough, international courses serve as merits towards career advancement.

As South Korea has hundreds of native English-speakers teaching English and several American university campuses, the question arises what Finland can offer. One of the two principal teachers of the course, Seppo Tella, Professor Emeritus of foreign language education at the University of Helsinki, explained that the reason to come to Finland is not English studies per se, but that it is commonly known abroad that Finns have a better knowledge of foreign languages than East Asians in general. English pronunciation is difficult for Asians, and that is a common denominator between Finns and Koreans. Another common factor is that both countries rank at the top in the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Korean teachers are seeking new information from other top-PISA countries.

The course was built on lectures in the mornings and school visits, demon-

strations, or group-work in the afternoons. Prof. Tella worked together with Adjunct Professor Pirjo Harjanne from the Research Group for Foreign Language Education (ReFLEct) at the University of Helsinki Department of Teacher Education. Adj. Prof. Harjanne explained that it is still common in Korea to learn a language by rote – an approach almost never used in Finland nowadays. According to her, Finland is strong in the methodology of language teaching. International methodology trends, such as intercultural communicative competence (ICC) as a goal of studying and learning and communicative language teaching (CLT) as a broad approach to teaching, are widely known in Finland and are also developed further. In Finnish foreign language teaching, the main emphasis lies on communicative language use in situations that are meaningful to the speaker, and less on code-oriented, or grammar-focused, approaches to language learning.

Against this background it is understandable that the inclusion of techniques for memorisation in the curriculum would fit poorly with the Finnish approach to language teaching. As regards education export at university level, the idea is to export Finnish education to the benefit of the client, not to mimic courses that the clients can get in their home-countries. The idea is to enhance, through dialogue and discussions, deeper understanding of those insights and practices that have proved successful in Finland. If this entails content or methods that are unfamiliar, or even uncomfortable, to the client, this may be a good thing, pushing the foreign teachers towards new discoveries. For instance, intensive modes of collaborative learning have become very com-

A day of orientation regarding Finnish culture would have been needed.

mon in Finland, even if in some other parts of the world traditional lectures still continue to be preferred.

Since 2008 the Palmenia Centre for Continuing Education has offered so called Eduvisits for international groups interested in Finnish education. These visits range from a day to a few weeks. Some are exploratory in nature, with the inclusion of a wide variety of presentations and visits. Others are academic training programmes with carefully tailored curricula leading towards added professional competence. The course for the South Korean group was of the latter type. The best experts from the university's departments are assigned for each training programme. Palmenia's experience from the Eduvisits programme is that school visits are the most popular part of the programme. Teachers from abroad increasingly wish for a direct exchange of ideas and experiences with their Finnish colleagues.

Considerations for the future

In the written feedback, the participants gave the same high marks for the acade-

mic part of the course as Palmenia's domestic courses usually receive. However, there were some minor areas of critique regarding other aspects worth considering. The participants were not entirely happy with some of the timetable arrangements. For example, they wished for more school visits, but were unhappy about the many transportation-arrangements. Also, some of the teaching premises were inadequate, with unpractical conference rooms that suffered from ICT-related problems. This created an atmosphere easily geared towards negative reactions from the Koreans – something that has to be paid more attention to in terms of future training. Also, there were indications that a day of orientation regarding Finnish culture in general, and Finnish foods and social codes, would have been needed at the beginning of the course. For instance, one student was upset by one of the teacher's request to help carry some of her books during a five minute walk from one lecture hall to another. In Finland, helping the teacher is quite natural whereas the South Korean teachers apparently considered this to be inappropriate.

Some of the critique regarding practical matters was perhaps due to two incidents. As soon as one of the teachers or invited guest lecturers said something, video recording devices were turned on among some of the Korean teachers (although none had asked for permission). When this practice continued, concerns were raised about the intended use of the recorded material in South Korea. When the practice was forbidden after more than three days, some of the participants reacted strongly. For future agreements, it is now advised to include a clause that prohibits audio and video recordings and the copying of the course

content without prior assent from the service provider. It may also be mentioned that all course materials had been made accessible online by the Finnish lecturers, but the Korean participants seemed more interested in recording the actual teaching sessions. When the lecturers finally forbade audio and video recording, they explained to the participants that this was against common practice in Finland (and in many other countries). In the future, it may also be needed to reconsider the relevance of and access to the course materials, which were now only little used.

The other incident occurred prior to the video episode. On the third morning, the Finnish lecturer asked the Koreans to fill in a short survey to make them reflect on their own teaching and on their students' studying. The Koreans filled in the survey, seemingly without hesitation. The teacher had used this survey as an introduction to the lecture itself and continued to elaborate on the theme closely connected to intercultural communication styles. Just moments later, Palmenia was contacted from South Korea with the message that the Korean teachers should not be asked to write anything without prior permission from the South Korean authorities, and that the data already gathered should not be used. The survey had been intended to be dealt with anonymously in the same way as the Finnish lecturers' earlier data from Finland, Japan and Chile. Although an effort was made to discuss the dilemma, the matter could not be resolved, and all data gathered was deleted. After this episode, the lecturers on their part forbade the Koreans to audio and video record their lectures.

Did expectations meet on both sides, on the Finnish and the Korean side? The two Finnish lecturers, both specialists in foreign-language didactics and intercultural communicative competence, had been asked to introduce the Korean participants to the latest Finnish and international methodological approaches to teaching English as a foreign language. The overarching rationale was based on theory linked with practically-oriented school visits and demonstrations. It turned out that more specific information would have been needed concerning the professional background of the Korean teachers. At times the Finnish theory-oriented approach may not have met the expectations of the Koreans, who expected a practical orientation. Part of this challenge could be solved by allowing more time for reflection for the participants. It may also be a good idea to let the participants peer-teach each other within a group where comments to and from can be expressed and internalised easily. Some obstacles in communication between the Finnish lecturers and the Korean participants arose due to highly different cultures. The Koreans seemed rather reluctant to speak up, to express their own individual opinions, which sometimes led to frustrating situations, as the Finnish lecturers tried to create an open dialogue-based atmosphere. All in all, more attention should be paid to intercultural communication, both on the Finnish and on the South Korean side. A continuing problem in the implementation of the course was the inadequate language proficiency of the majority of the Korean participants. Only a few of them expressed themselves fluently and understandably while many seemed not to understand or speak English adequately.

Finally, a fundamental obstacle in achieving ideal intercomprehension between the Finnish lecturers and the Korean participants may lie in the current fundamental differences in teaching philosophy, methodology and tradition, which all seemed to differ radically between Finland and Korea. The least one could do in any future training, would be to be more conscious and even cognisant of these differences, as otherwise they may prevent good, genuine efforts on both sides.

Financially, this course was just barely profitable, considering the time used for planning and various preparations. Basically, everything was hand-made and tailored for the customer. With repeat courses with the same or similar content, this type of activity can be worthwhile financially, and preliminary an annual repeat has been discussed. This time, the gain was one of experience and understanding regarding the technical, practical, and academic particulars of exporting Finnish education to an Asian country.

Kazakhstani Class Teachers in Helsinki

In autumn 2011 the University of Helsinki Palmenia Centre for Continuing Education concluded a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with two Kazakhstani educational and teaching organisations: the Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS) for gifted pupils and the Republican Institute for Professional Development of Leading and Research-Pedagogical Staff of Education System (RIPSKO) under the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The Kazakhstani organisations contacted

Palmenia after coming across its Eduvis-it website. Eduvisit, which is a paid service, provides international groups the opportunity to visit Finland to learn about the Finnish education system, teaching and schools.

The subject of both MoU agreements was development collaboration relating to current Kazakhstani education policy reforms which aim to support schools and teaching staff through research, development and continuing education. Palmenia negotiated with both organisations on the provision of continuing education to class teachers, subject teachers and head teachers as well as on the launch in Kazakhstan of the Learning to Learn assessment project, developed by the Centre for Educational Assessment at the University of Helsinki Department of Teacher Education. Negotiations with the Kazakhstani clients on the provision and funding of education went well and translated into concrete action: the provision of continuing education to Kazakhstani class teachers five months after the original agreement was signed. The following case report describes the continuing education programme commissioned by the Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS) and offered to 25 Kazakhstani class teachers in Helsinki in February 2012.

The programme curriculum was devised with input from the Department of Teacher Education and Palmenia. The Department's teaching and research staff were responsible for the provision of teaching. For them, the programme served as a pilot project in the export of education. After the visit, the university lecturers and professors who had participated in the project reflected on the resources that the new approach

Due to language difficulties, the teachers had to adjust their learning material and teaching strategies.

required of them, its benefits for them and the Department of Teacher Education both financially and in terms of professional development, as well as on their possible continued involvement in the export of education.

Putting the Agreement into Practice

In accordance with the customer's requests, an intensive two-week programme of didactical training was formulated on the following themes: literacy and literature; mathematics, chemistry and physics; history and social studies; biology and environmental studies; the didactics of religion and multicultural education; arts, crafts and physical education; drama education; special needs education; and the use of media in education. As part of what is known as "values education" in Finland, the programme covered not only the didactics of religion and ethics, but also current action intended to promote a good school ethos and prevent bullying. The programme introduced the visitors to the content and results of KiVa, a pre-

ventive anti-bullying policy which is extensively used in Finnish schools, and the intervention-oriented VerSo peer mediation model. In addition, site visits were conducted at the University of Helsinki's Viikki and Norssi teacher training schools as well as at the Finnish-Russian School in Helsinki. As many of the participants had never travelled abroad before, they were first offered a "survival kit", in the form of a brief introduction to Finnish society and getting around Helsinki led by a Russian-speaking tour guide.

The Finnish organisers had originally agreed with NIS officials that the visiting teachers would have the necessary language skills to attend classes in English. After the group arrived at the Helsinki-Vantaa airport, however, only three group members turned out to have adequate English skills, while the others spoke only Russian and Kazakh. The group was also accompanied by an amateur interpreter/English teacher whose language skills and vocabulary were not up to the task of exploring the programme themes. Due to the language difficulties, the Department of Education teachers had to adjust their learning material and teaching strategies by abandoning most of the planned theoretical teaching and set books in favour of a more functional approach. The description of the Finnish education system in English was also cancelled, as the interpreter was unfamiliar with administrative terminology, but the system was described in Russian during the visit to the Finnish-Russian School.

During the school visits, the Kazakhstani teachers were divided into groups in which at least one member understood some English and was able

to translate the Finnish teacher's explanations for his or her colleagues. Most of the Kazakhstani teachers were particularly interested in native-language instruction in Finnish. Although they did not understand Finnish, they observed their Finnish counterparts at work, while those with adequate skills in English described the theoretical foundations and practical applications of the instruction to the others. When asked why they were so interested in native-language instruction, the visitors explained that the government in Kazakhstan has invested heavily in the revitalisation and teaching of Kazakhstan's native language, Kazakh, which belongs to the Turkic language family. Russian was the dominant language in Kazakhstan for hundreds of years, and instruction in Kazakh was strictly forbidden, particularly during the Stalin and Soviet era. Since the country's independence in 1980, abundant resources have been directed towards revitalising the language, and native-language teaching by class teachers has been developed in various ways, including acquiring information about native-language teaching in Finland.

Goals and Impact: Two-way Learning

To compare the programme goals and impact, the visiting teachers were asked to describe their expectations on the first day of the visit. However, the teachers simply referred to the training commissioner's expectations. A cultural difference was discovered in the way pedagogical goals are set and effectiveness is assessed. In Kazakhstan, the funder sets the learning goals on behalf of the participants. Similarly, effectiveness is assessed not by consulting the students

but by discussing the learning outcomes with the teachers alone. This view is also reflected in the assessment of learning at school. According to the Kazakhstani participants, student self-assessment is not used at all, as it is the teacher alone who assesses learning.

On the last day of the programme, the participants were asked for group feedback. The regular feedback form could not be used, as it had not been translated into Russian. The participants were asked to cite the most important methods or approaches that they would be using in their own work and to indicate what content they would have added to or eliminated from the programme. They were also asked to describe what aspects of the Kazakhstani education system they would import to Finland.

The participants said that they would miss the high esteem accorded to teachers in Finland and the general culture of trust prevalent in the Finnish education sector, as the teaching profession is not similarly valued in Kazakhstan. According to one participant, not only the head teacher but also parents can interfere with teachers' pedagogical methods in Kazakhstan. Many participants went as far as saying that they would move to Finland to work as teachers, if they did not have a family back home in Kazakhstan.

The ideas and approaches that the participants would be taking back with them included teaching based on a socio-constructivist idea of learning, group work and collaborative learning, drama education and differentiation, native-language instruction, and the use of media and ICT resources in educa-

Experiences and Lessons for the Education Exporters

*The participants
would miss the
high esteem
accorded to
teachers in
Finland.*

tion. Although religion is not taught at school in the mostly Islamic Kazakhstan, where Quranic schools provide such instruction to Muslims and churches to other religious groups, the participants found the didactics of religion, multicultural education and related values education to be positive and interesting features of the Finnish education system. Anti-bullying measures were also praised.

In the area of special needs education, the visitors were struck by the range of support provided to weaker students in Finland. Support for gifted students, in contrast, was less evident to them during the school visits. Although the visitors recognised the value of the three-tier support and special needs teaching provided in Finnish schools, the use of differentiation to support gifted students was something that they would like to bring from Kazakhstan to Finnish schools. The visitors were happy with their training programme as a whole and only wished that it had been longer.

Teaching people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds was not a new experience for the teacher education staff involved, as many of them had previously worked in international teaching and research positions and all have international students in their current study groups.

Teaching Russian-speaking teachers was also easy due to the long tradition of behavioural scientific research in Russia, thanks to which the participants had extensive theoretical knowledge of teaching and education. The Kazakhstani teachers showed an interest in everything they encountered and engaged in active discussion and debate in the classroom. The Department of Teacher Education staff who taught the Kazakhstani group found it a productive experience for their professional development. The participants' inadequate language skills posed some professional development challenges requiring the adjustment of teaching methodology to support the needs of learners whose language skills did not optimally support communication. As it was a break from the norm, the experience was deemed inspiring, mainly as a result of the Kazakhstanis' active participation.

The continuing education of Kazakhstani class teachers was also a rewarding experience for the Department of Teacher Education and Palmenia, as it offered new perspectives on teaching, geography, culture and education policy. Although Finland and Kazakhstan are two very different countries, the programme was planned, funded and implemented in a spirit of collaboration

and understanding. Communication may also have been facilitated by the Kazakhstani's identification with Finland as a country with a similar political history. The countries have a shared history with both Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union, and both have undergone a process of independence that has shaped their national identity. In Kazakhstan, this process currently involves investment in Kazakh as the official language of school education as well as the language used in the media and everyday communication. Kazakhstani universities are also striving to develop the disciplines of ethnology and cultural studies. During the training programme, we learnt more about the political situation in Kazakhstan and the country's education reform, which will create more education export opportunities for the University of Helsinki.

The lack of a common language made teaching more difficult, although in classroom discussions and other comments the visitors said that they understood the teaching content quite well. Nevertheless, it has since been agreed that future Kazakhstani visitors will always be accompanied by a professional interpreter. Ideally, a professional interpreter familiar with educational terminology and proficient in the visitors' native language should be found in Finland, as this would enable the Finnish teachers to concentrate on teaching using their native Finnish and would thus deliver the best possible teaching experience to the visitors.

After the training, the University of Helsinki teaching and research staff were excited about the export of education and keen to continue their involvement. The Department leadership

agreed at the beginning of the project to allow teachers to incorporate the training into their annual 1,600-hour workload requirement. The funding provided by the programme will be transferred to the Department of Teacher Education, which will allocate it to the teachers responsible for the training. They can use the funds for participating in conferences, employing assistants and deputies and for other work-related purposes. To sum up, the experiment can be deemed a success. What is more, thanks to the financial benefits involved and the impact on working hours, the training will enable participation in forthcoming international training.

Reflections

One of the questions often put to us when we launched our education export venture was why we should get involved in developing export activities. An obvious answer is money. Export is expected to provide additional funding for both departments and teachers. Furthermore, some teachers are passionate about making their expertise available to others. This has been seen in climate studies and teacher education, among other areas. In general, Finns are keen to share their educational excellence to support the development of other countries.

At the University of Helsinki, discussion has focused on the ethics of exporting education. Although improving educational attainments is an excellent form of development cooperation, many teachers wrestling with the time restraints and demands of teaching and research are torn between how to allocate their 1,600-hour annual workload in a sustainable way: should they focus

on providing the best possible teaching and research to students at their home university or should they also allocate some of their time to education exports, which may involve accommodating the demands of undemocratic governments and dictatorships?

Although such values as equality, democracy education and social involvement are ingrained in the Finnish teaching and education system, it is not possible to integrate them into school teaching in undemocratic countries. Therefore, the question is how Finnish education exports will ultimately be reflected in the target country. Some teachers cited ethical considerations related to the allocation of working hours for not committing to new projects before reading the relevant Amnesty International reports. The impact of education exports on both education policy and the application of pedagogy in teachers' everyday lives is an important topic that should be investigated on the basis of case studies. Such research would help education exporters to develop both country-specific export strategies and the content of education export activities.

There is a lot to learn about choosing a trustworthy business partner.

In launching education export ventures, we have been pleased to note our customers' eagerness to purchase Finnish education services, particularly those related to teaching. One of the difficulties has been to determine what is actually being sold. If a customer wishes to purchase teacher education, does this mean that students from the target country will study in Finland, that teachers involved in teacher education in the target country will be trained, or that the curriculum will be developed in the target country or university?

There is also a lot to learn about choosing a trustworthy business partner. The safest choice of partner appears to be a public agency or authority with decision-making powers. Collaboration with educational organisations is another viable solution. In Arab countries and many other regions, private consultants and businessmen wish to handle negotiations and invest in educational institutions. This brings us back to the issue of trust.

Almost all our partners in various countries are interested in concluding different types of collaboration agreements. However, whereas the usual Finnish attitude to agreements is that they must be adhered to and lead to concrete action, in most other countries an agreement simply means that negotiations can continue. The same goes for the submission of tenders. In the majority of countries, a written tender is not enough; rather, those who request tenders must first be personally contacted to establish a relationship of trust. Typically, those requesting tenders change their mind after making the request and decide that they actually need

something else. This may considerably prolong the negotiations.

All in all, our education export activities have got well under way, and the growth potential is high. Although international competition is intense, Finns have an excellent reputation in the education sector. We must accept that we will get nowhere near the billion-dollar revenue rate of the English-speaking countries, at least as long as degrees cannot be sold. We will probably achieve the highest possible returns by selling equipment and the architecture of educational institutions. Selling staff training and consultancy services for the development of curricula fits in well with our University's mission and identity.

Sources

Email Cho-Hietanen (2011–2012). Email correspondence between Mika Hietanen and Minchul Cho.

Inki, R-L. (2012). *Foreign language teaching methods: the trump card of Finnish exports*. Retrieved on 18 June 2012 from <http://www.helsinki.fi/palmenia/english/news/2012/educationexport.htm>

Measures proposed by the education export committee. 8 June 2010. Internal document.

MINEDU (2012). *Finnish education export strategy: summary of the strategic lines and measures*. Publications of the Ministry of Education and Culture 2010:12. Helsinki: Ministry of Education and Culture.

Pehkonen-Rajamäki, E. (2009). *Tilaukoulutus Helsingin yliopistossa. Tilaukoulutuksen selvitysprojehtin raportti*. (Commissioned training at the University of Helsinki. Report on the review of commissioned training). 18 March 2009. Strategic Planning and Development, University of Helsinki. Internal document.

Palmenia magazine (2011). Issue 2.

Rector's decision on launching education export activities.

Yliopistolainen magazine (2011). Issue 4.

