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EVALUATION OF THE PSU 2006

Report to the Academic Training Association
and the University of Pristina

What: Pristina Summer University 2006
July 10– July 28 2006
Pristina, Kosovo

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Introduction

In Spring 2006 the Academic Training Association (ATA) asked me to function as the independent evaluator of the Pristina Summer University, edition 2006. The present report describes the observations I made during a visit to the PSU, and the conclusions I draw from these observations.

As the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the evaluation are very specific, the report is organised along the list of to-be evaluated points, as presented in the ToR. I will first describe shortly the summer university, the organisers and their strong and weak points, and then the visit on which this evaluation report is based. Thereafter I will review the PSU on the basis of the criteria in the ToR. The report ends with a set of recommendations to the organisers of the PSU, ATA and the University of Pristina (UP).

Description of the summer university

Only a short description of the Summer University is provided here; for an in-depth description of the PSU, the reader is referred to materials of the Academic Training Association (ATA).

The Pristina Summer University (PSU) edition 2006 was organised by the University of Pristina (UP), in co-operation with ATA, a Dutch NGO. It is the sixth edition, with one more being planned by the current organisers (UP and ATA). After 2007, funding for the summer university has not yet been secured, but UP remains inclined to organise further editions. The 2006 edition is the middle of three in which a handover of responsibilities from ATA to PU is implemented (for pre-2005 editions organisation was mostly in the hands of ATA). Main organisers in 2006 were three staff members of UP's international relations office (IRO), including its head. They did so under supervision of a committee assembled by the UP rector, the PSU committee. This committee consisted of the IRO head, the IRO staff member most involved in PSU, an ATA representative, two UP professors and two UP students. One of the students was absent during most of the preparations.

PSU 2006 consisted of fifteen university courses, all taught within three weeks in July. Teaching and other activities took place in buildings of the university. Classroom facilities varied from sophisticated to very basic. Courses also varied in levels, but most seemed equivalent to advanced bachelor courses. Each course was attended by between 15 and 25 students, adding up to around 400 participants. Of these, approximately 75% came from Kosovo, and a majority of the remainder were from Eastern Europe. Most students from Kosovo were regular undergraduates from the university. As was the case in previous years, a special effort was made by the organisation to include Serbian students in the program. In 2006 these efforts were very successful with 16 Serbian and 5 Montenegrin students participating, markedly more than in 2005.

Each course was taught by a local and an international visiting professor, with a logistics officer responsible for facilities and support. Many visiting professors were academics teaching in the EU or the USA, but a sizeable minority taught at universities in Albania. Courses were suggested by local professors, who also submitted, with each course, at least two suggestions for visiting professors (at least one course went the other way: suggested by the visiting professor, with a matching local professor found by the committee). The PSU committee then chose between suggestions, after receiving prioritisations by the faculties. ATA selected international students in collaboration with IRO officers. Local professors were expected to attend a training weekend prior to the PSU, in which they were prepared for their task and given some training in the ECTS system. They were all members of the UP faculty; most logistics officers were UP students. The university selected local students; a hard task this year since around five times as many applied as could be placed.

Next to the courses, IRO staff organised discussions (called Public Forums), excursions and social events for students and professors. Accommodation was provided for foreign students, some local students, and for visiting professors.

Strengths and weaknesses of the actors involved

UP is in many respects still a classic continental European university. It is a teaching university, with little research. Faculties, and within faculties professors, are largely autonomous. Instruction is mostly *ex cathedra*, exams are oral, the curriculum is in most faculties organised in years rather than courses. Quality control is virtually absent. Reform is slow, with Bologna action lines implemented more in theory than in practice. Management is weak and erratic, as exemplified by entrance exams that have been scheduled to clash with PSU courses several years in a row; this despite decisions to have them precede PSU (see later). It must be said, in its defence, that the university has been paralysed by an authority conflict for the last two years. A new rector was appointed in 2006, and hopes were high, among my interlocutors, that this new rector would have a stronger hand and bring fast improvements (incidentally, the new rector has been an enthusiastic local professor in PSU).

Next to the weaknesses listed above, UP also has notable strengths as an organiser of PSU. First and foremost, the IRO officers directly involved in organising PSU were hard-working, open, and dedicated professionals. They showed skill and flexibility in working around failures of management, bureaucratic inadequacies and other obstacles. A weakness of the IRO was, however, a certain complacency. An example was a resignation to much planning happening last minute. The need for some discussion of editions in the coming years was not seen at all.

ATA is a NGO that started out as a small volunteer organisation, but that has gradually professionalized. Its strengths include a strong sense of purpose, substantial experience in projects such as the PSU, and a strong culture of hard work and getting things done. ATA management makes a strong and flexible impression, with a strong sense of anticipating problems before they occur and of learning from past experience. ATA's main weakness is that of a small organisation working with much larger ones. It is dependent on both donors and the recipients of projects, making its own room for manoeuvring small.

Description of my visit

I visited Pristina during the second week of the PSU, from July 18 to July 22. In that time, I spoke several times to the organisers, to several visiting professors and co-teachers, and to numerous students. I spoke to five member of the PSU committee, and to ATA staff in charge of PSU. In addition to these conversations, I took the opportunity to observe the PSU in action. I went to one public forum, visited the buildings in which the PSU was held, visited three courses, and took part in one class excursion. Moreover, this report benefited from interim evaluation talks that ATA held with all visiting professors, and which I was allowed to read.

Evaluation by main issues in Terms of Reference

Project Results

Below, I list all the project results named in the ToR, and discuss whether they have been attained. Recommendations are given where they come up, but are listed again at the end of in this report.

1. Summer courses organised

Variety and relevance of course program;

As planned, the program consisted of fifteen courses. All started as planned, though at least two had other visiting professors than announced in the program due to late cancellations. That the courses nevertheless went through as planned is an impressive feat of improvisation.

Course topics were selected by the PSU committee from suggestions made by local professors. The committee members I spoke to did not all list the same criteria, but some that were shared by most were variety, the potential for further collaboration between visiting and local professor, and a fair division of courses over faculties (each faculty that contributed suggestions could organise at least one). One member also said that practicality was a criterion he used. Indeed, topics were more applied than in previous years, with courses in XML webdesign and health education. Still, students in one class complained of the overly theoretical framing of the topic in one social sciences course.

Though repetitions were not forbidden, the committee strived to include as many new courses as possible. Only particularly successful courses were repeated, such as a very popular international law course that was organised now for the fourth time in the PSU. In general, selection of course topics seems to have worked well, leading to an interesting and varied program.

Two critical notes can be placed, though: many courses overlapped with the regular program, and four courses were taught in Albanian only. The fact that some courses in the PSU were highly similar to courses in the regular programme can be awkward for students. UP students who pass the course in the PSU can use the credits thus earned to skip part or all of the regular course. The inflexibility of the program at most UP faculties, however, implies that student cannot use the gained time to do another course, and thus do not actually graduate any faster. Although this is an important drawback of having overlapping UP-PSU courses, local professors I spoke to justified it on the grounds that the PSU course allowed them to redevelop their regular course with more interesting course materials. This is a valid point, but only if the course is organised a single time as a PSU course.

Courses in Albanian go against several of the stated goals of the PSU. Since only students that speak Albanian can attend the course, such courses only stimulate internationalisation when seen very narrowly. Also at the level of university collaboration and curriculum reform, gains are clearly more limited when courses are held in Albanian. The professors of such courses also tend to be isolated from others by the language barrier, as they typically do not speak English. Although collaboration with universities in Albania is clearly a worthwhile goal for UP, it is questionable whether such collaboration could not be just as productive outside PSU. PSU committee members recognised this but said that the limited number of course suggestions from some faculties forced them to take in courses in Albanian. This reviewer doubts whether involving each and every faculty in each and every PSU edition is so important that it justifies spending limited resources on courses that do not fulfil PSU goals.

Recomm. 1. if courses in PSU overlap with courses in the regular UP programme, they should be part of PSU just once.

Recomm. 2. PSU courses taught in Albanian only should be avoided, even if this means not giving each faculty its due.

Selection procedure (and its degree of transparency) of visiting professors, co-professors and students;

The selection of foreign students was done by ATA, in collaboration with UP IRO staff, on the basis of regional spreading, recommendations, and GPA. Local students were rated on qualities such as knowledge of English and GPA, and then selected by the local professor. Although this seems to open the door to favouritism, IRO staff stated that selections was usually done according to the ratings. Both selection procedures seem solid, and delivered a mixed student population for PSU. Perhaps sometimes too mixed: several visiting professors complained of large differences in the level of students. IRO officers would make their own life lighter if they informed visiting professors of the role of their co-professor in the selection.

Local professors were selected only implicitly. Each course suggestion was prepared by a local professor, and it was understood that this person would function as co-professor. With each course suggestion, two names of visiting professors had to be proposed that could co-teach the course. In almost all cases, one of these two was approached for the course. This means that current procedures do not really select professors, or only in as much as the professors are a ground for selecting or rejecting a course suggestion. This, I gleaned from my conversations with PSU members, was the case only to a very limited extent (members expressed a preference for new local professors over those that already taught in a previous PSU edition, but in fact many did). The emphasis on courses in the selection process is defensible in view of other PSU objectives, but it does mean that the focus on training young UP staff, evident in the Proposal for PSU 2005-2007, is lost to some extent.

Given the effort spent on filling each course with the perfect 25 students, it was surprising to find that some courses had substantially lower numbers of students than 25. The explanation was no-shows and last-minute cancellations. It is probably impossible to guarantee that all selected students will show up (though requiring a deposit might help). What is possible, however, is to fill up the empty spaces with local students that applied for the course but did not make the cut. Such students could be placed on a waiting list, and be telephoned on the first day of the course if a selected student did not show up. Professors could be asked to schedule an opening session on the morning of the first day to check attendance, and give the first serious lecture on the second day or on the afternoon of the first day.

Recomm. 3. there should be a waiting list of local students to fill up places left open by no-shows.

Effectiveness of promotion of PSU courses locally, in the region and internationally;

Promotion was clearly very effective, as shown by the huge oversubscription of the available spots. Local students suggested that word of mouth was the main reason they applied, which is a good sign for the future. Visits to neighbouring countries were made to promote the PSU, including a visit to Belgrade. This visit, an initiative of IRO staff, was credited by many I spoke to for the record number of Serbian students participating in the PSU.

Recomm. 4. the excellent efforts to recruit Serbian students should continue in 2007.

Degree of implementation of ECTS;

Implementation of ECTS was exemplary. Course credits were calculated in a transparent way, professors and students were informed well in advance about the system, and diplomas handed out were up to standard. For students at many UP faculties, the credits were not all that useful, however, as programs are too rigid to allow students to offset requirements with the course credits earned at PSU. This is not a failure of PSU, however, but a sign that the implementation of the Bologna action lines in UP is a still ongoing process.

Degree of curriculum/course reform achieved;

Of several courses, I heard that the materials and methodologies developed for the PSU would be used for similar courses in the regular program. Whether the PSU contributed to UP curriculum reform in a wider sense is discussed later in this report.

Degree of recent academic knowledge offered;

The courses visited and of which I inspected materials were all up-to-date.

Teaching methodology used;

Courses I visited all used interactive teaching methods. Students were challenged to enter into discussion in class, were given individual and group assignments, analysed cases, and, in many courses, made site visits. Added should be that the implementation of interactive methods was sometimes less than perfect. I witnessed one interactive class become a veiled ex cathedra lecture because the discussion was too theoretical for most students, and one class became chaotic because several interactive techniques were used through one another, leaving students confused whether they had to go on with a group assignment, or follow a powerpoint presentation. In the latter course, students made a clear distinction between the quality of lectures managed by the two professors. Such issues would not show up in the formal class evaluations of students, as these do not allow students to differentiate between the two professors.

Recomm. 5. class evaluations should allow students to differentiate between the two course professors.

Ethnic diversity of the participants;

Local students, 75% of total, were for the large majority ethnic Albanian, which is not surprising given the ethnic separation currently in place in Kosovo. International students came from every country of ex-Yugoslavia, Albania, Bulgaria and Romania, and some self-financed students from other Central- or Eastern European countries and from Western Europe. Overall diversity is thus good. Individual courses, however, were sometimes less mixed than this. For example, most Montenegrin students ended up in one course, which runs counter to the idea of bringing Kosovar students in contact with a mix of foreign students.

When I asked local organisers what improvement they would like in PSU 2007, inviting more foreign students to it was most often named. Underlying this was a feeling that the student mix was currently skewed too much toward local students. However, since local students are a main target group and foreign students only to a much lesser extent the proportions seem justified.

Recomm. 6. more effort should be made to mix students within courses.

Teaching facilities;

Facilities in most UP classrooms are rather bare, but were sufficient for most courses. Extras such as beamers were available to the professors that needed them, though usually through their own initiative.

Classrooms were often changed in the first week of the PSU. As was the case in previous years, entrance exams for the university were organised at the same time as PSU, and many classrooms were needed for these exams. Although UP has promised many times that the exams would be rescheduled to before the PSU, it seems unable to do so. The problem seems not to be a lack of will, but lack of organisation: each year, entrance exams are organised too late, when there is no time left anymore for smart scheduling.

Practical arrangements such as accommodation for professors and students;

All visiting professors were housed, but many complained about apartments being far from the university and some complained about the quality of the housing. Another complaint was that professors were placed into one apartment that did not have a language to communicate in, e.g. Anglophone and Albanian professors. Most students were housed in the dormitories. Their sole complaint was the very restricted availability of warm water, forcing them to have cold showers on

most days. This is a recurrent problem of PSU (already mentioned in reports on the first edition in 2001), and it strikes this reviewer as rather awkward that no progress has been made on this front. Students from Serbia and Montenegro were housed separately in a hotel due to security concerns.

Some visiting professors complained about communication in advance of the PSU, most notably about unanswered emails. Indeed, IRO staff seems a little complacent about the need for timely information. Visiting professors received a welcome pack with information on the PSU, facilities and Pristina on their arrival. Although this pack was of high quality, it would have been much more useful during preparations for the visit.

Recomm. 7. staff communicating with visiting professors should be instructed to react to emails promptly, even if only to inform that an answer to questions or requests will come later.

Recomm. 8. visiting professors should receive their welcome pack via email some weeks before the start of PSU

Daily course logistics and logistics officers;

Each course had an officer responsible for course logistics. Though some professors complained of lazy or absent logistics officers, most of these seemed to perform fine. Some officers I spoke to or watched in action were impressive in their dedication.

The involvement of co-professors from the UP in preparing and teaching the courses;

Involvement of local professors varied from course to course. In two I visited, no local professor was present. In one, I was told that he had never shown up. In the other, he usually attended class, but functioned as little more than another student. In a third course, the local professor taught the lecture I attended, with mixed results. Of another course, I heard that local and visiting professor had divided up teaching weeks. This is a rather meager interpretation of co-teaching. Although it is difficult to extrapolate beyond the classes I have visited or the professors I have spoken to, a closer monitoring of this aspect seems in order. This could occur during post-PSU debriefings of visiting professors.

One visiting professor proposed abolishing the role of the local professor, and offering instead all local staff a per diem to sit in in classes. Although in this way more UP staff would be involved with the PSU, it is not something I would recommend. Even those local professors that do not show up in class play a valuable role in proposing and preparing for the course.

Recomm. 9. visiting professors should, after the course, be asked to describe exactly what their local coprofessor contributed to the class.

Internal and external evaluation of the summer courses.

Edition 2005 was not evaluated externally. Edition 2006 was (this report is the outcome of that evaluation), and it is to be hoped that the final edition in this funding period -2007- is also evaluated. More important than external evaluation, however, is that proper internal evaluation mechanisms are in place. This is indeed the case. Courses are evaluated by students, and professors are asked for their opinion halfway the course and are debriefed afterwards. This commitment to quality control is impressive. It can only be hoped that these planned evaluations will be executed diligently.

2. Public forums organised

Variety, relevance and format of forums program; Interest in the various debates with particular attention to the participation of PSU students and PSU co-professors and visiting professors;

Six public forums were planned. I attended the fourth. Facilities were excellent, with simultaneous translation available over earphones. Although the topic, poverty reduction in Kosovo, was interesting, two of the three speakers were not very gifted, and the speakers did not interact – or even react to one another. On the whole it was a rather dull affair. Attendance was low; in particular, very

few professors were present. I was informed that the third forum had been a similarly dull affair, while the second, and sixth forum could be more accurately described as cultural performances. The first was cancelled when the very high-level speakers (both the president and prime minister of Kosovo) cancelled on very short notice. On the whole, the public forum schedule made an uninspired, hasty impression.

Recomm. 10. public forums could be organised around a thesis, not a theme, so that there is something to debate (e.g., not “poverty in Kosovo”, but “Kosovo’s economy is too open for its own good”)

Recomm. 11. guests should be invited on the basis of their willingness and ability to discuss and engage with the public.

Recomm. 12. if prestigious speakers are invited (which is of course commendable), cancellations should be calculated in and backup speakers should be arranged.

3. PSU Pre-Training Organised

Relevance and quality of the pre-training weekend for PSU staff and co-professors; Interest in the pre-training weekend by PSU staff and co-professors

My site visit did not overlap with the pretraining weekend, and I could only base myself on hearsay to form an opinion of it. For local professors, the training seemed to have involved mostly proper application of the ECTS system, and seemed to be no undue burden. Several local professors wondered, however, why they were not introduced to their logistics officers (who received training on the same day in the same building), and why local professors were not told what to expect of logistics officers. Training of PSU staff was not evaluated.

Recomm. 13. local professors and logistics officers should be introduced to one another during the pretraining

4. Recreational program organised

Variety and relevance of recreational program (incl. field trips); Interest in the programme from the participating students, co-professors and visiting professors; inter-ethnic composition of the students in the recreational programme.

The recreational program consisted of parties during the week, a football tournament, and excursions in the weekend. Students were very interested in the social program. The visiting professors I spoke to, on the other hand, knew Kosovo, and were therefore not very interested in the excursions. They were very grateful, though, for the opportunity to interact with the local professors and one-another during a dinner organised by PSU staff.

Students of all nationalities participated in the social programme, but unfortunately this did not mean that they mixed very well. I heard that especially visiting students from Slavic-language former Yugoslavian countries were considered by others to bond too much (one expressed it as that she discovered at PSU “...that we [ex-Yugoslavian countries] share so much more than we thought”. These students all slept in the same tent during an overnight excursion, and some formed exclusive teams during the football tournament. Though such reconciliation is touching, it goes against the goals of PSU. To a certain extent, a shared language and (for Serbian students) separate accommodation make such group processes unavoidable. PSU staff could try to counteract them, however, by stimulating bonding according to other lines, for example courses or faculties.

Recomm. 14. grouping along ethnic lines should be counteracted; for example, one could force members of football teams to come from the same course.

Cost-Efficiency of the PSU

The cost efficiency of PSU was assessed in two ways. First, I compared budgets with money spent on similar projects run in the past by ATA, to ascertain that PSU costs were not exorbitant. In addition, I compared costs of different subprojects, uncovering implicit tradeoffs involved in dividing the funds over the subprojects. I used the following budget numbers, calculated from donor contributions (thus excluding in-kind contributions from UP, ATA, and visiting professors).

Activity	direct costs	with overhead allocation*
Office / overhead costs	125 002	
Courses	112 320	220 334
Public forums	3 460	6 787
Pre-training	5 090	9 984
Recreational programme	9 115	17 881

* dividing office and overhead costs over projects using direct costs as a proportion.

Almost all budgeted costs concern the courses. Per course, E 7500 is spent in “marginal costs”, and 17,000 in total costs. Per student, this comes down to E 280 in marginal, 640 in total costs. This compares positively with the E 1,227 spent per student on the International Winter University in Macedonia (IWUM, 2005), but negatively with the E 430 paid per student at the PSU 2004 (both computed with help of to the financial report for the project). These differences are largely due to economies of scale. Overhead / staff costs are similar in all three projects, but they are spread over different numbers of students. At the “cheap” PSU 2004, about the same number of staff organised a summer university with 770 students, while at the IWUM only 200 students attended. This analysis shows that cost efficiency is reasonable, and that to increase it, the scale of PSU should be increased.

This consideration might lead one to the conclusion that other elements of the project should be clipped in favour of organising one more course. However, costs of the public forms, pre-training weekend, and recreational programme are low compared to those of the courses. Lowering the budget for pre-training, recreation and public forums by 50% would allow perhaps two extra courses to be organised, which might be a reasonable trade-off. This is only true, however, if staff input into these activities is indeed proportional to direct costs, which is not something this evaluator can oversee.

The PSU was organised by a small core team of two IRO officers, with part-time support being hired in the months up to and the weeks of the PSU. This seems to be an efficient setup, although it is not immediately clear that the PSU needs dedicated officers throughout the whole year.

Recomm. 15. PSU organisers should consider searching for extra funds, as increasing the scale of PSU would increase cost efficiency.

Recomm. 16. PSU organisers should scrutinise staff time involved in organising forums and recreation, and should consider decreasing both to increase the number of courses.

Sustainability of the PSU

Funding has been arranged for PSU in its present form for the period 2005-2007. This means that an edition in 2007 is secure. The university is clearly committed to PSU: all UP officials I spoke to were proud of the project, and key personnel is under contract. Nevertheless, there is also a surprising amount of fluidity in a project that is so clearly meant to last several years longer. For example, none

of the PSU committee members outside of the IRO office and ATA knew whether they would, in 2007, still be in the committee. Either there is no procedure for the continuation of this rather crucial committee, or there is one but it has not been communicated to the members. Both would be awkward.

University officials expressed a clear resolve to continue with the PSU after 2007. For post-2007 editions, however, funding has not yet been organised. Planning to acquire such funding seems to be in a very early stage.

Recomm. 17. PSU organisers should commence applying for funding for post-2007 editions, if they intend to organise these.

Recomm. 18. UP would benefit from taking a longer planning horizon in organising PSU.

Recomm. 19. the composition of the PSU committee should not be left open at each new edition, but should be planned for the coming years.

Transfer of responsibilities to UP

Throughout the 2005-2007 period, responsibility for organising the PSU is to be transferred from ATA to UP. In 2006, this process was well underway. The IRO office of UP handled planning, budgeting, course selection, publicity, local applications, local student selection, logistics, and daily management during the PSU. With all these responsibilities, involvement of ATA was indeed limited (unlike in 2005, I was told, when oversight was still tighter). Transfer of responsibilities has thus largely occurred, and has been remarkably successful.

Remaining with ATA were applications and selection of foreign students, recruitment of visiting professors, evaluations, reporting to donors, financial oversight, and general oversight. Selection of foreign students was already done in collaboration with IRO staff. Applications of foreign students were entered in ATA's database, which IRO staff could remotely access. IRO staff was shown how selection worked, and anticipated taking over this responsibility in 2007. Contacting potential visiting professors could also be taken over by IRO staff in 2007. This task has been made substantially easier by the fact that local professors are now required to propose visiting professors when making course suggestions. This means that visiting professors are usually already aware that they might be asked by the time the course has been selected for the PSU. Visiting professor contact details are stored in the same database of ATA. For managing contacts with visiting professors and foreign students to wholly go over to UP, IRO staff should start building up its own database. Most efficient would either be for IRO to receive an empty copy of the ATA database, or some sort of hosting agreement, whereby UP staff would continue to use the ATA database, but would somehow be given ownership of information entered into it.

There is little reason why IRO staff could not take over the organisation of student evaluations. Filled-out forms are currently scanned in Amsterdam; perhaps this could occur in Kosovo, as there are Kosovar opinion polling firms that must use similar scanning machines.

Finances are a more thorny topic. Budgeting and financial management was mostly handled by IRO staff. ATA played a supervisory role, which is appropriate given that ATA has a responsibility to its donors. Next to that, ATA also played a more operational role. Many payments at the behest of PSU went through the accounts of ATA, because of dysfunctional payment procedures within UP. Goods can only be procured from approved vendors, only after approval from several officials, and then only after a lengthy delay. IRO staff rightly complained that these procedures were unworkable. Although such procedures can be understood from the need to prevent corruption, they require a more efficient bureaucracy than UP seems to be, and grind down projects such as PSU in which many non-standard purchases must be made. In the world over, universities set up special vehicles to handle such projects, such as incorporated daughters or foundations. These are then required to justify their

expenses after the fact, instead of getting approval for each payment before it is made. If such a vehicle were set up, responsibilities should be very clear, and reporting requirements should be strict and prompt.

Coordination between the partners seems to be going smoothly. It is governed by a very explicit memorandum of understanding that listed responsibilities. ATA has an office in Pristina, and officials on both sides seem well acquainted with one another. Moreover, via ATA's presence in the PSU committee, communication is smooth.

Recomm. 20. in 2007, IRO staff should be given responsibility for the last operational aspects of PSU now in the hands of ATA, with the latter retaining a supervisory role.

Recomm. 21. UP should either revamp its payment procedures, or allow PSU staff to set up a special vehicle to handle donor money and small payments from that donor money.

Strategic project goal

The strategic goals of the PSU are, according to the ToR

- to improve cooperation in the Western Balkans, specifically interuniversity cooperation
- to improve higher education in Kosovo and
- to accelerate the integration of Kosovo into the European Higher Education Area

Does the project live up to its strategic goals? The first goal is attained in some, but not all senses. By exposing Kosovar students to students from countries in the Western Balkans, the PSU will increase understanding of Kosovar students for their neighbouring countries. PSU may also increase the understanding for Kosovo in the neighbouring countries, not only by exposing selected students to Pristina, but also by showing to the whole academic community that Kosovo is more than a problem area, and that UP could actually be a destination for academic transfer. The visit by IRO staff to Belgrade deserves mention here. The staff member was interviewed on radio, and was thus able to show a wide Serbian audience a different side of Kosovo.

Several visiting professors were recruited from Tirana University, and usually had collaborations going with UP professors. Thus interuniversity collaboration with a single Western Balkans country was supported. No visiting professor came from a different Western Balkans university (although one, currently working in Denmark, was from the region). Currently, there is also no collaboration through other channels with universities in the Western Balkans - There is no collaboration around PSU and summer universities organised concurrently with PSU. A UP official described relations between PSU and these summer universities as one of "healthy competition". More direct ways to include interuniversity cooperation in the PSU project could be investigated. One such way, organised this year by ATA, was a get-together of students attending different summer universities, to which a delegation from each PSU course was sent. As the get-together was planned after my site visit, it is not clear what came out of this initiative, but it is the sort of cross-pollination that would increase the impact of all summer universities involved.

It is to the third goal, integrating the Kosovar university education more strongly into the European Education Area, that the PSU seems to make the clearest contribution. PSU offers a venue for local and visiting professor collaborations. Indeed, there were many such collaborations, which often preceded PSU but were strengthened by it. An example is a course in archaeology. The two professors knew each other, but used the PSU to organise a collaborative excavation. Some collaborations were even at the level of institutions: through a professor exchange, PSU offered faculties an opportunity to strengthen ties to foreign partners.

Moreover, PSU offers good UP students an opportunity to gain experience with the international standard in university instruction, to train their English, and to build an international network. Several

students could enter graduate studies at EU or US universities thanks to contacts built up during PSU. Anecdotic evidence suggests that PSU is an asset on the résumé of participating students, and especially of staff involved in PSU. PSU also seems to be, to a large extent, the cork on which floats the university IRO bureau.

The second goal, improving UP education, is impossible to evaluate without detailed study of UP. The following is thus only an impressionistic, subjective assessment. There are several ways in which the PSU can improve UP education. A first is the direct contribution of the courses to UP students' education. A second, and theoretically more important way, is through exposure of local professors and students to new ways of instruction and new procedures. Local professors can develop new teaching styles in the PSU and new materials. Moreover, they are exposed to interactive teaching, new ways of grading students, the ECTS credit system, and student evaluations of courses. Via them, these new ideas could trickle down into the faculties.

Nevertheless, now six editions of the PSU have not eliminated clear deficiencies within UP. In many faculties, most teaching is still *ex cathedra*, with an oral exam several weeks or months after the end of the course. Professors regularly fail 80% of students, thinking that to do otherwise would undermine standards (some might also just be maximising their salary, as the pay-for-exams system makes repeat exams a substantial source of income for professors). Student evaluations have been tried at several faculties, but no staff member I spoke to had ever seen results of these, even of their own classes. ECTS has been introduced at all faculties, but at many this has been a paper reform. Each course has its credits, but the old system is still intact of years that are passed or, if too many exams are failed, repeated.

Although it is impossible to guess what UP would have been without PSU, improvements seem to have been more modest than could have been hoped for. One ground for this might be that simply too few professors are exposed to PSU, or the wrong ones. The 15 UP staff teaching PSU courses often has experience at foreign universities, and the ones I spoke to were very open to novel techniques. They are clearly not what holds UP back. Perhaps ways may be sought to increase the number of UP professors exposed to PSU to increase its impact.

Recomm. 22. new ways have to be found to enhance collaboration between universities in the Western Balkans within summer universities.

Recomm. 23. to involve more staff of UP staff in the PSU, all faculty staff members may be invited to sit in with part of the course. Professors may be asked to furnish a program that could be distributed to staff members.

Recomm. 24. receptions could be organised per faculty in which visiting professors mingle with UP staff members, leading to more possibilities for collaborations.

Conclusions

On the whole, the PSU made an orderly and well-organised impression. Students seemed satisfied with the courses, the social programme, and with the facilities at their disposal. Visiting professors also expressed satisfaction with their work and with the organisation. Moreover, it is my impression that the summer university offered high quality instruction to its students. The social programme seemed to interest students. Public forums, however, can clearly be improved.

Responsibilities have been largely transferred from ATA to staff in the IRO, who was clearly up to most tasks, and performed excellently in some regards (notably in the field of budgeting and publicity). The remaining operational tasks of ATA, foreign student selection, visiting professor contacting, organising evaluations, should also be transferable to IRO staff without many problems. Only completing the transfer of financial management could be problematic, due to dysfunctional procedures within UP. A solution for this problem might be setting up a special vehicle for the PSU.

At an operational level, PSU 2006 is thus clearly a success. At a strategic level, overall results are positive. In its present form, PSU contributes only marginally to regional cooperation at a university level. It does, however, increase contacts at the level of students, and can be said to make students more aware of the situation and outlook of their neighbouring countries. Its contribution to the integration of UP in European higher education is clearly large and positive. The contribution to improving the quality of UP is difficult to evaluate.

Recommendations

Recommendations were listed in the text where they arose. They are here listed again.

1. *if courses in PSU overlap with courses in the regular UP programme, they should be part of PSU just once.*
2. *PSU courses taught in Albanian only should be avoided, even if this means not giving each faculty its due.*
3. *there should be a waiting list of local students to fill up places left open by no-shows.*
4. *the excellent efforts to recruit Serbian students should continue in 2007.*
5. *class evaluations should allow students to differentiate between the two course professors.*
6. *more effort should be made to mix students within courses.*
7. *staff communicating with visiting professors should be instructed to react to emails promptly, even if only to inform that an answer to questions or requests will come later.*
8. *visiting professors should receive their welcome pack via email some weeks before the start of PSU*
9. *visiting professors should, after the course, be asked to describe exactly what their local coprofessor contributed to the class.*
10. *public forums could be organised around a thesis, not a theme, so that there is something to debate (e.g., not "poverty in Kosovo", but "Kosovo's economy is too open for its own good")*
11. *guests should be invited on the basis of their willingness and ability to discuss and engage with the public.*
12. *if prestigious speakers are invited (which is of course commendable), cancellations should be calculated in and backup speakers should be arranged.*
13. *local professors and logistics officers should be introduced to one another during the pretraining*
14. *grouping along ethnic lines should be counteracted; for example, one could force members of football teams to come from the same course.*
15. *PSU organisers should consider searching for extra funds, as increasing the scale of PSU would increase cost efficiency.*
16. *PSU organisers should scrutinise staff time involved in organising forums and recreation, and should consider decreasing both to increase the number of courses.*
17. *PSU organisers should commence applying for funding for post-2007 editions, if they intend to organise these.*
18. *UP would benefit from taking a longer planning horizon in organising PSU.*
19. *the composition of the PSU committee should not be left open at each new edition, but should be planned for the coming years.*
20. *in 2007, IRO staff should be given responsibility for the last operational aspects of PSU now in the hands of ATA, with the latter retaining a supervisory role.*
21. *UP should either revamp its payment procedures, or allow PSU staff to set up a special vehicle to handle donor money and small payments from that donor money.*

22. *new ways have to be found to enhance collaboration between universities in the Western Balkans within summer universities.*
23. *to involve more staff of UP staff in the PSU, all faculty staff members may be invited to sit in with part of the course. Professors may be asked to furnish a program that could be distributed to staff members.*
24. *receptions could be organised per faculty in which visiting professors mingle with UP staff members, leading to more possibilities for collaborations.*