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Introduction to NMUN 2016 : stakeholder perspectives on learning processes and outcomes

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Introduction to *NMUN 2016: Stakeholder Perspectives on Learning Processes and Outcomes*

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1. The Genesis of this Volume

In November 2016, Kobe City University of Foreign Studies generously agreed to host the National Model United Nations (NMUN) simulation event in cooperation with (NCCA). As the NMUN website states:

NMUN draws a diverse group of informed college/university students and faculty from around the world to address current global issues. Our conferences are experiential learning programs that provide students with a better understanding of the inner workings of the UN and a forum to hone skills in diplomacy, negotiation, critical thinking, compromise, public speaking, writing, and research. (NMUN website landing page)

The roots of NMUN start with a League of Nations (the precursor to the United Nations) simulation in 1927, with the transition towards MUN simulations beginning in 1943—a full three years before the ratification of the UN Charter. The conference has grown yearly with the annual New York event being the world's largest. In terms of UN involvement,

NCCA/NMUN has been a recognized Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) associated with the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI) since 1982. NCCA/NMUN has also been a recognized member of UN Academic Impact since 2013. Numerous NMUN conference speakers work for the UN. We have been privileged to have UN Secretaries-General Ban Ki-moon, Kofi Annan, and Boutros Boutros-Ghali; and Deputy Secretaries-General Amina J. Mohammed and Jan Eliasson serve as keynote speakers. UN officials have also served as advisory group members, and many student delegations meet with their official national delegations during the conference. UN facilities, including the General Assembly Hall, are generally used on the last day of our New York conferences. (NMUN About us page)

Since 2008 annual global conferences have been held in many diverse locations: Xi'an, China; Quito, Ecuador; Olomouc, Czech Republic; Lille, France; Galapagos Islands; Songdo, Korea; and Rome, Italy to name just a few. Kobe, Japan won the bid for NMUN 2016 and joined that elite list of global conferences. Since this was a first for Japan, it was felt that the pioneering efforts of the NMUN 2016 conference committee and a range of other stakeholders needed to be properly put into the public record. Hence, the present volume came into being.

2. Explanation of the Theme

The theme of this volume serves two purposes. On the one hand, the first section of the volume looks into processes required to prepare and launch an event like NMUN. However, as it is also important to consider the outcomes of such an event, the second half of the volume takes this other perspective. The next sections provide further exploration of the two distinct yet intertwining parts that articulate this theme.

2.1 Part one: Stakeholder perspectives on learning processes

The preparation for and launch of an international MUN event requires attention to a large number of components and the cooperative efforts of many stakeholders. In order to appreciate the complexity of this undertaking, it is important to first delineate the various components and how they intertwine/overlap with each other. Then, each of the components should be described and analyzed from the perspective of a major stakeholder for that specific component.

2.2 Part two: Perspectives on learning outcomes to inform 'smart' practices

Perspectives on learning outcomes as told by participants, observers, and interested stakeholders allow for a deeper appreciation of the completed event and offer suggestions/directions for future smart practices. The reason 'smart' is the designation rather than 'best' stems from the rather subjective and hence vague quality of the word. It may be impossible to determine some universal 'best' so it may be more generally helpful to describe what worked well in a particular context, to reflect on how it may be improved and then term it a smart or (at least) promising practice. According to Bardach (2012) generating public value at the lowest cost possible is one of the main driving forces of smart practices. It also "involves challenging assumptions" and "breaking loose from conventions" (p. 114) to a certain degree. He also notes that in order to transfer smart practices to other contexts it is important to have identified the essence of the practice so

that it can be adapted sensitively. Therefore, this volume aspires to uncover the core essence of NMUN 2016 so that the lessons learned and practices established may encourage and inform future NMUN event planners.

3. The Papers in this Volume

Reflecting the two-part theme, this volume is divided into two sections. The first section brings to life the complexity and details of the NMUN 2016 event itself. The second reflects more broadly on the learning that such an event invariably brings to all the stakeholders involved and offers not only internally generated suggestions for improvement but outsider perspectives that promote best practices.

3.1 Stakeholder perspectives on learning processes

The first chapter in this section, (Overview: Hosting the National Model United Nations Japan 2016, Lori ZENUK-NISHIDE) is a summary of the components and committees that made up the NMUN 2016 team. The chapter will help the reader to better understand and appreciate the remaining chapters in part one. Chapter Two (Large Delegation Preparation through Co-Teaching and Co-Learning, jointly authored by Lori ZENUK-NISHIDE and Craig SMITH) offers a rare glimpse into pre-MUN event work that student delegates, in cooperation with their teacher/coaches and other mentors. The next chapter (Pedagogical Meaning of the Cultural Visit for the Host University Volunteers: Through the Eyes of Leaders, Ken TAMAI) uses a reflective practice perspective to understand and interpret the events experienced by the cultural tour team. This is followed by a chapter (Stakeholder Perspectives on NMUN Ceremonies, Donna TATSUKI) that reflects on the growth and learning by the ceremonies group, which was tasked with giving the overall NMUN event a beginning, an end, and a public face. Chapter Six (The UN Forum and Faculty Lecture at NMUN: Bringing Expertise to MUN Simulations, jointly authored by Donna TATSUKI and Lori ZENUK-NISHIDE) explains the purpose and position of expert briefings in UN meetings and describes how expert briefings were accomplished via two events. Chapter Seven (National Model United Nations and the First Student Press Corps: With a Thought on Journalism Education at Japanese Universities, Atsuko SHIGESAWA) will report on the preparation and experience of the press team before, during and after NMUN 2016. The final two chapters in this section offer perspectives from NMUN stakeholders who brought delegates from overseas to participate (NMUN Japan 2016: Sustaining Multilateralism, Cross-cultural Learning and Domestic Cooperative Internationalism, Chaldeans MENSAH) and (A Wonderful Experience in

Japan for the German Joint Delegations from Erfurt and North Rhine-Westphalia, jointly authored by Sarah DURYEA and Thomas WEILER).

3.2 Perspectives on Learning Outcomes to Inform Best Practices

The second section of this volume casts its net wide in order to capture and present an array of views. It shows how challenging the norm and breaking loose from assumptions, growth is achieved and innovation is secured. The opening chapter in this section, (Improving the Interactions of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) Users and Native Speakers of English, Donna TATSUKI) reports on a rarely examined aspect of the communicational problems faced by ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) users, which are caused by Native Speakers of English in MUN simulations. She recommends that the onus no longer be placed on ELF users to adapt but rather, that Native Speakers be trained in accommodation strategies and made more aware of their own culpability in any communication difficulties that occur. The next chapter, (Diversity as a Catalyst for Competency Development through Model United Nations Classes, Andreas MÜGLICH & Anna SEIDEL) describes how personal competency development can be enhanced by diversity in classroom and through the project National Model United Nations. This theme of delegate preparation is also the topic of the next chapter (Model UN Class at University of Trier and Erfurt, Germany, Ronny HEINZE) but differs both in terms of location and style. Nevertheless they both show that there is a strong connection between MUN participation and the ever crucial development of global citizenship.

References

Bardach, E. (2012). *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*. London: Sage.