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The Erasmus+ funded trip to the Open University of the University of Jyväskylä was by all measures an edifying and enjoyable experience. The two primary hosts - Dr Virpi Uotinen and Minna Kallinen-Kuisma, had put together a wide-ranging programme in which my three FernUniversität colleagues and I learnt much about the Finnish higher education system; the history of the teacher training 'seminary', the Open University and the University of Jyväskylä; the institution's involvement in EADTU; the newly refurbished library; student support services; the role of the Centre for Multilingual Academic Communication; virtual language exchanges; Digivisio 2030 and much else besides.

The political upheavals of the past two centuries did little to break the bonds between Scandinavian and Continental scholars; thus, the Finnish education system bears a striking resemblance to that of Germany – not only in its overall liberal leanings, but also in the particularities of the structure of higher education institutions. One aspect that did differ markedly, however, is that it is usual in Finland for each bricks and mortar university to also run an Open University whereby the same curricula is available for distance learners.

In light of our work at studyFIT, an area that was of particular interest to Dr André Biederbeck and myself was the student support services on offer at the Open University of the University of Jyväskylä. They too have wide-ranging support services for training students in subject-centred competencies; however, the measures they take to bolster their students' resilience and to cater to their psychosocial needs are beyond compare. An onsite chaplain, godmothers, 'goodies' and even a motley troop of staff members' dogs are co-opted to serve in various therapeutic roles. The reason so much attention is paid to student wellbeing is that the Finnish state subsidies for higher education are based, in part, on completion rates, such that stemming the tide of attrition is a matter of urgent concern and is addressed in various creative ways.

For the FernUniversität's English Learning Support project, garnering information on virtual exchanges from Dr Judit Hahn was a key item on the agenda. The hour-long interchange was not only inspirational, but it also yielded some practical leads to enhance the operations of our fledgling English Café.

Overall, our hosts are to be commended for providing us with substantial input. The programme also allowed for informal discussions and some free time which we spent exploring the campus-based Museum of Central Finland, visiting the famous Panda sweet shop and walking around the Jyväskylä pedestrian precinct. The welcome dinner, hosted by the Open University Director Dr Jukka Lerkkanen, was a fine introduction to Finnish cuisine.

In addition to thanking our Finnish hosts, I would also like to thank the FernUniversität in Hagen's International Office for facilitating the visit.