

London Program: A Challenge for Excellence

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The London program run by Global COE was fairly challenging for me; however it was a wonderfully fulfilling experience. The success of the program, I think, owes to the well-prepared pre-program sessions, the friendly atmosphere of the British hosts and the positive attitude of the GCOE members.

The pre-program sessions were demanding but were helpful in preparing for the actual programs in England. Preparations actually began in December 2007 in which we wrote three English papers for IOE, PEGB and INPE, the contents of which were all different. In February, a month before leaving for London, the preparation program kindly offered the Japanese participants a rehearsal session that allowed us to make presentations in front of the professors from the Institute of Education, London University of London. The assignments were difficult but provided thorough preparation for the London sessions.

I also would like to note the sincere and friendly responses of the IOE people at the session. I was nervous for my own presentation, especially considering that I was the only student given the privilege to attend this program outside of the Department of Education, as I am from the School of Human and Environmental Studies with a non-philosophical background. My research topic is about spirituality but the method stands on empirical science. This was my first time to speak in the area of philosophy of education and the presentation style was new for me. Furthermore, I had to concentrate to understand British English, which is less familiar for me.

My respondent was a graduate student studying compassion and altruism. Her presentation added the philosophical point of view on my topic of spiritual health education. She also gave me some British references to cite in my research papers, which I appreciated. Several active comments and questions from the floor indicated their interest in my presentation and the topic. I could not answer these questions sufficiently at that moment, but still I was able to convey what I wanted to explain, thanks to their sincere and friendly attitudes. Actually, I was mostly nervous and spoke without thinking, as if someone else was speaking. When Prof. Saito said that my response was good, I was glad to hear her positive comments but could not remember what I actually answered. I missed a valuable opportunity to deepen the discussion in that case due to nervous tension.

It was only after I came back from London, that I could really appreciate the contents of the discussion. Some of the scholars I met in London and Oxford sent me long emails, which might lead to fruitful discussions.

The high quality of the London program was attributable not only to the students' own abilities but also to the atmosphere that had been created among members with excellent teachers; mutual trust, support and severe but positive encouragement. I experienced a good example of the group dynamic effect, as the participants are from various departments, such as the School of Education, and was impressed by the

professional educational strategy employed by the IOE, University of London.

This program gave me the academic opportunity to broaden my perspectives as a researcher as well as direct communication with some of the field's top scholars. This GCOE program lives up to its name as a 'centre for excellence.' I would like to express my appreciation to the staff for implementing this program and to the members for sharing this invaluable experience with me.



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