

***Study Abroad Program:
Case Study for Career Program***

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Abstract

In this paper, I introduce Study Abroad Program as tacit knowledge. In Japan, classes are often offered in the didactic lecture style where many students are enrolled, and they began to promote a more “Active Learning” style in classes only recently. It is imperative to motivate students and maximize their willingness to work and study. Listening to professionals and experts firsthand accounts of their purpose of career at their working place is a precious lesson for students.

Keywords: Study Abroad Program, Tacit Knowledge, Active Learning

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Introduction

At universities in Japan, classes are often offered in the didactic lecture style where many students are enrolled, and it is only recently that they began to promote a more “Active Learning” style in classes. Examples of an active learning style include students preparing and giving presentations, then taking part in discussions and debates, or colleges offering experience-based classes such as domestic and overseas fieldwork and volunteering. More universities have started offering internship programs where students visit companies, collect information, conduct research, and find agendas on their own, then seek clues to address these problems through hands-on experience.

Professional skills development in Japan has excessively relied on corporate education and training. In Japan, students study general academic subjects at universities that are less relevant to work, and they receive professional training at companies with their on-the-job training programs. Listening to professionals and experts firsthand accounts of their purpose of career at their working place is a precious lesson for students. Moreover, it is universities’ mission to provide students with professional skills training coupled with career development opportunities, and that effort requires an interdisciplinary approach beyond departmental boundaries. Many Japanese youth quit their job without building a career. If this condition continues, Japan will fall into a critical situation where companies are unable to find competent professionals who serve as central roles in organizations.

Chapter 1 Introduction of Study Abroad Program

Chapter 1.1 Outline of the program

The program which the author serve as a coordinator for the program, aims to cultivate general capabilities (cognitive, theoretical, social, and cultural skills as well as broad knowledge and experience) through students’ own proactive quest with active learning. The program entails discovery learning, problem-solving learning, experience learning, and explorative learning. It offers two credits and entails completing pre- and post-training guidance in Japan, overseas training at local companies, and compiling a final report. The program started in 2008, and so far has conducted overseas training sessions in California, US (2008, 2009), Paris, France (2010), San Francisco/ Silicon Valley, California, US (2011), and New York City, US (2012 – 2016), with a total of 69 participating students.

Students who enrolled in the Business Communications II (credit course) can participate in this program. The Business Communications II aims to teach business communication skills that are the foundation and basic requirements for global business people, and are imperative for smooth interaction and transaction with colleagues and clients from a variety of backgrounds. Furthermore, it aims to teach cross-cultural communication skills and presentation skills that are essential for global business persons to exercise leadership, especially when major Japanese companies such as Toyota and Nissan rely on more than 70% of their sales from countries outside of Japan in a progressively globalized world economy. The program invites instructors with experience in international businesses to teach with a hands-on learning approach, as well as industry experts operating globally as guest speakers to

give lectures. Moreover, in response to a pre-training guidance request from students, the program invites a master of international protocols to teach table manners and etiquette at a French restaurant with a full-course dinner.

Chapter 1.2 Case Study: New York in 2016

The training took place in early February for 8 nights and 10 days. The purpose of the program was to visit and talk with employees at local companies and a law office in New York City, a creative city in an advanced media nation. The participating students were encouraged to learn about current businesses conditions and the purpose of working overseas, and to utilize the findings for their own career planning by understanding the importance and value of having expertise in a region as diverse as New York City. Below is the summary of the program in New York.

Day 1

All day: Visit commercial facilities in New York City: The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), The New York Public Library, Broadway musical theatres, luxury brand stores, etc.

Day 2

Morning: Orientation at Global Labo
Afternoon: The United Nations (UN) tour
Evening: The Ride NYC bus tour

Day 3

Morning: Visit and lecture at Moses & Singer LLP, a New York City law firm
Afternoon: Visit Columbia University and campus tour

Day 4

Morning: Courtesy visit to Consulate General of Japan in New York
Afternoon: Lecture at JETRO (Japan External Trade Organization) New York office
Evening: Lectures from Japanese guest speakers working in New York at Global Labo

Day 5

Morning: Visit and lecture at Bloomberg
Afternoon 1: Lecture at the Permanent Mission of Japan to the UN
Afternoon 2: Debate at PricewaterhouseCoopers LLC. (PwC)

Day 6

Morning: Alexander Technique lesson and lecture at Global Labo
Afternoon: Lecture at Kodansha USA Inc.
Evening: Cross industry networking at Global Labo

Day 7

All day: Visit of cultural facilities in New York

Day 8:

Departure to Japan

Chapter 2 Discussion

According to the knowledge management theory advocated by Dr. Ikujiro Nonaka “There are two types of knowledge: tacit and explicit.”ⁱ In this theory, the knowledge conversion model, SECI in which tacit knowledge is shared through collaboration with others (Socialization) and converted into a shareable form of explicit knowledge (Externalization), then explicit knowledge is combined with other explicit knowledge (Combination) to create new knowledge. As the new knowledge is acquired and mastered through experience and practice, it becomes one’s tacit knowledge (Internalization)ⁱⁱ, assumes new knowledge is created through interaction between tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge, and is converted from individual knowledge into shared organizational knowledge. This interaction between tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge is essential for knowledge creation within organizations, and organizational knowledge creation is therefore a spiraling interactive process between these two types of knowledge. It is important for individual’s knowledge to interact with the organization at large since it provides the opportunity to nurture innovation and to create competitive advantages. Dr. Nonaka states that this is a key factor contributing to Japanese companies that succeeded in the global society in such a short period.

Tacit knowledge is the knowledge that individuals implicitly possess yet are unable or find difficult to externalize by writing or verbalizing. The concept of tacit knowledge was originally developed and introduced by a Hungarian physical chemist and philosopher, Michael Polanyi (1891-1976) in *Personal Knowledge* (1958) and *The Tacit dimension* (1966) which he described “we can know more than we can tell.”

For example, when scientists, artists, or athletes exhibit exceptional breakthroughs or performance, it is difficult for them to explain how they “knew” what it required them to do in order to make the achievement. Likewise, just because one can recognize someone’s face, it doesn’t mean that it is easy to explain how he or she recognizes the face and describe the details of the face to someone else. It is also difficult to explain how one can ride a bicycle, even if one can ride it with ease. These skills related to recognition, physical accomplishment, and unique talents are composed of small specific elements such as the way you put your feet on the pedals of a bicycle, the way you shift your body weight, etc. But, laying out all these specific small details does not mean he or she explained how to ride a bicycle. Those mastered the skill of riding a bicycle “know” how to ride a bicycle which is not just composed of small details, and that knowledge which is “unable to externalize by writing or verbalizing” is tacit knowledge. On the other hand, objective and rational knowledge that can be verbalized and/or externalized into things like mathematical formulas, graphic charts, and manuals, etc., and is conveyable and sharable is called explicit knowledge.

Education in Japanese universities typically offer classes to disseminate explicit knowledge. However, they do not offer experience-based classes to nurture tacit knowledge, making it difficult for students to connect what they learned in the class into more subjective and personalized knowledge. Students build foundations by taking classes and achieving explicit knowledge, and then convert the explicit knowledge into tacit knowledge through hands-on experience like this overseas career

training. Then, this new tacit knowledge is converted into new explicit knowledge by the spiraling interactive process. It becomes imperative for students to learn how to increase and advance their own tacit knowledge.

In the study abroad program, students gain explicit knowledge in the classroom prior to the trip, then while they are in New York, they achieve both tacit and explicit knowledge through hands-on experiences. Later they combine the newly learned knowledge with explicit knowledge they already have, and internalize their New York experience to make it their own tacit knowledge. Therefore, students can combine explicit knowledge with tacit knowledge and tacit knowledge with explicit knowledge, which enables them to further progress and find new ways to apply knowledge. Such mechanism of interactions between tacit and explicit knowledge in the SECI model where you can experience both types of knowledge is extremely important. Thus, this study abroad program establishes a new form of learning to instill the cyclical knowledge management model as seen in the SECI model.

The Council on Promotion of Human Resource for Globalization Development organized by Japan's Cabinet Office listed the requirements for global human resources as the followingⁱⁱⁱ: linguistic and communication skills, self-direction and positivity, a spirit for challenge, cooperativeness and flexibility, a sense of responsibility and mission, understanding of other cultures and a Japanese identity, a broad and well cultivated mind and profound expertise, willingness to find and solve problems, team-work and leadership skills (in bringing together persons of various backgrounds), public-mindedness, moral sensibilities, media-literacy, presentation skills, and creativity and originality. The activities of study abroad program are compared to the above-mentioned factors along with international protocol, another factor the author considers important. Taking particular note of the four elements; tacit knowledge, explicit knowledge, the requirements for global human resources, and the requirements for domestic human resources, each activity was evaluated and quantified by our own criteria to determine the degree it is associated with these four elements. The criteria were generated by taking the criteria of knowledge management and knowledge creation processes into consideration (Table 1). Furthermore, when the activities were sorted into tacit knowledge, explicit knowledge, global requirements or domestic requirements, most of them were placed somewhere between tacit knowledge and global requirements (Table 2).

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Table 1: Comparison chart of the activities of the overseas career training and tacit knowledge & the global human resources requirements

[The Activities of the Overseas Career Training]

- 1 The Museum, Public Library, Broadway musical theatres
- 2 The United Nations (UN) tour
- 3 The Ride NYC bus tour
- 4 Moses & Singer LLP
- 5 Columbia University campus tour
- 6 Courtesy visit to Consulate General of Japan
- 7 JETRO (Japan External Trade Organization) New York office
- 8 Japanese guest speakers working in New York
- 9 Bloomberg
- 10 The Permanent Mission of Japan to the UN
- 11 PricewaterhouseCoopers LLC. (PwC)
- 12 Alexander Technique lesson
- 13 Kodansha USA Inc.
- 14 Cross industry networking (guest speaker: Mr. Yoroku Adachi, CEO of Canon USA)
- 15 V Indoor complexes such as Chelsea Market, Macy's.
- 16 Business communication class and pre- and post-training guidance

[Global Human Resources Requirements]

- A. Linguistic skills
- B. Communication skills
- C. International protocol
- D. Self-direction
- E. Positivity
- F. Spirit for challenge
- G. Cooperativeness
- H. Flexibility
- I. Understanding of other cultures
- J. Japanese identity
- K. Broad and well cultivated mind and profound expertise
- L. Willingness to find and solve problems
- M. Team-work
- N. Leadership skills
- O. Public-mindedness and moral sensibilities
- P. Media-literacy
- Q. Presentation skills
- R. Creativity and originality

In this program, it is also essential to foster human resources that one can trust and rely on. For that goal, students must be able to think critically without prejudice, and assert their opinions clearly. In order to articulate one's opinion on a timely manner and persuade others, logical thinking and debate skills, as well as English fluency to communicate ideas are all crucial, hence these skills must be trained in early years. Japanese students often tend not to speak up even when they have their own opinions due to their shyness and fear of making mistakes, or fear of standing out in public. Likewise, teaching them explicitly at home and school the importance of actively speaking up is a good thing to do.

Structured and integrated explicit knowledge that academic courses at universities provide is objective and rational knowledge. In order for students to acquire this, our overseas career training is highly effective as it entails an active learning method through hands-on experience and practice which efficiently converts explicit knowledge into tacit knowledge.

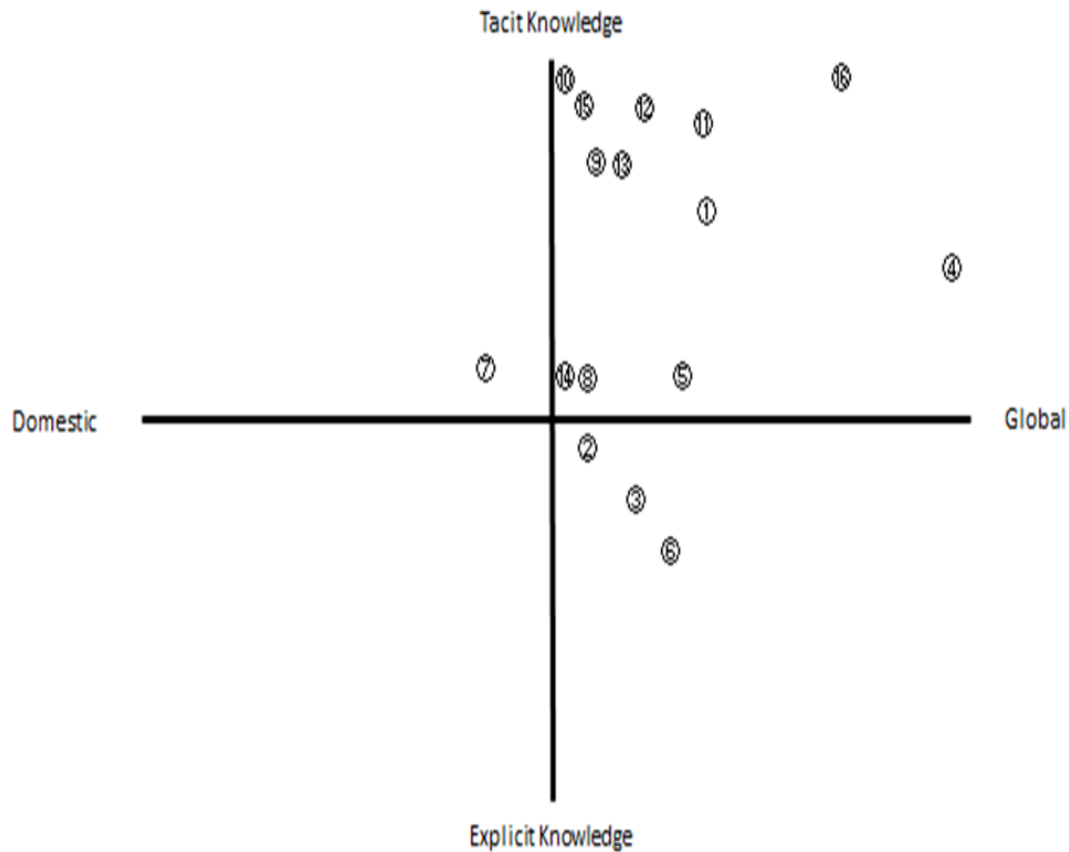


Table 2: Categorization of the Activities of the study abroad program

Conclusion

Many students reported that they would like to brush up on their English skills and become fluent communicators overseas, suggesting that they are no longer hesitant about utilizing English and have become more confident. Furthermore, upon their return from the overseas career training, they enrolled not only in English classes, but also international-relations classes, deepening their ability to understand more specific and concrete global agendas. They became more open to overseas travel, and many students started traveling alone by themselves. They now actively select and find employment at companies operating worldwide. Along with the changes in environment surrounding companies and youth, teaching students not only basic academic skills and specialized knowledge but also communication skills to collaborate with others has become increasingly more important than ever.

The reports submitted by students who participated in the New York illustrate how much they were inspired and learned, even more so than we the professors had expected. These students will start participating in recruiting activities later this year.

It was a great opportunity and the right timing for the students to consider their future. It would be meaningful to conduct a survey after their graduation, and find out which aspects of the training were beneficial and influential to their later career, and then reflect the findings onto the planning of future trainings.

The fact that roughly 80% of freshmen and sophomores in Japan have never considered their career choice^{iv} suggests the important role career education and placement support can play in colleges. Career education and placement support should be offered from the freshmen year instead of the junior and senior years. Many colleges in Japan still don't recognize career education courses and placement support guidance for credits. As a result, it is only when students enter the junior and senior year that they become serious about the job search; however, colleges should offer career education classes as basic requisites with credits as soon as students enter the college, and offer detailed instructions and off-campus career related opportunities such as internship programs with active learning approaches during their freshmen and sophomore years.

In recent years, more colleges have started to engage in career education efforts. Nonetheless, students' utilization and participation in career education activities is limited, and it is not well integrated into a whole college education from entry to graduation in a four-year program. The study abroad program with the active learning approach is highly valuable and influential for students not only as career education activities, but also for their lives at large. The program offers students the opportunity to engage in conversations with professionals and experts, to actually visit their offices, and to learn in a group work setting overseas. The active learning approach enables students to engage in independent and proactive learning, and to cultivate general capabilities (cognitive, theoretical, social, cultural skills) as well as broad knowledge and experiences. It entails discovery, problem-solving, experiential, and explorative learning, all which make the whole learning experience more satisfying. It is highly recommended to incorporate an overseas internship program with the active learning approach into the curriculum, especially during early college years. It would motivate students to envision their career goals and plans earlier, and serve as the catalyst for building a stronger foundation for becoming more proactive and independent individuals who can thrive in the recruitment activities following their junior year.

References

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Endnotes

ⁱ Ikujiro Nonaka and Hirotaka Takeuchi. (1996) *Chisiki Souzou Kigyou (The Knowledge-Creating Company., Katsuhiko Umemoto trans.)*. Tokyo, Japan. Toyo Keizai Inc.

ⁱⁱ Socialization is the process of acquiring and communicating tacit knowledge through collaboration. Externalization is the process of converting tacit knowledge into a shareable form of explicit knowledge. Combination is the process of combining explicit knowledge with other explicit knowledge to create new knowledge. Internalization is the process of acquiring and mastering newly created explicit knowledge through experience and practice.

ⁱⁱⁱ The Council on Promotion of Human Resource for Globalization Development (June 22nd 2011) *An Interim Report of The Council on Promotion of Human Resource for Globalization Development*. Retrieved from

http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/global/1206011interim_report.pdf

^{iv} Yuki Mochizuki (2012) *Dai Nikai Daigakusei no Gakushu/ Seikatsu Jittai Chousa Houkokusho. Daigaku ni okeru Keito-teki na Career Kyoiku/Shien no Hitsuyosei*, Tokyo, Japan: Benesse Educational Research & Development Institute.