

Important Factors for an Effective Implementation of Students' Planned Activities

Marin Kawase
Nihon Fukushi University
nw160161@n-fukushi.ac.jp

Risa Takimura
Nihon Fukushi University
nw160237@n-fukushi.ac.jp

Abstract: We designed one-month study tours in the Philippines by ourselves to support Japanese-language education. Through this experience, we consider how we, university students, can do better as a volunteer of Japanese language classes, and improve our own skills. It is necessary for volunteers to know about their needs and seeds. Therefore, we applied Kolb's experiential learning model and repeated the cycle a few times. Through such an effort, we found it would be effective to observe the local students hard for long period of time. We can observe them even outside their classes because we are not teachers, and easier to build casual relationship. As a result, the observation leads to improve the quality of our activities and the language skills of both us and local students.

Keywords: higher education, experiential learning, Japanese language education, volunteer

INTRODUCTION

We designed one-month study tours in the Philippines by ourselves to support Japanese-language education. We reflect on these activities as a student to discuss important factors for an effective implementation of study tour program. We analyze two study tour programs that each of the authors designed for ourselves. One is the support of Japanese-language education in Mindanao Kokusai Daigaku (MKD, meaning Mindanao International College) in Davao, the Philippines, which has a course of Japanese education, and the other is the support of Japanese-language education in Cebu, the Philippines.

In these programs, we have two research questions. One is "What is important to improve the quality of activities as a volunteer?" The other is "What is good learning for each other?"

METHOD

To achieve effective experiential learning, several learning models are proposed. The most widely referenced experiential learning model, proposed by Kolb (1984), is composed of a four-stage process of "concrete experience," "reflective observation," "abstract hypotheses," and "active testing." In this study, we hypothesized that repeating the Kolb's experiential learning model cycle would be effective to improve the quality of volunteer activities and practiced based on this idea. First, we conducted what we planned before coming on the site and assessed the experiences. Then, we renewed plans based on the assessment (observation and reflection), and engaged

in volunteer works based on the renewed plans. We analyze how these efforts affected to our volunteer works.

RESULTS

Activities in Davao

The typical procedures of an experiential learning are composed of three steps: pre-learning, fieldwork experiences on the spot and post learning; hence, one of the authors prepared the presentation to introduce about Japan for volunteer at MKD as part of pre-learning. However, based on Kolb's model, she carefully observed her experience at MKD, and it became evident that she needed to change her original plan to use that presentation while she had observed their lessons and having a close relationship with them. Figure 1 shows the scene when she observed Japanese lesson as "concrete experience." In holidays, she visited many places with them and they chatted in English and Japanese. Through such conversation, she obtained various information and their real feeling. They rarely use Japanese outside classes. It is said that Japanese people do not have many opportunities to use English. Comparing with our experience to their situation, she thought that it is a point of resemblance. She found that it is important to make a good relationship with them not only a supporter in Japanese-language education but also an overseas friend. So, she tried hard to observe in outside classes too.



Figure 1. Picture in Japanese language lesson class.

Activities in Cebu

In Cebu, she contacted with students in the Philippines to investigate what they would like to know about Japan. She prepared a presentation based on that. In the field, she helped Japanese lesson. Figure 2 shows a picture with students there.

There were many cases where she could not understand Japanese as they were learning outdated words not used in Japan nowadays, and intonation was also awkward. Therefore, she thought they should use easy and simple words for communication purpose. Through this training, it seemed that Japanese learners acquired daily conversation skills and increased vocabulary were quickly.



Figure 2. Picture with Japanese language learners.

DISCUSSION

It seemed difficult for the Japanese language class students to understand the differences of grammar and a nuance of expression. It is also difficult for us to answer the questions for that since it is almost impossible to describe such complicated notions clearly in English.

Japanese language education also contributes to the relationships among people who live in this planet. Including the Philippines, many Asian students can speak English very well while studying Japanese. It might be the better way to use two languages and try to communicate deeply each other for further understanding. We can build a good relationship. The

examples above suggest that it is important for students to find out what Japanese language learners really need and flexibly respond to the needs of learners from observation through various ways such as observation of the classes and informal communication with them. These efforts would also be important factors since the skill to identify a client's needs and solutions is one of the important business skills to students for their future.

When we carry out "Kolb's experiential learning theory", we need to make aware of the real learning that students need on the stage of reflection. That means we decide the contents of activities from observing classes and communicating with them outside classes. As a result, we can contribute to high-quality supports and it becomes a good activity for us.

CONCLUSION

We consider the support that we, university students, can do as a volunteer of Japanese language classes. We observed the students and extracted information from them. We realized that we could obtain much information from observing. It improved the quality of the support. The students of Japanese language class can also get benefit from the better supports. Moreover, we increase opportunities one another to use Japanese and English. Therefore, it leads to improve our language skills.

When we, university students, support students who learn Japanese language, we need to know about the support that they want us to do. Through this study, it was implied that the repeating the Kolb's experience learning was effective for this purpose and to improve the quality of support.

REFERENCES

- Kolb, D. A. (1984) *Experiential Learning as the Science of Learning and Development*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.