

Problem Solving of the Extracurricular Activity in Higher Education: Focusing on ICT Usage of Undergraduate Students Sustaining International Volunteer Activity

Shion SAITO
Meisei University
syonmeimei08@gmail.com

Daichi TAKAHASHI
Meisei University
issunbousi12244@gmail.com

Hinano YAMADA
Meisei University
nano0718shiii@gmail.com

Takayuki KONNO
Meisei University
konno@t-konno.net

Yuka HAYASHI
Meisei University
lovedell.1110m@gmail.com

Abstract: The purpose of this research was to address some to the problems faced by Japanese undergraduate students serving as international volunteers, with particular focus on how students use ICT to help solve these problems. A questionnaire survey of 13 undergraduate students currently serving as international volunteers was conducted. The participants' free description responses were analyzed using the KJ method. Five key points were identified based on three comprehensive considerations. This research's findings should lead to an improvement in the quality of Japan's international student volunteers and contribute positively to other international volunteers in higher education.

Keywords: Higher Education, Extracurricular Activity, International Volunteers, Undergraduate Students

INTRODUCTION

Recently, the qualities and abilities required in the Japanese society of the future have been summarized as a "Zest for Living." One of the necessary elements in this conception is the spirit of social contribution such as volunteerism (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology: MEXT 2008). Others elements include an awareness that one is a member of the international community, a prosperous culture, a spirit of understanding and respect for different cultures, identity as a Japanese, and the ability to communicate in other languages.

Japanese universities have been encouraged to teach students the important relationships between career education and volunteer activities. In response, "subjects mainly aimed at volunteering" have been introduced (Nagamura 2006). This research focuses on the learning necessary to acquire the kind of "Zest for Living" that will underpin the future Japanese society, with particular attention given to the present situation of university students serving as international volunteers. Previous research on international volunteers in higher education has revealed several concerning issues. For example, the low relatively low level of international awareness on the part of Japanese students has created problems for NGOs/NPOs operating overseas. On the university side, little information about accepting organizations

has been made available to students (Kishi and Yoshida 2014). Both are "disturbing factors" that limit the success of Japanese international volunteers (Sato *et al.* 2010).

To encourage university students to pursue international volunteer work, we need to address the lack of contact with the recipient organizations and the insufficient collection of relevant information by Japanese universities. To promote interest, it will be necessary to create an environment that makes it easier for students to volunteer. For university students who serve as international volunteers, we need to find effective problem-solving methods. Recognizing that today's students use a variety of media in their daily lives, this research considered which types of media can best be used to address the problems that students are likely to encounter as international volunteers. Here, media is defined as the means by which individuals communicate with one another, particularly social networking (Nakahashi 2014).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this research was to clarify the problem-solving through extracurricular activity for undergraduate students involved in international volunteer activity, focusing on students media use.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data collection

An online questionnaire was administered to thirteen university students (seven male and six females, ages 19 to 23) enrolled in Meisei University in Tokyo. The students were all involved in ongoing international volunteer work. The contents of the questionnaire were as follows. "Problems faced by university students who continue international volunteer activities for children and problem solving using media."

The questionnaire distinguished between problems at the preliminary preparation stage and on-site problems, identified possible solutions, and gathered information on media use. We identified the main media used by the students, drawing a distinction between analog and digital media. Based on the experience of the research targets, we sought to determine what university students should know in advance in order to facilitate their international volunteer activities.

Data analysis

The data were analyzed using the KJ method (Kawakita, 1967). The KJ method is a recognized way of organizing and stringing together stored associated information together for analysis. By applying this method, we considered the information from a variety of angles rather than simply aggregating the interviews together. The analysis was conducted in six phases.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As a result of the analysis, the following five points were determined:

- (a) The information shortage problem in the preparation stage could be solved using various media—primarily friends and smartphones.
- (b) Unanticipated problems at the travel destination could be settled flexibly by consulting with an acquaintance who was in the field rather than friends.
- (c) There were three common problems in advance preparation and travel destinations which were solved by using digital media.
- (d) While visiting at the travel destinations, the use of smartphones to communicate with friends decreased significantly and the use of media to communicate with acquaintances increased.
- (e) There are three essential knowledge sources that need to be used by international volunteers.

From these results, this research conducted three comprehensive considerations.

- (1) Future international volunteers can solve many of their potential problems by keeping in touch with acquaintances during their preparation time.
- (2) Since the ICT environment at the travel destination is typically poor, problems could be solved by utilizing media that can be used offline.
- (3) Japanese friends were indispensable for international volunteers.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTION

The purpose of this research was to clarify the problem-solving through extracurricular activity for undergraduate students involved in international volunteer activity, focusing on students media use. As a result of the analysis, five points were determined and this research conducted three comprehensive considerations.

The goal in this research was to suggest ways to increase the number of international volunteers among university students, and identify ways to utilize the media for problem-solving.

In order to achieve the broad purpose of this research, it will be necessary to gather further information on smartphone applications that can be used offline as well as to identify functions that can be applied to solving problems faced by international volunteers. In addition, since there are media options other than the ICT for media used by university students (for example, friends and acquaintances).

The targets of this research were university students. To expand the target, it will be necessary to clarify the purpose of the research and adjust the contents of the questions in the online form so that they relate to a broader group.

REFERENCES

- MEXT(2008) Chapter 1, On educational issues and future education basic policy
http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/kihon/what/005/w005_01.htm (accessed 2018.6.18.)
- Nagamura, Y. (2006) The examination into actual conditions of volunteer-learning in higher education: through analyses of volunteer subjects in university and junior college, *Volunteer research*, 7 :25-46
- Kawakita, J. (1967) *Idea method- for creativity development*. Chuokoron-Shinsha public company, Tokyo, Japan
- Kishi, M. and Yoshida, C. (2014) The motive and innovation process of local NGO/NPO by collaborating with foreign volunteers, *Multicultural Relations*, 11 :53-66
- Sato, M., Sakamoto, A., Muramatsu, T., Saito, C., Shimano, S. and Watanabe, T. (2010) *Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers : Trends in Implementation of Environmental Education*

Activities and Barriers:Contributing Factors in
Asian Region, Through JOCV Environmental
Education Activity Reports Analysis,
Environmental education ,19(3) :15-28
Nakahashi, Y. (2014) Media Literacy. Hokuju
Shuppan, Tokyo.