Need for Service Learning in Compulsory Foreign Language Education in a Japanese University Setting

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1884: Yokohama Baptist Theological Seminary
1927: Kanto Gakuin

- Comprehensive educational system – day care (infant) to doctoral and professional programs
- Presently 11 Colleges (more expansion in the next year with focus on “Global education” initiatives)
- Enrollment 10,713 at the university (May, 2015)
- Motto “Be a Man, Serve the World” since 1919
International Education / “Global Citizen” Initiatives

- National curriculum for elementary school students
  - International Understanding Curriculum
  - Foreign Language Curriculum
- National curriculum for junior high / senior high school students
- Foreign language curriculum at KGU
- “Global citizen” initiatives (projected programs / vision within 5 years)
# International Programs and Offerings at KGU

## Study Abroad Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Capacity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long-term (one semester to one year)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term study abroad (3 to 4 weeks)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>150</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>N of Programs</th>
<th>N of Participants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Short</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Short</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>72</td>
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Survey for Assessing Interest in International Programs at KGU (1)

- Survey: April 2014 through April 2015
- Respondents: 943
- Findings:
  - Experience abroad (travel, etc.)
    - Yes 412 (44%)
    - No 531 (56%)
  - Interest in study abroad programs
    - Yes 411 (44%)
    - No 393 (42%)
    - Ambivalent 137 (14%)
Survey for Assessing Interest in International Programs at KGU (1)

- Reasons for lack of interest

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<tr>
<td>lack of foreign language ability</td>
<td>lack of funds</td>
<td>fear of instability / lack of safety in foreign countries</td>
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<tr>
<td>219 (59%)</td>
<td>87 (23%)</td>
<td>67 (18%)</td>
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Interest in Various Programs

- 3 Significant responses:

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<th>Interested in participating in programs held on KGU campuses</th>
<th>Interested in participating in volunteer type programs with students from abroad</th>
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<td>301 (32%)</td>
<td>184 (19%)</td>
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Not interested in any form of international exchange or international programs on campus

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<td>265 (28%)</td>
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Pilot Program for Service Learning in the English Curriculum

- **Purpose**: Help motivate students in their foreign language learning by giving them an opportunity to use their skills in serving others.

- **Participants**: 100 first year students from the Colleges of Science and Engineering and Architecture and Environmental Designs (*students who for the most part do not like English or are highly motivated to study English)*

- **Time frame**:
  - 1st term – 3 questionnaires distributed to all students
  - 2nd term – open participation solicited among 40 students
First Survey:
“English/ Foreign languages in My Community”

- Go out and walk about in your neighborhood, train station, local shopping area .... Anywhere close to where you live or this university. Look for English signs and foreigners in your community. Listen for English and other foreign languages.

FINDINGS:

1. Foreign language signs were noted in English, Korean and Chinese in most of the train stations. However, when leaving the metropolitan area, the number of signs diminished greatly.

2. Three students commented on the fact that even though there were signs in English on the outside of stores in Tokyo, that the inside of the stores did not have English signs or English speakers in all cases, and these students felt that was misleading.

3. All students recognized the need for English or foreign language signs in their community.
Students were given the following instructions:

Think about the places you have been and the English / foreign languages you have or have not seen. Is there anything YOU can do to make a change, to make the environment more friendly for foreigners in Japan? What do you think you can do?

FINDINGS:

- 90% (66 students) commented that they should focus more on studying English or a foreign language for communication.
- Teaching Japanese customs, giving directions, explaining Japanese food and historical places were all topics students felt they need to be proficient at.
- Many students stated that they felt more signs in foreign languages should be placed throughout their communities.
Third Survey

You have pointed out many places in your community that need English or foreign languages to help people who do not speak Japanese. In the fall semester, we hope that you will be able to help foreign visitors here on the Mutsuura Campus by making a map or building directories in English. What kind of map do you think is good?

1. Map of buildings on Campus  
2. Directory of the library and Foresight  
3. Map to the dormitory  
4. Map to the train station  
5. Other

What do you think you can learn from making a map of the Mutsuura Campus or building directories for the buildings on campus?

Do you think this is a good learning activity?
FINDINGS:

- N=46 students

- Campus Map should be made in English (27)
- A Directory for the Library and Foresight should be made (5)
- A map to the Dormitory should be made (1)
- A map to the train station should be made (11)
- Maps to offices and dining facilities should be made (2)
- This would be an excellent learning opportunity (41)
- This could be an learning opportunity but were uncertain as to it being effective (2)
PRODUCTS etc.:

- An A4 size pamphlet in English highlighting the buildings on campus and a map in English (1)
- An A4 size information sheet explaining where different things can be obtained on campus (Eg. Umbrellas when it rains, student ID cards, Internet facilities, etc.) (1)
- An A4 size information sheet explaining the different places on campus to purchase and eat meals, with a simple explanation of the menu offerings at the various locations. (1)
- Proposed volunteering at a near-by school in an English class. (This student’s English is almost native-level, and this project will be hopefully pursued by the student in the coming academic year in a different course.) (1)
Issues with Service-Learning in the General Curriculum / Foreign Language Classroom in a Japanese University

- Understanding of SL benefits to students and community on the part of the faculty is still low (1 teacher who initially volunteered to help out, in fact did not include the service learning component in the fall term of their writing class)
- Students’ recognition of need in community is high, but their own confidence is lacking.
  - The majority of students felt that increasing their own language ability would be enough to resolve language issues of foreigners in their community.
  - Students recognized the personal need to study English and foreign languages.
  - Impetus and motivation for learning English appears to have changed.
- Through SL projects, students may overcome their complex of not having sufficient language skills.

→ Thus participation in international programs at the university level MIGHT increase.
Some more issues to consider

- Due to composition of classes, coordination of teachers is necessary
- Evaluation of service learning projects
- Changes in Japanese Education from the Ministry of Education
- Active-learning initiatives
- Service-learning initiatives (KGU’s new university policy has 3 policy’s that state that service-learning will be included in the university’s education program --- However, service-learning is still being met with resistance on the part of faculty members and administrators)
- Globalization initiatives
Students appeared to understand that they need to study English so it can be applied within their community.

In the coming term, it will be important for the English faculty members to see if there is an increase in the number of students participating in the elective English courses and determine if this pilot program had an effect on the students’ choice to continue foreign language education beyond the compulsory requirements.

Students appear to want to participate in international activities on campus. Furthermore, they also show a desire to do “volunteer” activities with students from abroad.

The International Center is presently working on implementing activities that will foster service-learning projects as well as volunteer activities that both Japanese and non-Japanese students can participate in at KGU.