

The Improvements in Quality of LIS Education through the Mutual International Exchanges of Students in the East Asia

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Abstract:

A great deal of useful content now does not go through the publishing process is going directly online by blog or wiki. At present, academic libraries are undergoing a radical transformation deriving from changes in teaching and learning, new information technologies, and the new needs of students. The academic curriculum has been a matter of interest worldwide, as library schools have embraced information studies and have sought to determine the appropriate changes useful to the profession. The popularity of offering practical experience as a part of library education has fluctuated over the years, largely due to differing opinions on the importance of such programs to Library and Information Science (LIS) education. There is no consensus about what to call the practical experience in LIS programs. However, the practical experience across borders, in other words, the international internship, in LIS programs is gaining in importance in the East Asia. In recent years, a growing need of international collaboration to expand the university education and research has attracted attention in Japan. Tsukuba University as the largest organization to provide the LIS program in Japan developed an international internship program. In general, the international internship program aims to help students to develop world-wide communication skills and to gain a greater insight into the information and knowledge specialists abroad through work experience. In this paper, precious experiences in mutual exchange of students as the international internship between Shih Hsin University in Taiwan and Tsurumi University in Japan were explained and discussed.

Keywords: international internship, academic curriculum, LIS education, East Asia, mutual exchange of students.

1 INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, the dominant form of recorded thought is changing from print to electronic with the rapid progress of ICT in any country. A great deal of useful content now does not go through the publishing process is going directly online by blog or wiki. At present, academic libraries are undergoing a radical transformation deriving from changes in teaching and learning, new information technologies, and the new needs of students.

Over the past 20 years, people all over the world have been increasingly influenced by the forces of internationalisation and globalisation. The cultural background of people that interact at an intercultural level has a strong impact on the manner in which this type of interaction takes place. Cultural diversity should not be regarded as an obstacle to communication and a threat to the specificity of one particular culture (FLANJA, D. and GÂZ, R.M. , 2011).

Many universities have recognised the importance of an international perspective by incorporating global or international elements into their curriculum or graduation requirements. The international experience of students is considered to enhance learning, the acquisition of competencies, the development of critical soft skills and, potentially, overall employability. For this reason alone universities would do well to encourage a greater up-take on international exchange programs, particularly to non-English speaking countries where both language acquisition and cultural experience can provide valuable additions to a graduate's portfolio of employability skills (Crossman, J.E. and Clarke, M., 2010).

The academic curriculum has been a matter of interest worldwide, as library schools have embraced information studies and have sought to determine the appropriate changes useful to the profession. The Library and Information Science (LIS) educators must meet the challenges of cultural diversity in preparing future library professionals with preparing their instruction (Abdullahi, I. , 2008).

Japanese government is promoting universities' activity in implementing internationalization as well as exchange with Asia and the United States, etc. In the area of higher education, Japan will expand its scholarship systems, work to ensure the quality of universities and make them more international in nature, expand and improve graduate education, and promote vocational education, such as by cultivating students' entrepreneurial abilities (On the New Growth Strategy, 2009).

The popularity of offering practical experience as a part of library education has fluctuated over the years, largely due to differing opinions on the importance of such programs to LIS education. There is no consensus about what to call the practical experience in LIS programs. However, the practical experience across borders, in other words, the international internship, in LIS programs is gaining in importance in the East Asia.

In recent years, a growing need of international collaboration to expand the university education and research has attracted attention in Japan. Tsukuba University, the largest organization to provide the LIS program in Japan, developed an international internship program. In general, the international internship program aims to help students to develop world-wide communication skills and to gain a greater insight into the information and

knowledge specialists abroad through work experience (Joho, H., Uda, N., Morishima, A., Ishii, H. and Mizoue, C., 2011).

In this paper, precious experiences in mutual exchange of students as the international internship between Shih Hsin University in Taiwan and Tsurumi University in Japan were explained and discussed. The another purpose of this paper is to clarify the role of the mutual exchange of students as the international internship based on a wide variety of practical experiences in both Tsurumi University and Shih Hsin University.

2 PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE ACROSS BORDERS

The mobility of international students across borders has emerged in a common theme in many countries and also Japanese government has been attaching great importance to it (On the New Growth Strategy, 2009). With the development of knowledge societies, international students has become the key driving force of economic development and the guarantee of improvement of national strength (Wei, H ., 2012).

Cultural diversity should not be regarded as an obstacle to communication and a threat to the specificity of one particular culture. All in all, one of the advantages of short term student exchange programmes, widely developed in the contemporary era of globalization, is that the period is short enough not to alter a pre-established identity, but long enough to offer the opportunity of perceiving oneself from a different perspective, in offering a point of comparison(FLANJA, D. and GÂZ, R.M. , 2011).

What is the reason universities promote internationalisation? In the higher education sector, despite debate over how it should be defined and measured, graduate employability has become a critical benchmark for measuring performance at both an individual and an institutional level. Therefore, the universities in many countries would do well to encourage a greater up-take on international exchange programs (Crossman, J.E. and Clarke, M., 2010). The international experience does enhance learning, the acquisition of competencies, the development of critical soft skills and, potentially, overall employability.

3 INTERNATIONAL INTERNSHIP IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE (LIS) PROGRAMS

The internationalization of LIS education is considered not only desirable but also critically necessary. The education of future library and information professionals who are able to understand the global information access, and to promote systems of communication among people throughout the world, is also considered to vital for the success of the profession. A range of thoughts and suggestions are given on how LIS schools can respond to the challenges of an increasing global world and, more specifically, how they can develop LIS programs and create classroom settings that are truly international in orientation and scope (Abdullahi, I., Kajberg and L. Virkus, S. ,2007).

The four concepts of internships in LIS education for the new information society were defined: (i) international and (ii) interdisciplinary that allow them to expand beyond the local and disciplinary, and (iii) intentional and (iv) interconnected, that draw attention to their purpose, the learning process and the role of participants (Bird, N. J., Chu, C. M., & Oguz, F. , 2011). The international internship in LIS education is thought to provide an opportunity for students to expand beyond the local and disciplinary.

In Japan, a need for international collaboration in higher education and research is growing along with three stages of the Asian region, the Asian Pacific region and the world. The University of Tsukuba, the largest organization to provide an LIS program in Japan since 1979, established and developed an international relationship with universities and institutions in three-step approach, such as the Asian region, the Asian Pacific region and the world. The College of Knowledge and Library Sciences in the University of Tsukuba established a course of international internship program for undergraduate students of the 3rd year to acquire real job experience at a certain company or organization what students have any interest. This international internship program aims to support students to improve communication skills in English and to gain insight into the work contents of information & knowledge specialists through work experience around 10 days. In the program, students enrolled in the course were necessary to prepare for the internship about three months. After the internship, students gave a presentation on their activities during the international internship to other students in the college. The results of the survey to all internship students indicated a very high level of satisfaction with the program (Joho, H., et., 2011).

The earlier stage of international internship program depended largely on personal relationships of trust with some particular faculties. The operational works for the international internship program were placed a disproportionate emphasis on the particular faculties between both sides. To get a good result from the international internship, faculties in each university or institution should divide work properly and also an organization should establish a lasting relationship with a partner organisation. If the organization concludes an academic exchange agreement with the counterpart, the international internship between two organizations will continue in stable condition (Mizoue, C., Matsumoto, M., Nakayama, S., Ishii, H. and Joho, H. , 2011).

4 CASE STUDY: JAPANESE STUDENTS IN TAIWAN

The Tsurumi University in Japan concluded the academic exchange agreement with Shih Hsin University in Taiwan in 2011. In the first stage, the academic exchange program started as a short-term faculty exchange between the departments in charge of LIS education in each university, such as Dept. of Library, Archival and Information Studies (Dept. of LAIS) at Tsurumi University and Dept. of Information and Communication (Dept. of IC) at Shih Hsin University. The faculties who were invited from the partner university gave lectures and exchanged research information with researchers in the partner university.

In the second stage, the Dept. of LAIS at Tsurumi University accepted graduate students of Dept. of IC at Shih Hsin University with a short-term course of international internship. The short-term course of international internship that was originally introduced by the Dept. of LAIS at Tsurumi University implemented in a time frame of two weeks in July 2012. In the third stage, a real mutual exchange of students under the international internship program between Shih Hsin University in Taiwan and Tsurumi University in Japan was first accomplished by the Dept. of LAIS at Tsurumi University newly introduced a course of “Special Practical Experience 2” in 2012. The faculties of the Dept. of LAIS at Tsurumi University wanted to expand the range of options in the curriculum to introduce the new course of “Special Practical Experience 2”.

In total, twelve students of the Dept. of LAIS at Tsurumi University signed up for the course of “Special Practical Experience 2” in 2012 (Table 1). The nine of them were female students

and the other three were male students. The students who enrolled in the course were confined exclusively to the first and second-year students.

Table 1. The number of students enrolled in the course of “Special Practical Experience 2”.

Enrolled Students	Male Students	2nd grade	3rd grade	Female Students	2nd grade	3rd grade
12	3	2	1	9	5	4

The Dept. of LAIS at Tsurumi University started the new course of “Special Practical Experience 2” in April, 2012 and around the same time the new course was noticed to students. In July 2012, the details of course content briefed to students who decided to take the course and also are still being considered. A total of five lessons before the international internship in Taiwan, primarily in Taiwanese history and culture, an outline of Shih Hsin University, libraries and archives in Taiwan, daily language lessons in Chinese and self-introduction in English were conducted from Nov. 2012 to the end of February 2013. The twelve students and two faculties of the Dept. of LAIS at Tsurumi University were in on the international internship during nine days from March 5 to March 13, 2013 in Taiwan. In March 2013, students submitted their report written on the basis of their experience of international internship in Taiwan and then students presented at the class after their experience of international internship.

Table 2. The teaching process on the course of “Special Practical Experience 2”.

Date/Month/Year	Teaching Process
April 2012	New course of “Special Practical Experience 2” noticed to students
July 2012	Briefing session about the course content for students who decided to take the course and also are still being considered
Nov. 2012 to the end of Feburary 2013	Operation of five lessons before the international internship in Taiwan, primarily in Taiwanese history and culture, an outline of Shih Hsin University, libraries and archives in Taiwan, daily language lessons in chinese and self introductions in English.
5-13 March 2013	International internship in Taiwan.
March 2013	Submission of the report after the experience of international internship
27 March 2013	Presentation meeting after the experience of international internship

The daily schedule of the international internship program in Taiwan was shown in Table 3. The success of the program depended to a large extent on the efforts and assistance of faculties of the Dept. of IC at Shih Hsin University. All places visited during the international internship program in Taiwan have been arranged by faculties of the Dept. of IC at Shih Hsin University. The faculties and graduate students of the Dept. of IC at Shih Hsin University

received our students kindly during the international internship program in Taiwan. The program of international internship in Taiwan was made up of two special lectures, the visits of libraries and museums, and the time of meeting and discussion mostly.

Table 3. The daily schedule of the international internship program in Taiwan.

Days	Daily schedule
1	Students' arrival at Taipei, the visit to Shih Hsin University(SHU) and the accounts of the international internship program
2	Museum visit to National Palace Museum guided by a faculty of the Dept. of IC in Shih Hsin University
3	Two special classes focused on the topics "Information Literacy" by faculties of the Dept. of IC in Shih Hsin University and the visit to Film & Radio Stadio and University Library at SHU
4	Library visit to National Central Library, and the University visits to National Taiwan Normal University and National Taiwan University Library guided by a faculty
5	Free activities and cultural experiences
6	Free activities and cultural experiences
7	National Park visit
8	Library visits to Intelligent Library and Taipei City Library-Beito, and round table meeting between the representatives of faculty members and students in Shih Hsin University and Tsurumi University
9	Flight back to Japan

According to the reports written by students on the basis of their experience of international internship in Taiwan, they achieved many results involved in the course of international internship in Taiwan away from their everyday life in a different circumstance. The students were deeply touched by the warm welcome shown to them by faculties and students of the Dept. of IC at Shih Hsin University and also persons that they met in the visited places.

It is already taken notice that the students can develop world-wide communication skills and gain a greater insight into the information and knowledge specialists abroad through work experience (Joho, H., Uda, N., Morishima, A., Ishii, H. and Mizoue, C., 2011). In this study, we got similar opinions from our students' feedback on their experience of international internship in Taiwan. We gave considerable attention to active exchanges occurred and continued during and after the international internship in Taiwan between students at Shih Hsin University and students at Tsurumi University.

5 CASE STUDY: TAIWANESE STUDENTS IN JAPAN

As we already mentioned, in the first stage, the academic exchange program started as a short-term faculty exchange. This case study on Taiwanese students in Japan corresponds to the second stage. The second stage was also already noted that the Dept. of LAIS at Tsurumi University accepted graduate students of the Dept. of IC at Shih Hsin University with a short-

term course of international internship. The short-term course of international internship that was first introduced by the Dept. of LAIS at Tsurumi University implemented in a time frame of two weeks in July 2012. In total, five students of the Dept. of IC at Shih Hsin University signed up for a short-term course of international internship organized by the Dept. of LAIS at Tsurumi University in 2012 (Table 4). The two of them were female students and the other three were male students.

Table 4. The number of graduate students who do their internship in Tsurumi University.

Accepted students	Male Students	Female Students
5	3	2

The graduate students who are enrolled at the Dept. of IC at Shih Hsin University were accepted into a short-term course of international internship at Tsurumi University (Table 5). As noted previously, Tsurumi University in Japan concluded the academic exchange agreement with Shih Hsin University in Taiwan in 2011. After the conclusion of agreement, the Dept. of LAIS at Tsurumi University decided to accept graduate students in the short-term course of international internship in October 2011. In April 2012, the course outline of the two week international internship was decided for five graduate students of the Dept. of IC at Shih Hsin University. In June 2012, the details of the course were decided. The five students of the Dept. of IC at Shih Hsin University were in on the international internship during fifteen days from July 1 to July 15, 2012 in Japan. The five students submitted their reports written after their experience of international internship in Japan.

Table 5. The accepting process of graduate students to Tsurumi University.

Date/Month/Year	Accepting Process
May 2011	Execution of the agreement of international exchange between Shih Hsin University in Taiwan and Tsurumi University in Japan
October 2011	Decision to accept graduate students in the short-term international internship course
April 2012	Course outline decision of the two week international internship for five graduate students
June 2012	Course details decision of the two week international internship
1-15 July 2012	Operation of the two week international internship
15 July 2012	Submission of the report after the experience of international internship

The daily schedule of the international internship program in Japan was shown in Table 6. All places visited during the international internship program in Japan have been arranged by faculties of the Dept. of LAIS at Tsurumi University. The program of international internship in Japan was made up of participation in several classes, experiences of customer service and cataloging process in the library, the visits of libraries and museums and the time of meeting and discussion mostly.

According to the reports written by graduate students on the basis of their experience of international internship in Japan, they achieved many results involved in the course of international internship in Japan away from their everyday life in a different circumstance. The students were deeply touched by the warm welcome shown to them by faculties and students of the Dept. of LAIS at Tsurumi University and also persons that they met in the visited places. In this case, we got similar opinions from our students' feedback on their experience of international internship in Taiwan. We are particular interest to active exchanges occurred and continued during and after the international internship in Japan between students at Shih Hsin University and students at Tsurumi University.

Table 6. The daily schedule of the international internship program in Japan.

Days	Daily schedule
1	Students' arrival at Haneda
2	Visit to Tsurumi University, the accounts of the international internship program and attendance at the class of "Introduction to Library Science"
3	At university library, brief introduction of university library and experience of customer service, and attendance at the class of "Japanese rare books"
4	At university library, brief explanation of library in Japan and experience of cataloging process, and attendance at the exercise class of "Graduation Thesis"
5	Attendance at the class of "Document Handling" and the exercise class of "Graduation Thesis"
6	Visit to "Tokyo International Book Fair"
7	Free activities and cultural experiences
8	Free activities and cultural experiences
9	Visit to Public libraries in Yokohama and Kawasaki
10	Visit to National Diet Library
11	Visit to Keio University
12	Free activities and cultural experiences
13	Visit to Book stores
14	Attendance at the department meeting
15	Flight back to Taiwan

6 CONCLUSIONS

Many universities have recognised the importance of an international perspective by incorporating global or international elements into their curriculum or graduation requirements. The international experience of students is considered to enhance learning, the acquisition of competencies, the development of critical soft skills and, potentially, overall employability (Crossman, J.E. and Clarke, M., 2010). As in the case of LIS education, the international exchange of students, especially international internship, is considered not only desirable but also critically necessary (Abdullahi, I., Kajberg and L. Virkus, S. ,2007 and Bird, N. J., Chu, C. M., & Oguz, F. , 2011). In Japan, the University of Tsukuba established

and developed an international relationship with universities and institutions in three-step approach, such as the Asian region, the Asian Pacific region and the world (Joho, H., et., 2011).

As shown in Figure 1., we discovered a strong mutual interest among students in the international internship achieved in Taiwan and Japan from their reports written on the basis of their experience of international internship. First, they achieved many results involved in the course of international internship in Taiwan or Japan away from their everyday life in a different circumstance. Secondly, the students were deeply touched by the warm welcome shown to them by faculties and students in both universities and also persons that they met in the visited places. Third, we are particular interest to active exchanges occurred and continued during and after the international internship in Japan between students at Shih Hsin University and students at Tsurumi University. The mutual exchange of students as the international internship is thought of as making a significant beneficial effect on attitudes and behavior of students in everyday school life.

Because of making the beneficial effects on mutual exchange of students as the international internship more clearly, we needs further study. The more departments or schools in chage of LIS education at universities in the East Asian countries would be expected to introduce the international internship into their curriculum for growth for students. On the otherhand, a new attempt has been done that students can participate in this experience regardless of their physical location; in other words, to develop a virtual internship (Franks, P.C. and Oliver, G.C., 2011). Further studies are needed how we do balance between a real international internship and a virtual internship.

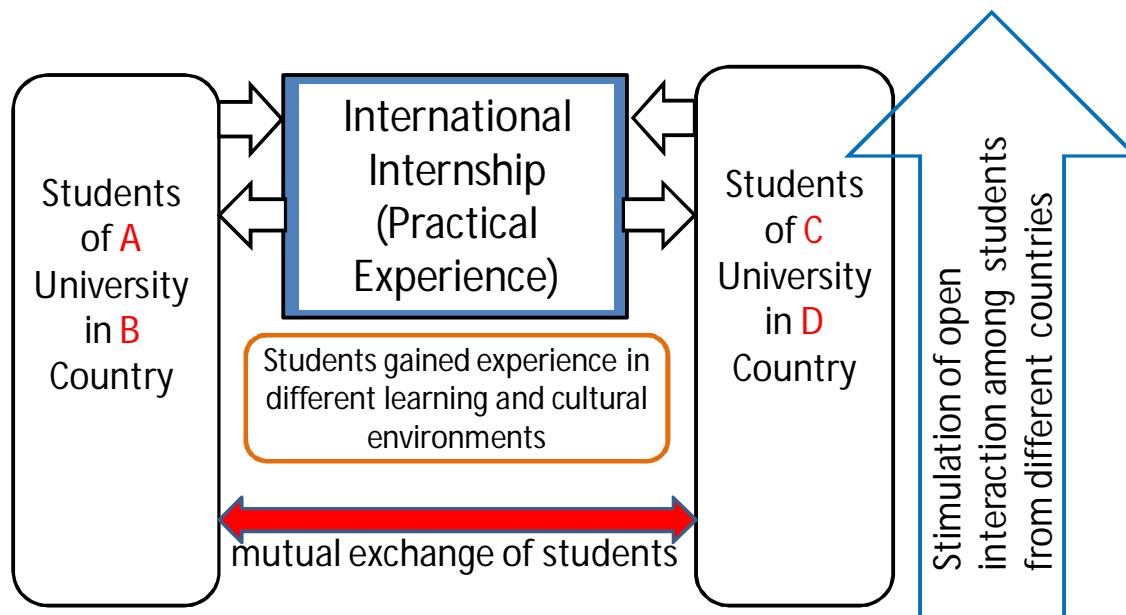


Figure 1. The mutual exchanges of students under the international internship program

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