Value and Effect of Short-Term Overseas Training in Vietnam: Part 1: Overview

Tetsuro SEKI, Dr. Eng.*

1. Introduction

Bunkyo University proposes various programs for international exchange in response to learning request from the students. The proposed programs are roughly classified into "Open Program" and "Closed Program" intended for all students with any faculty and for the students with some particular faculty, respectively. The Closed Program, as compared to the Open Program, has the advantage of being able to design the program that highlights the peculiarity of discrete faculty. That is to say, it is easier to make a program that is intimately related with the studies of a particular faculty.

The Faculty of Information and Communications was established in 1980 as the third faculty of the Bunkyo University. This faculty specializes in the education of information studies, and as such, is the first university faculty in Japan. Since its founding, the faculty education has been aiming to develop comprehensive intellect regarding the information that derives from human behaviors. As compared to other faculties in Japan with similar names, this faculty's academic arena is characteristic in that "it integrates the humanities and engineering".

This faculty has three departments, namely, the Department of Public Relations, the Department of Business and Information, and the Department of Information Systems. While the scope of education and studies of these departments is almost equivalent to other departments with similar names, it is unprecedented that these departments are under single faculty and are providing education as well as conducting studies in the manner correlated each other. These three areas of specialty are required to be related each other more intimately as the growth of high information society advances. For this reason, it has become much more significant now than in 1980 when the Faculty of Information and Communications was established to integrate the education and studies of these three different departments.

On the other hand, it is not easy to develop overseas training program that can satisfy the students of these three departments. It is because

*Associate Professor, Faculty of Information and Communications

what the students aspire quite varies such as to mass communication, business management, and development of information system. Therefore, there has been no overseas training program in the Faculty of Information and Communications since it was established 30 years ago.

In 2009, the Bunkyo University and FPT University have signed a general agreement to promote mutual cooperation in both education and studies. Pursuant to this agreement, the Bunkyo University dispatched a delegation of 16 students in 2010 to the FPT University followed by yet another delegation of 14 students sent to the FPT University in 2011. To add to these activities, the Faculty of Information and Communications has invited 1 university professor and 2 students from FPT University to the Bunkyo University conducting joint exhibition at a university festival "Sho-to Sai" as part of its effort to strengthen mutual relationship and to promote international sensibility of the students of the Faculty of Information and Communications.

In this report, the overview of short-term overseas training in Vietnam that established by the Faculty of Information and Communications is provided with its aim and characteristics.

2. Overview

This training is to be conducted for a week from late February to early March each year. The agenda to be studied in this training is understanding of Vietnamese culture and industry. The training organizers expect that Japanese students not only understand Vietnamese culture and industry, but also Japanese students teach students in Vietnam about Japanese culture and industry, so that mutual communication could be achieved.

2.1 Preparations for Departure

Prior to flying to Vietnam, preliminary training, which totaled 12 hours or so, is to be held in Japan. This is a preparation for students to interact meaningfully with students in Vietnam in a short period. For example, self-introduction cards shall be prepared, in which own name, place where they live, hobby, and favorite foods are included together with unique drawings or photos, so that students could use it to start off conversation. Students of the Faculty of Information and Communications are not all good at conversing in English. In addition, as same as most of Japanese are, they are not good at joining in conversation positively and take initiative. This card is an idea and so created for such students that they can draw themselves into foreign culture, together with people whom you first met. This is the first step for them to interact internationally and to understand multi-culture.

Of course, studying to understand culture and industry in Vietnam is included in the preliminary training. All the participants are allotted their shares to prepare a research report that consists of around 40 pages, and they would share various information about Vietnam. This information sharing in advance enables students to increase knowledge about Vietnam, as well as to help to promote further understanding when students are exposed to the fact in Vietnam.

However, the significance of the assignment to students to prepare a research report in advance by the training organizer is to give a change of preparation to know the difference between information obtainable in Japan and the fact in Vietnam, rather than learning by recognition of already acquired knowledge. Spread of the Internet

enables acquisition of information easily, but it is important for students to find out with surprise that "truth" is "in the place, in the country", so as to foster globalized individual. Preparing an investigation report by looking into internet or checking with travel guidebooks is an important preparation for students to know the gap from the fact.

2.2 On-site Learning

Opportunities for learning in Vietnam are divided into three types. The first opportunity is to participate in classes in FPT University, which are conducted in English or Japanese medium. The second one is to establish communication with Vietnamese teachers of Japanese language and students of FPT University through interactive meetings or walking in the town together. The third one is to visit Japanese companies which developed in Vietnam as well as Vietnam companies which aim at advancing themselves to Japan.

English class in FPT University is not limited to ordinary English lesson. Practical business English lesson is developed. In the training of it in 2011, mixture of Japanese and Vietnam student teams were requested to discuss on solution of quality issues of semi-conductor makers and to stage a debate. It was difficult even for students of FPT University, who were used to such challenges. In addition, it was a good opportunity to make students of our university to realize how poor their English speaking and debate competency were. (see Exhibit 1)

Professors and students in FPT University were very kind to our students. Activities in FPT University, to begin with, going around the town for shopping, eating, company visits that is mentioned below, Hanoi town tour, and so on, many people accompanied us wherever we went, in their efforts to deepen rapport among our students in positive manners. The period we stayed in Vietnam for this training was very short. However, both of us embraced on the last day and shed tears for impending parting, this scene tells us everything what the real training should be.

With regard to company visits, we visited FPT Software Joint Stock Company (abbr. F-Soft), which stands adjacent to FPT University. F-Soft is the largest ITC company in Vietnam. Their parent company is FPT Corporation, which is the largest conglomerate in Vietnam. FPT University is also under the same umbrella of this conglomerate. We explore the values of Japanese market or industry from the viewpoint of Vietnam companies. Moreover, in order to know the values of Vietnamese market or industry from the opposite view, which means, from Japanese viewpoint, we visited Japanese companies based in Vietnam, received lectures or toured their factory. So far, we have visited Hino Meters Vietnam Ltd., NEC Solutions Vietnam Co. Ltd. and so on, where we received very interesting lectures on "people and country of Vietnam from the viewpoint of Japanese or Japanese company". (see Exhibit 2, 3, 4)

3. Value of Training in Vietnam

Our students visit Vietnam for reasons, which have two conflicting aspects. Firstly, it is the same Asian country as Japan, the country is relatively close to Japan in terms of food culture and national characteristics. Vietnam is one of the countries that make Japanese feel less exotic. More than 90% of the students in the faculty of Information and Communications who participate in the overseas training go overseas first time in this training.

In this sense, Asian countries are good place to travel with ease. When visiting foreign countries, religion in the local country is one of the difficult issues for Japanese to understand. Japanese tend to visit temples on the purpose of sightseeing, but sometimes we make mistakes by breaking local taboos. It is said that majority of Vietnamese are Buddhist. But for ordinary Vietnamese, it is nothing but adopting Buddhist practice into some events just like many Japanese do. In addition, it is said that their national characteristic is close to Japanese. So, Japanese may feel less uncomfortable about the Vietnam's way of thinking or their behavior.

The other aspect is contrary to the above reason. In Vietnam, there is lots of scenery we can no longer be seen in Japan. It means that we cannot see due to reasons such as economical growth, development of social systems, and so on. Economy or social structure in Vietnam is characterized by the word "chaotic" from the viewpoint of Japanese. However, there exists "order" in their sense, and organization is in place. In fact, Vietnam's economy has sustained approximately 7% growth based on GDP base. Both devaluation of money and inflation of prices bring consumer prices up by nearly 20% every year consequently. It is no doubt that Vietnam is going to catch up with developed countries, and people's lives have rapidly become rich. In addition, Vietnamese people are greedy for economic growth. Because of the greediness, they are fully motivated and active. Japanese lost such greediness that we used to possess when Japan's economy was growing rapidly. There are so many that Vietnam can offer to our students to learn, who shoulder Japan in the future.

At the beginning of this report shows the diversity of the learning scope of this faculty, and it is pointed out that this introduce the difficulty of developing an overseas study program that can meet the diversity. In present Vietnam, there are abundance of areas, out of which the Faculty of Information and Communication can learn, such as Vietnam art, advertisement which corresponds to new media, creation of sales methods of new goods, process of changes by companies or social system in conforming to the international society, and so on. Of anything else, students should learn that Vietnamese people, who are full of hope and enthusiasm, are good friends for Japanese people as well as good competitors in the future.

4. Conclusion

In this report, the overview of short-term overseas training in Vietnam is shows with its characteristics and values. Main purpose of this study is to get the knowledge of the Vietnamese Excellencies of the people, of the culture, of the industries, and of the geographical features. Vietnam is an essential partner of Japan especially in such as manufacturing, ITC and tourism. This is the first step of development of overseas training program for the students of Faculty of Information and Communications and it related faculties.

In the next report, the totally evaluation of the program with introduction of post-learning of this overseas training will be provided.

Exhibit 1: Discussion and Debate in English

Exhibit 2: Lecture on Manufacturing Process and Quality (Hino Motor Vietnam)

Exhibit 3: Lecture on Vietnamese IT Market and Economics (NEC Solutions Vietnam)

Exhibit 4: Lecture on Vietnamese Management Mind (Executive Floor of F-soft)