

Title	LoCCo tours : a problem-based study tour program in remote areas of Japan
Sub Title	
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Publisher	慶應義塾大学大学院メディアデザイン研究科
Publication year	2016
Jtitle	
JaLC DOI	
Abstract	
Notes	修士学位論文. 2016年度メディアデザイン学 第509号
Genre	Thesis or Dissertation
URL	<a href="https://koara.lib.keio.ac.jp/xoonips/modules/xoonips/detail.php?koara_id=KO40001001-00002016-0509">https://koara.lib.keio.ac.jp/xoonips/modules/xoonips/detail.php?koara_id=KO40001001-00002016-0509</a>

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Master's Thesis  
Academic Year 2016

LoCCo Tours: A Problem-Based Study Tour  
Program in Remote Areas of Japan

Keio University  
Graduate School of Media Design

Hui Whiplus Wang

A Master's Thesis  
submitted to Keio University Graduate School of Media Design  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
MASTER of Media Design

Hui Whiplus Wang

Thesis Committee:

Professor Hiro Kishi	(Supervisor)
Professor Sam Furukawa	(Co-supervisor)
Professor Akira Kato	(Co-supervisor)

Abstract of Master's Thesis of Academic Year 2016

## LoCCo Tours: A Problem-Based Study Tour Program in Remote Areas of Japan

Category: Design

### Summary

We are now facing a new world of changes and uncertainties. And we need to find out a new way of education to make our next generations well-prepared for the future opportunities and challenges. Especially in Japan, the country which is now facing many of the global challenges such as depopulation, industrial restructuring, and cultural preservation, in such an early stage, we need to create a new form of education to cultivate students with the capabilities to solve those problems now and in the future.

LoCCo Tours: a problem-based study tour program in remote areas of Japan, is an experiment in creating the new form of education for the future global leaders. In this program, students will travel to specific regions in Japan and participate in the field trips and workshops, while helping the local governments and businesses develop new tourism businesses under the global context. During the program, the students will obtain deeper consciousness in the global issues, problem-solving skills via collaboration, as well as the confidence of becoming future global leaders through making impacts on the local communities. Until now, we have conducted the program in 6 cities all over Japan. On December 10th and 11th of 2016, we organized our study tour to Misawa City. The outcome of the tour showed that the program did contribute to the growth of the students and did make the positive influences in the remote areas of Japan.

Keywords:

Globalization, Regional Revitalization, Education, Traveling, Workshop

Keio University Graduate School of Media Design

Hui Whiplus Wang

# Acknowledgements

I would like to show my great appreciation to my supervisor Professor Hiroyuki Kishi for his guidance on the entire project. It is very honored to join his Creative Industry Project in Keio Media Design and to enjoy such a great platform to consider about the real businesses for the future. I would like to thank to Mr. Takeshi Oe, Mr. Sei Kishinami and Mr. Koji Kataoka for leading the Traditional Crafts Future Project and provide great resources and connections in Sabae City and the Echizen Area, as well as Mr. Ken Kido, as well as Winnie Ko, Melody Chen, and Kazuma Fushimi for the great assistances in Sabae City. In addition, I would like to thank to Mr. Taizo Sugimura for arranging the discussion session during our regular meetings which gave me a lot of inspirations.

I would also like to thank to my sub-superior Professor Sam Furukawa for his great suggestions to this project. He has been taking care of me for almost two years, whether in Tokyo or in New York.

I would like to thank to Professor Masa Inakage, Senior Assistant Professor Marcos Sadao Maekawa and the entire GID team. During the one year GID journey in London and New York, I have entirely changed my understanding of education and started to focus on the design of communication and education. I would like to say thank you to Kimi Huang, Gwen Gage, Paul Gulla, Yuan Liao, Evelyn Yu and Buwei Hu for joining the Sabae study trip and the experimental ideation workshop and provide great outcomes.

I would like to show my gratefulness to all members from the NPO Bizjapan, the student-run organization based in University of Tokyo, which is engaged in the education for the future global leaders. Although I just joined Bizjapan from this September, I would really like to thank for the trust from all the members to let me take the responsibility of the LoCCo Project. I would like to thank my colleague Daichi Ishii, as well as Tianyu Zhao, Iyori Ueda, Risa Sato, and Ziyi Yang for organizing and running the project as well as provide the important connections with the local governments and businesses.

I would like to show my deep appreciation to Mr. Joboji and Mr. Nagahori

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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from Zai Co. Ltd., to arrange almost all outdoor activities, local transportation and accommodations for us during the our first free study trip in Misawa City. I would also like to thank Yinghan Zhang, Emil Schend, Min Young Cho, Di Xu, and Tuan And Do for participating the study tour and the workshops, with the amazing presentations of the proposals for improving the inbound tourism of the city.

Finally, I would like to say thank you to all local governments, organizations, business owners and media who have supported to our project (Figure 0.0.1). And Mr. Yu Nagai, Ms. Miyu Yamamoto, Mr. Koki Shimazu and Ms. Noriko Watanabe from Taktopia & Co. for the great advices on how to develop a successful workshop. It is so nice to meet everyone related to this project. I really want to thank everybody who gave me support on this project. I am, and I will still be having a great time doing this.



Figure 0.0.1: The Partners of LoCCo Project

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background

We are now facing a new world of change.

We experienced such an the unexpected year of 2016, and I believe there are so many people on the earth suffering from the fear and anxiety of the uncertainties about the possible upcoming changes. Most of them are frightened about the risks inside those uncertainties, while a part of them are looking into the possible opportunities. Frankly speaking, as a part of the human society, every single individual holds no other choices but to accept those changes.

In the wave of globalization, the coming uncertain factors are also becoming universal ones (Figure 1.1). First, they are more dispersed geographically than before. When ISIS is expanding their influence to the netizens all over the globe, the big data gathered from almost every corner of the world are contributing to the utilization of the natural resources. Second, they are more complicated than before. As the unexpected result of the 2016 American Election was indeed pushed by the boom of the social media, technology is playing a more important role in politics. On the other hand, UBER, as a technology company, are investing more on hiring the lobbyists to try to modify the regulations to expand their market. Third, more and more dangers and chances are showing up as unprecedented without any examples in the past we could refer. We will soon have to make new laws to regulate the AI ethics, while we also have to reconsider our career paths as the longevity is now changing the way of retirement.

However, when we are all involved into the era of uncertainty, it is difficult to say that our school education is well-prepared for the incoming challenges and possibilities (Figure 1.2). First, the traditional school education is restraining the students in a school for 3 years or more, so the students could hardly be exposed to the real important issues which have to be investigated in multiple locations. Second, the traditional school education is forcing students to think inside the

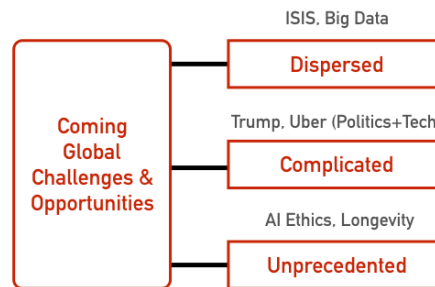


Figure 1.1: The Characteristics of Coming Challenges and Opportunities

scale of one single subject, while the real problems are always related to different disciplines. Third, the traditional school education is imprisoning students by the limited correct answers in the paper-based examinations, while the new social values have to be created by the approaches beyond the existing plans. If our students are still spending most of their youth in those low-efficient activities in school to perfect their specific skills, the entire human society will no longer have the capability to fight against the imminent global challenges, and those challenges, may destroy us quickly before we have realized what is happening.

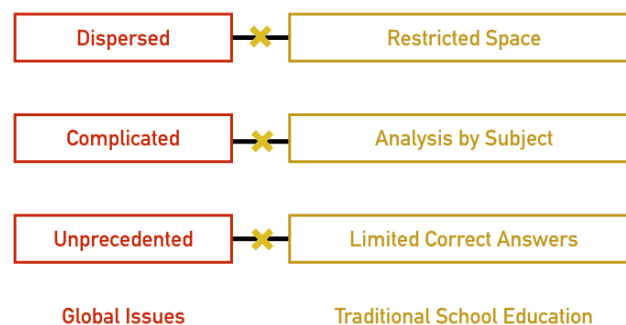


Figure 1.2: Limitations of the Traditional Classroom Education

We need a change in our education. A new education which may not totally replace the current education system, but serves as a necessary supplementary role for every student, to empower them the capabilities to survive in this era of change (Figure 1.3). First, the students have to get to know about what is happening in

the world to gain the awareness of the real social problems, or global consciousness, as a first step to know about this world. Second, the students have to get the ability to analyze complicated issues comprehensively through the collaboration with people from different backgrounds and disciplines, as a preparation of tackling the threats which related to lots of factors. And third, the students have to harvest the experience of making social impacts through innovation, which stands for the ultimate objective of the new education. In other words, we have to educate our next generations something necessary to lead the human society to survive in the next decades, which we called the global literacy. It should be a coherence of global education and entrepreneurship education, and be implemented in an efficient way.

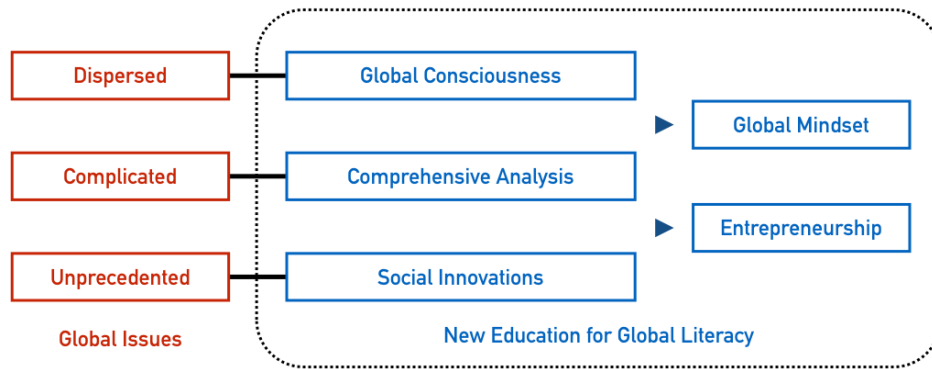


Figure 1.3: The Education of Global Leadership

In order to make the change in our education, we have to jump out of our current systems to seek for the new answer for the education industry. The Huffington Post once suggested that the traveling is the best education. It has stated five reasons to explain including learning new languages, explore cultural differences, discover cultural similarities, unearth history and gain independence. However, when most of people say they are going to travel, they usually indicate they are going to go sightseeing and spend their holidays somewhere, and their destinations are usually popular tourist attractions. Without getting deeply involved in the local societies, merely sightseeing requires only seeing the scenes, but lack of observation of the real circumstance, because those attractions are mostly renovated and modified to cater the expectation of those visitors, rather than providing some cultural shocks that may happen outside the attraction ar-

eas. Through the development of visual reality technologies, people could easily enjoy the similar experience at home with the VR headsets. Another aspect that may let us question the result of education of sightseeing is the study objectives. When a tourist come to a new place, she or he may be willing to visit somewhere special, but because lack of the objectives, she or he may still come to the places they could find in the travel guides which would be usually still attractions. The objectives like spending holidays or traveling around the world would be still too broad for them to think about what they are seeing, as a result, they may forget most of the interesting details except something they posted on the Facebook. Without analysis under a certain goal, those memories may be too loose to form a knowledge structure and might faded inside the deepest part of the brain. In addition, the limitation of the activities that outsiders could do may keep them away from receiving an efficient education. The lack of the outcomes of a trip may decrease the motivation of the travelers to be engaged in the journey and get closer to the travel companions which mostly come with you together. Without having the responsibility at the destination, outsiders are always outsiders, who could hardly absorb the real values of the place and get further improved in their abilities. As a conclusion, if we need to change education through tourism, we have to give up the traditional ways of traveling (Figure 1.4). We need to design a new form of traveling to cultivate the abilities for the next generations to become future global leaders.

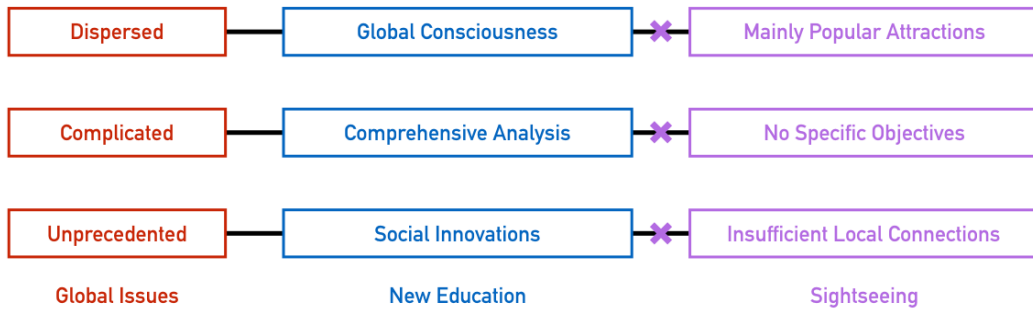


Figure 1.4: The Limitation of Sightseeing for Global Leadership Education

So, what is the new form of traveling look like, in order to provide a more efficient education for global consciousness, comprehensive analysis and social innovations? From my perspective, I believe if you totally changed your identifi-

cation and become another person who is living and working in your destination, your journey would definitely have a huge impact on you in understanding the real world. The global consciousness comes from the empathy of the local residents and circumstances, it can only be gained when the traveler is immersed inside the community and having the in-depth observation. With a given task, the traveler could get into the analysis of the local issues. Through a facilitated workshop which equals to the office of a local company, the traveler could become a local worker, talk with the colleagues and start to think deeply. Moreover, having an actual local client which has the real contract with you may let you to become more local. When your efforts could become the true benefits of your client, your experience in this area will be acknowledged and memorized, which provide greater motivation for generating social innovations in this area. When students may hardly make a difference to impact in their own communities, an outsider could always take the advantage of being different to bring new possibilities and changes to the new community. (Figure 1.5)

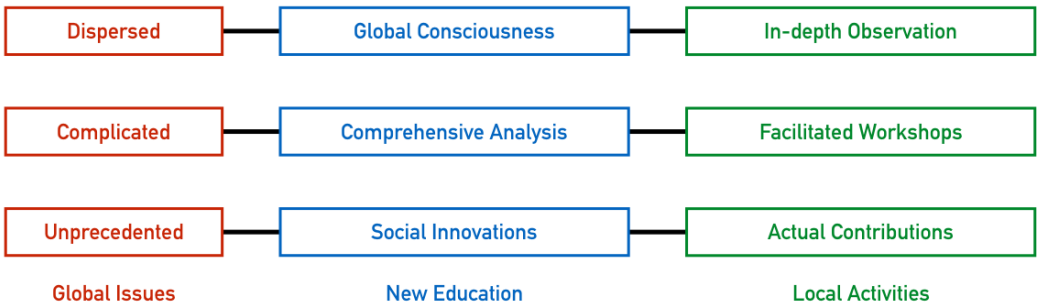


Figure 1.5: The Features of the New Form of Traveling

## 1.2 Goals

So now, let us look back at the situation in Japan. As a country pioneers in its aging society and depopulation, Japan is now becoming a sample for other countries to research on to deal expected situations of aging populations of their own countries, because depopulation is now become one of the biggest global issues existed. However, when you come to the metropolitans like Tokyo or Osaka, you could hardly find those issues, but when you come to the remote regions all over

Japan, you might be surprised about the huge numbers of deserted houses. Along with aging population, the issues like the cultural preservation and the industrial restructuring, are more likely happen in the remote areas than the metropolitans. As a result, the global issues in Japan are actually local problems.

As a traditional East Asian country which was once being immersed in to Confucianism for a long time, the educational systems are usually based on the lectures especially in colleges comparing with other Western countries. In order to make a change in education in Japan, it is necessary to involve more aspects outside the classrooms to provide students brand new learning experience in tackling the real, specific problems based on their research and works.

In a recent survey we conducted in Keio University to research on the needs international and returnee students of their study life in Japan.

According to the survey, most the students think they do not have enough Japanese friends, do not have enough chances to practice speaking Japanese and do not think they get involved to the Japanese society (Figure 1.6).

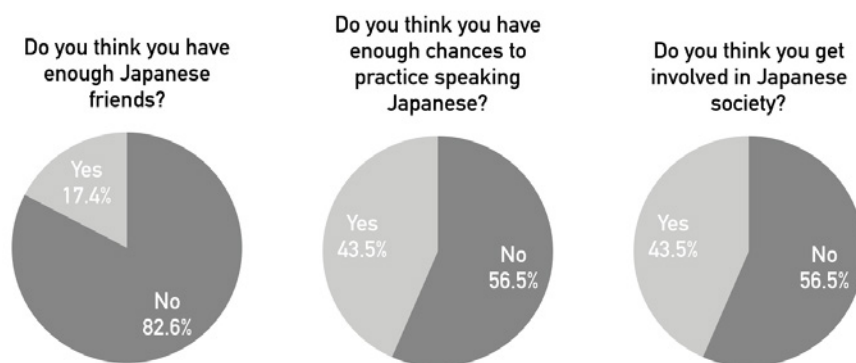


Figure 1.6: Survey on the Community Involvement of International and Returnee Students in Japan (N=23)

Around half of the respondents think they do not have enough chances to travel in Japan. And the most important aspect to prevent them from traveling more is the travel expenses. Time, partners, language barriers and lack of local guides are also the aspects (Figure 1.7).

In addition, almost 70% of respondents think they do not have enough chances to contribute to the Japanese society (Figure 1.8).

To summer up, most of the international students and the Japanese returnees



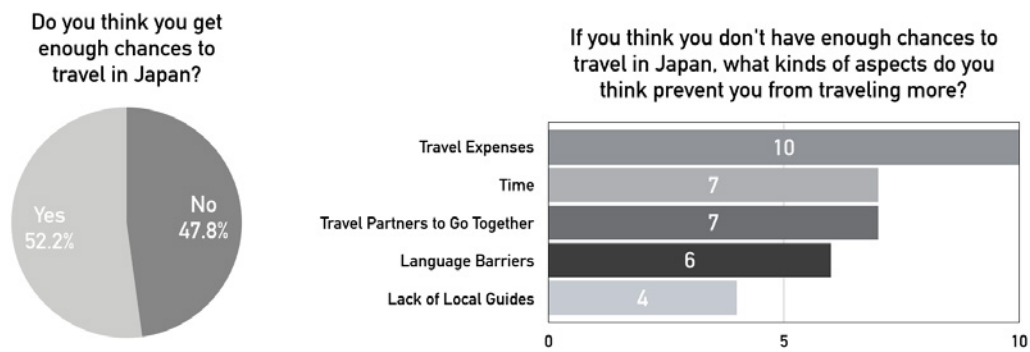


Figure 1.7: Survey on the Traveling Activities of International and Returnee Students in Japan (N=23)

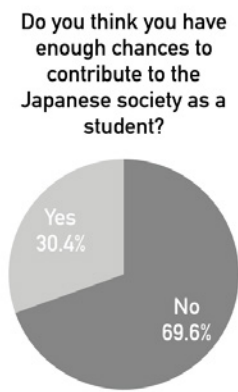


Figure 1.8: Survey on the Community Contribution of International and Returnee Students in Japan (N=23)

need to get involved to the Japanese society, travel more by spending less, and contribute more to the community. Those needs and wants are becoming very important starting points for us to design the new experience of learning.

That is what we are doing right now, a project named LoCCo Tours. It is a study tour program in remote areas of Japan, which not only bring the international students to Japans remote regions, but also let them to experience the real life of the local communities. The program is a problem-based study tour program in remote areas of Japan. It works as a combination of a tour, a study and an internship. Featuring its in-depth observation, facilitated workshops, and a platform for actual contributions, we hope this program could change the entire system of our current education using the power of traveling, or in the other way, making traveling the best education. (Figure 1.9)

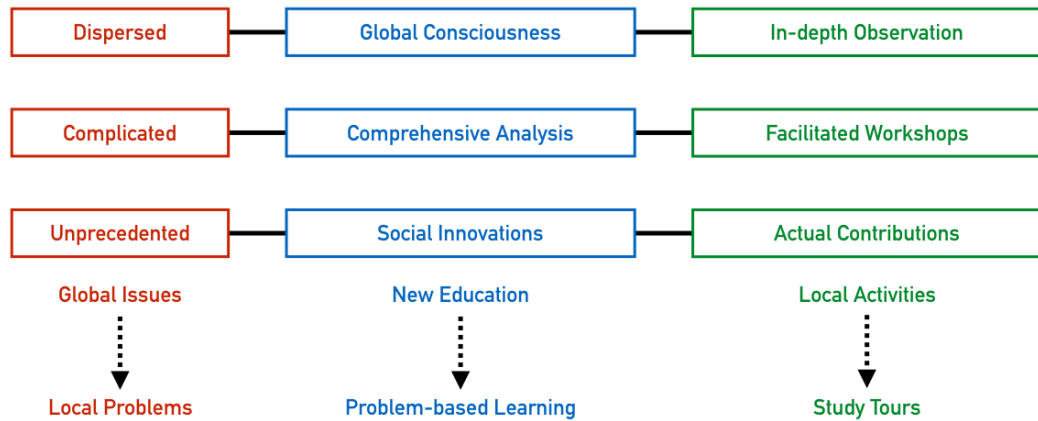


Figure 1.9: The Core Idea of Problem-based Study Tour

The program aims to cultivate future global leaders through making impacts to the society. We hope this program itself could also be monetized to support a sustainable contribution to both the students and the local areas. Here are the goals of this project (Figure 1.10):

### 1.2.1 The Growth of the Students

The project itself is an education program, so we are mostly focusing on the growth of the participating students. We aim to maximize the growth the students they could gain through a variety of activities. We hope to cultivate them as the real

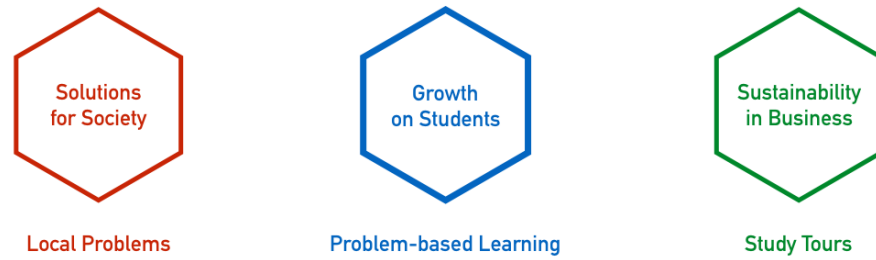


Figure 1.10: The Goals of the Project

global leaders in the future who have the capability to deal with the complicated global issues and also embrace the great chances in the future. From the beginning of the program, they will gain a deeper understanding of the real social issues outside their comfort zone, learn more about the ways to analyze and collaborate through the workshops, and finally, take their first little step of changing the entire world, by making impacts into the local communities.

### 1.2.2 The Solutions for the Society

We need the support from the society to run this project, and making social contributions is both a process and a result of the program. Living in an era of changes means we have to shape the society better to face the incoming challenges and opportunities. And we would like to see the positive changes we make to the local society and make the world a better place through this educational program. In Japan, we focus on defining the local problems by utilizing the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of the students, as well as providing solutions to the local issues with students and local stakeholders altogether.

### 1.2.3 The Sustainability in the Business

Although we are running this project under a student-run non-profit organization, we take it very seriously as a real business to create sustainable positive influences to both the students and the society. Named LoCCo, which is the abbreviation of "Local Creative Community", our project is creating a platform for community involvement and community contribution between students and remote areas. We hope the project can be designed to be easily accessible and with a healthy business

model for expanding its influences.

## 1.3 Thesis Overview

This paper follows the basic structure of a design thesis, while it also serves as a journal of a real business. Here are the contents of each chapter (Figure 1.11):

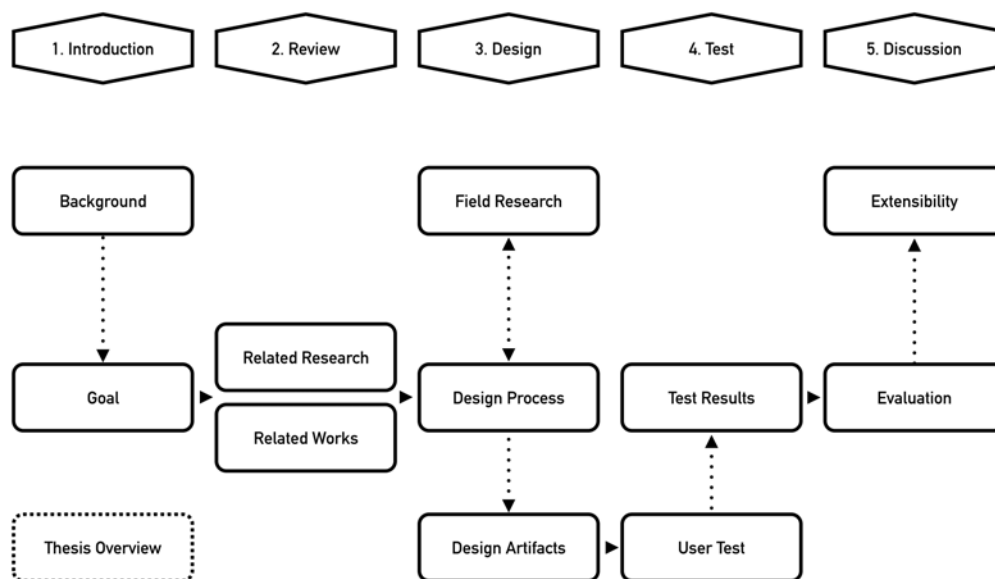


Figure 1.11: The Overview of the Thesis

- Chapter 1 Introduction talks about the background and the goals of the project, as well as the overview of the thesis.
- Chapter 2 Review focuses on the related research and related works of the project on the fields of education and tourism.
- Chapter 3 Design demonstrates the field research of the project, as well as the design process and the design artifacts of this project.
- Chapter 4 Test explains the user test and the results of during our first free study tour, the Misawa Study Tour.

- Chapter 5 Discussion evaluates the whole project based on the given goals and discusses the extensibility of this project.

# Chapter 2

## Review

### 2.1 Related Research

In order to provide the best education and cultivate future global leaders, we looked into three related research fields of education which are global education, problem-based education, and entrepreneurship education (Figure 2.1).

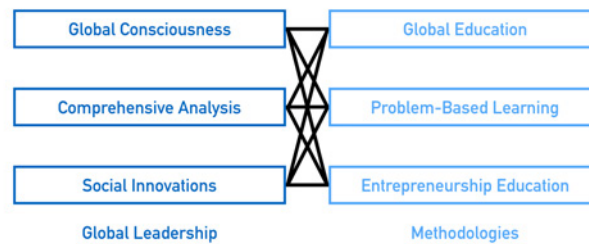


Figure 2.1: The Related Research Fields of Edcagation

#### 2.1.1 Global Education

According to the Maastricht Global Education Declaration in 2002, global education is defined as the education that broadens peoples horizons to the realities of the world of globalization, and awakens them to build a better world with greater justice and equity [6].

Global education also includes intercultural education on the intercultural competence (as above), which refers to the ability to communicate with people with other backgrounds effectively, and appropriately [4].

In practice, service-learning plays a key role in global education. It provides a chance for the students the direct awareness and engagement with the real issues

in the world, and serves as a key factor in becoming a global citizen [3].

In our project, we deeply implement the belief and the concept of global education in every part of the activities. When traveling to a place outside of the comfort zone and joining the study tour, the students will be immersed in the context of intercultural communication and the actual services in the community, in order to cultivate the global mindsets to become the future global leaders.

### 2.1.2 Problem-Based Learning

Originated from a medical school program, the problem-based learning process was firstly aiming to provide the motivations for learning by revealing the relevance of the medical learning materials and the application to the future roles of the students [1].

Problem-based learning also serves as a core pedagogy in ecological economics, with a process of (1) building the problem base, (2) analyzing the problem, (3) synthesizing the findings, and (4) communicating the results [2].

The problem-based learning process does not focus on the result with a defined, expected solution, but more about the development of the desirable skills. In the process, the tutor has to provide enough trigger materials for students to understand the situation, and build the confidence of the students as well as encourage the collaboration [5].

This LoCCo study tour program will be designed based on the problem-based learning process, with two main phases of problem-defining and problem-solving. The study tour will focus on the growth that the students would gain during the problem-solving process, as well as an interesting study experience that motivate all students to get engaged into the learning process.

### 2.1.3 Entrepreneurship Education

In this project, we provide the students the main study materials for problem-solving, which is considered to become a part of entrepreneurship education. We selected few business development toolkits as the important media for the better understanding of the circumstances, the better analyzing of the problems, and better presentation to the group members and the shareholders. One of the core toolkits we are using is the value proposition canvas (Figure 2.2).

The value proposition shows the product-market fit of an organization, and is a joint print between business strategy and brand strategy. The original version

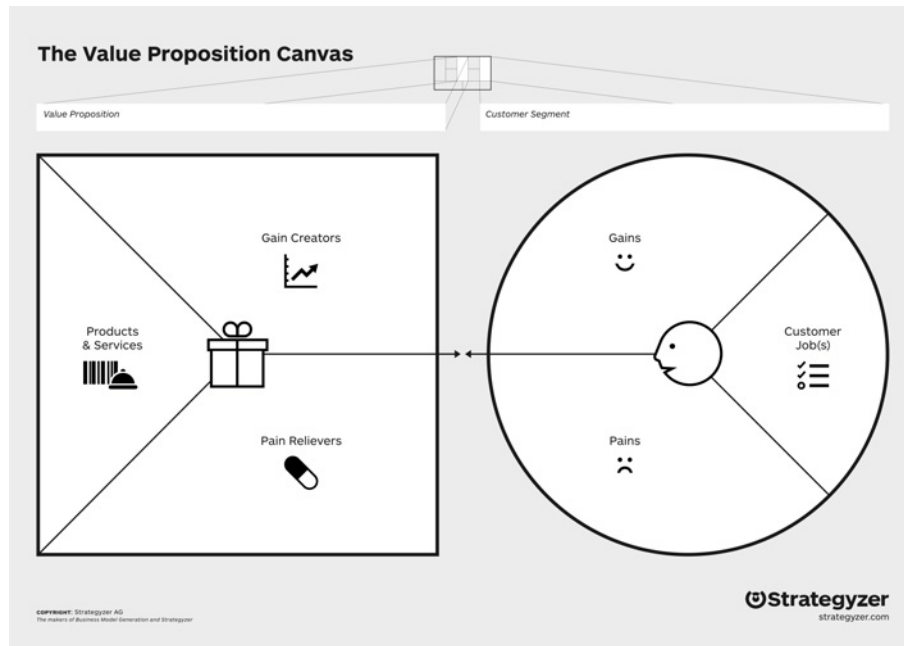


Figure 2.2: Value Proposition Canvas ©Strategyzer

of value proposition canvas was developed by Alex Osterwalder and his team in 2012, as a most important component of their business model canvas (Figure 2.3). It involved both the consideration of the customers and the product with the thinking of the Lean Startup movement. But, it was questioned because of the lack of the considerations in marketing and psychology.

In 2013, Peter J Thomson released his iteration of value proposition canvas (Figure 2.4) based on the theories of behavioral economics and choice psychology [7]. It was decided into 2 groups of sections, the product, understanding section and the customer empathy section. The product understanding section includes the features, the benefits and the experience of a product, demonstrating the functioning attributes of the product, the ways that the product makes the customers life better, and the feeling of using the product. The customer empathy section includes the wants, the needs and the fees of the customers, showing the emotional drivers, rational drivers and the dark side of decision-making for a customer. The canvas also includes a substitutes section. It refers to the potential alternatives for your product based on the customers behaviors.

In our project, the value proposition canvas is used as a core workshop material for the students to discuss on, and to develop innovative product ideas and



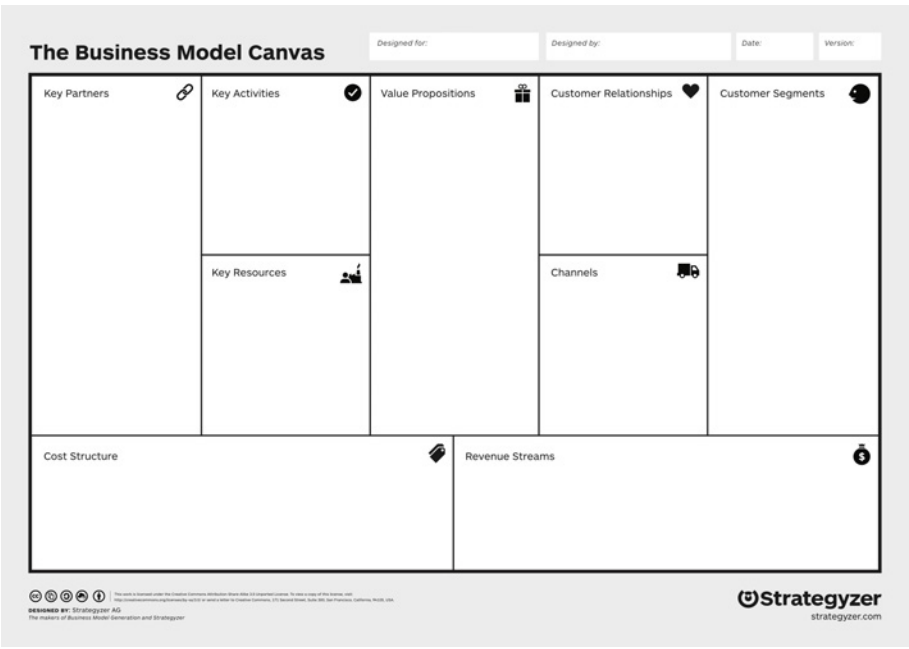


Figure 2.3: Business Model Canvas ©Strategyzer

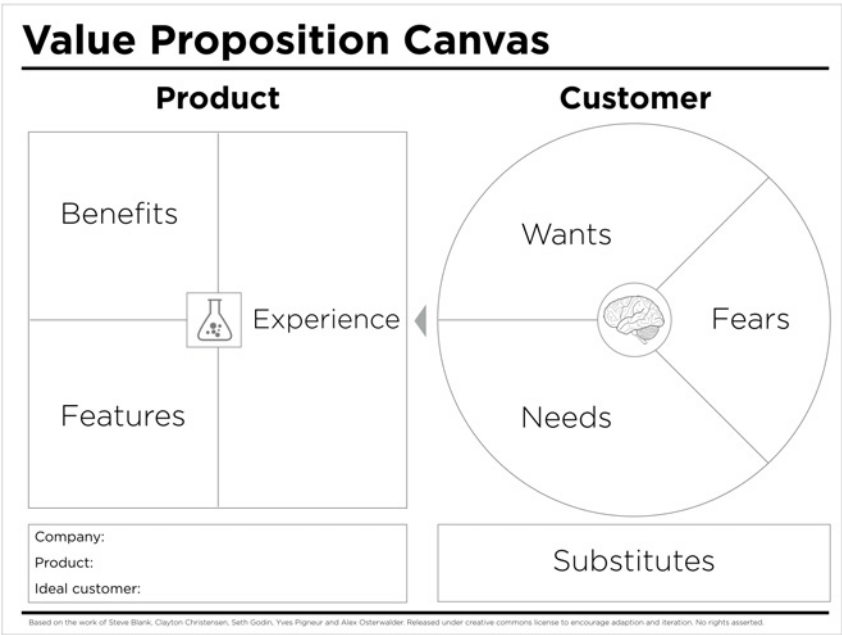


Figure 2.4: Value Proposition Canvas ©Peter J Thomson

marketing strategies for the local stakeholders.

## 2.2 Related Works

### 2.2.1 AIESEC

AIESEC (Figure 2.5) is the worlds largest youth-run organization, it runs global internship programs and international volunteer programs provide young students a platform for leadership development and cross-cultural experiences.



Figure 2.5: The Logo of AIESEC ©AIESEC

The main programs that AIESEC offers are international internship programs named Global Talent and Voluntary internships named Global Volunteer. Global Talent programs are usually 3 to 18 months long and in the fields of management, technology and education, while Global Volunteer programs are related to various projects including environmental sustainability, education and human rights.

I personally was a member of AIESEC in the year of 2011 and had learnt a lot of the international communication from the program. Different from AIESEC, LoCCo builds a stronger relationships with the local stakeholders and has a control of the entire program, which focuses more on the study outcomes of the students by providing well-facilitated workshops.

### 2.2.2 TAKTOPIA & Co.

TAKTOPIA & Co. (Figure 2.6) is a Japanese education company focusing on providing the educational programs to cultivate the future Glocal Leaders. The term Glocal Leaders refers to the talents with the both the consciousness of a globalized world and the capability of solving local problems.

Two of the core programs that TAKTOPIA is offering is the entrepreneurship camp and the overseas study tour, both of the programs focus on the process of problem-defining and problem-solving based on the MITs 24-step guide on disciplined entrepreneurship. It also provides the workshops for the students to

talk about the business plan and a pitch session for students to present their proposals.



Figure 2.6: The Logo of TAKPOPIA ©TAKPOPIA Co.

Personally, I visited this company twice to seek for the collaborations in developing the workshops. The workshops they provide are well-facilitated but only for the middle school and high school students, and they do not expect any involvement with the real local clients and stakeholders. These are different from the LoCCo study tour program.

### 2.2.3 Akita Cultural Tourism Information Project

Started by the Institution for Asian Studies and Regional Collaboration (Figure 2.7), Akita International University, the Akita Cultural Tourism Information Project is aimed to develop the inbound tourism through discovering the cultural heritages, by utilizing the perspectives of international students in this area as well as the Japanese students after one year of exchanging study.



Figure 2.7: The Logo of Institution for Asian Studies and Regional Collaboration ©Akita International University

The process of the project is divided into 3 phases: promoting the tourism resources to foreign audiences, analyzing the feedback from the overseas and then developing the new tourism products based on those feedback.

It owns a portal site named Concierge, Akita for its overseas promotion. At this time point it works well but because of the lack of the local DMO (Destination Marketing Organization), the collaboration with the local governments might limit the further impact that this project will make. There are many other similar projects which are trying to involve international students to the development of local tourism industry, but it is still vitally important for those projects to make sure they could receive the sufficient outcomes as the results of their investment.

# Chapter 3

## Design

### 3.1 Field Research

In order to find out the best education resources for the students, our project members and I have visited 5 remote areas all over Japan in a month (Figure 3.1) and conducted some test study tours in those places. Those 5 places are Shirakawa Village in Gifu Prefecture, Sabae City in Fukui Prefecture, Onjuku Town in Chiba Prefecture, and Mutsu City along with Misawa City in Aomori Prefecture. With the help of the international students who joined our test study tours, we have observed the local circumstances, talked with the local government officers and business owners, and got insights of the problems and needs in Japan's remote areas in order to shape the design of our programs.

#### 3.1.1 Shirakawa Village, Gifu Prefecture

On October 29 and 30, 2016, we visited Shirakawa Village (Figure 3.2) to seek for the possibilities of providing the students chances to learn from this world heritage. Guided with the advisor of the village, Mr. Murayama, the former vice mayor of Fussa City, Tokyo, we visited the entire village and the TOYOTA Shirakawa-Go Eco-Institute (Figure 3.3) near the village, and talked with the directors in education and tourism of the village office, the hostel owners, as well as a foreign assistant language teacher (ALT).

During the field work in Shirakawa, we found out that the whole village is trapped in the fear of losing the World Heritage record. The large amount of visitors, harvested by the World Heritage landmark, are actually damaging the villages traditions. Lots of local residents have turned their residences into gift shops, which may lead to the loss of the World Heritage record, since the UNESCO will re-examine the site regularly to make sure that it does not become a tourist trap. In the other hand, the large amount of the visitors have not brought the real



Figure 3.1: The Locations of Our Field Works



Figure 3.2: The Shirakawa Village



Figure 3.3: With Mr. Murayama and the President of the TOYOTA Shirakawa-Go Eco-Institute

economical benefits for this area. Visitors stay in the village only for 40 minutes in average, and most of the them just come to the observation deck to see the overview of the village and rush to their next destinations. This is result to the low profitability for each visitor to the village.

So, the village is trying to produce some special activities and events to attract the visitors who would like to stay in the village. The most famous one is the Shirakawa-go Light-up Event in the beginning of every year.

However, the unexpected surge in the volume of visitors of the Light-up Event in 2016 has forced the village office to postpone the announcement of the light-up event in 2017. Now the village office is working on a new system to limit the number of people allowed into the town, to visitors who will be using the local restaurants and lodgings. So, in 2017, the pressure on the transportation might be somehow relieved in a certain extent, but it would also keep the visitors to be staying in the village during the daytime. The village not only has to deal with the issue of traffic and safety in the snowy nights, but also has to deal with the manners of the visitors to protect the properties of the locals as well as the conflicts between visitors and the residences. They need the student volunteers to join the village to facilitate the communication between local people and outsiders, as well as to develop new travel experiences with higher added value for the overseas visitors. Those student volunteers will be led to experience the life of the residents and rediscover the values of the traditional cultures in this world heritage (Figure 3.4).

We are still contacting with the local stakeholders to discuss on the detailed plan for the international students or returnees in Tokyo to come to Shirakawa for the voluntary program. And we are focusing on the study outcomes for the students from this historical site as well as the positive impact to the protection of the world heritage.

### **3.1.2 Sabae City and Echizen City, Fukui Prefecture**

On November 4th to 6th, I visited Sabae City and Echizen City in Fukui Prefecture as a group leader for the study tour of the GID (Global Innovation Design) program with the students from Pratt Institute in New York City (Figure 3.5). During these 3 days, we visited the local factories and studios for producing eyeglasses, Japanese paper, Japanese knives, potteries and Japanese lacquerware, and talked with the local crafts people. We are shocked about the impact from the global markets to the local area on its manufacture industries.



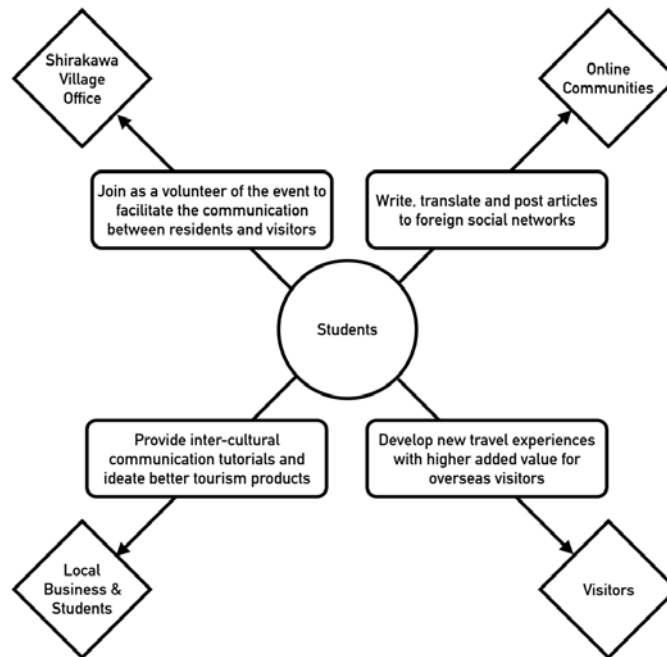


Figure 3.4: The Needs of Shirakawa Village on Students



Figure 3.5: GID and KMD Students Visiting a Japanese Paper Studio in Echizen City

As a city which is proud of its craftsmanship, currently a lot of industries are threatened by the overseas competitors who have the similar technologies with lower costs. The problem comes from the business models for most of the factories based on OEM manufacturing. In the discussion session with Takeuchi Optical Corporation, one of the biggest eyeglasses manufacturer in the city, we noticed that they only sell the eyewear to the whole-sellers in a very low price, but never contact with the end-users who actually use their products. In the other side, the OEM manufacturing also restrains them to get a good R&D team to design better products. Unlike 20 years ago, among the 3 processes of R&D, manufacturing and retailing in the value chain, the manufacturing process is getting the least profit now. So, they urgently need a collaboration with the foreign students, especially the students from the design school to help them develop better products to face the challenges from the global market.

Beside the manufacturing industry, through the discussion with the officers from the city council, we have also understood that the city is trying hard to attract foreign visitors to come to develop its inbound tourism. In the current stage, they feel a little bit puzzled about the needs of the foreigners and have no directions on providing proper services for them. Although we need to decide whether this city could become a nice destination to carry out our project, but the Kawada Art Camp, a satellite campus of Kyoto Seika University located in Sabae City, which is running inter-cultural communication programs between foreigners and local craftspeople, might be a good breakthrough for us to build an initial plan for our project.

### **3.1.3 Onjuku Town, Chiba Prefecture**

On November 13th, the members of our project visited Onjuku Town in Chiba Prefecture. The town was once a seaside resort which was famous around the Tokyo metropolitan area 20 years ago, but now it is suffering from the serious aging problem.

We had a BBQ communication with Mr. Ohchi, the chairperson of the town assembly, Mr. Kitamura, a local NPO organizer and local farm manager, Mr. Harris, a foreign immigrant from Canada who is also a ghostwriter, and the representatives of local high school students. We talked about the needs of the residents and the possible collaborations we could build with each other. They really hope to re-active the town again by inviting young students to come and talk with the local people, provide language tutoring and career counseling to the

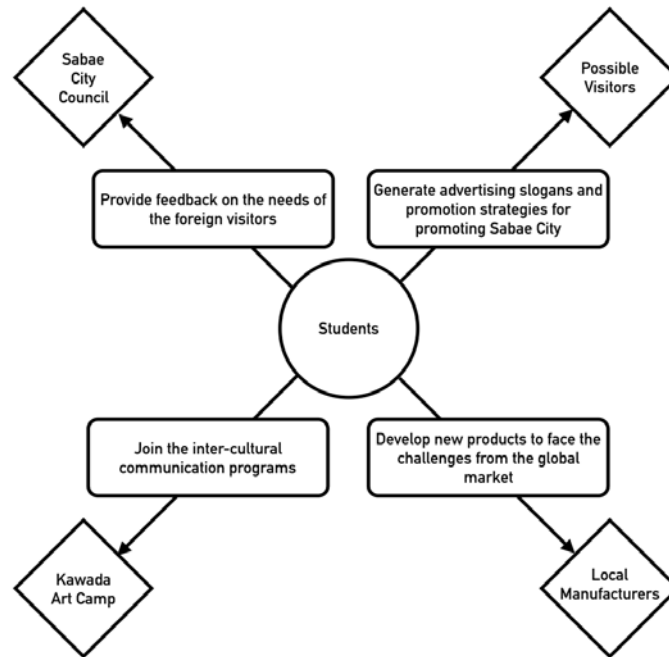


Figure 3.6: The Needs of Sabae and Echizen City on Students

local students, as well as giving ideas on how to attract new immigrants from outside to this town.

They showed us the possibilities of providing the free camping place for the students (Figure 3.7). The details of the program is still under negotiation and we hope the town office could provide more budgets for the transportation of the students, to encourage them to come and contribute to the local community.

### 3.1.4 Mutsu City and Misawa City, Aomori Prefecture

On November 19th and 20th, we visited Aomori Prefecture to get a deeper understanding on the resources they could provide for our project. This time, we also invited some international students from outside of the project to join, as an experiment of doing an official study tour program. The field work this time includes a walking tour guided by the president of a local marketing company, a discussion session which involved the director of local tourism association and foreign language teachers, as well as a workshop with the officers from the Misawa City Council (Figure 3.8). We had a press coverage on Toonippo, the biggest

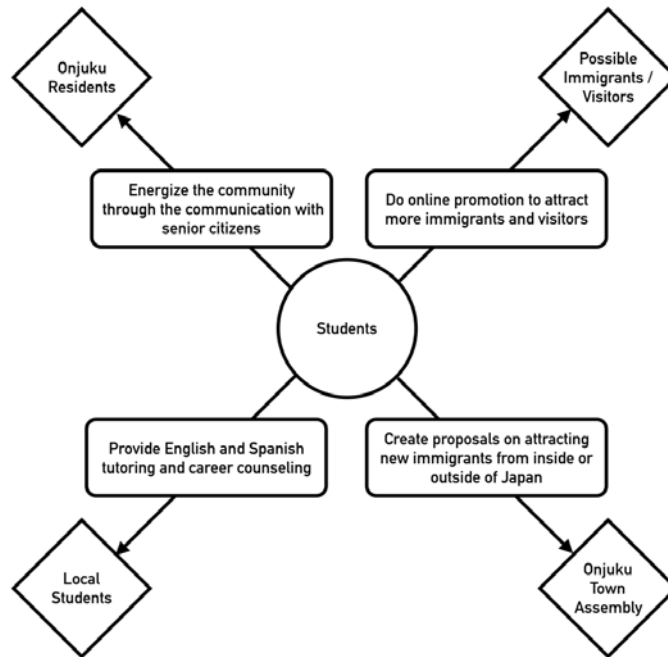


Figure 3.7: The Needs of Onjuku Town on Students

newspaper of Aomori Prefecture (Figure 3.9), and we successfully signed the contracts with both Mutsu City and Misawa City, to launch our study tour programs in these two cities for the international students in Tokyo for free.

### 3.1.5 Summary of the Field Research

Through a lot of interviews, discussion sessions and workshops with the local stakeholders in remote areas of Japan, we find that the local regions in Japan is a great platform for the students in metropolitans to study and make an impact. I summarized the needs of the remote areas on the students into 4 points(Figure 3.12):

- The needs on activation of the local community through the involvement of the students from metropolitans
- The needs on the education for the local students and business on the language skills and inter-cultural communication



Figure 3.8: The Workshop in Misawa City



津民 2016年(平成28年)11月25日 金曜日

# ほっかむりで町歩き

## 留学生 漁師の暮らしに触れる



**大間** 東京都の大学に通う外国人留学生たちが19日、マクロの一本釣りで名高い大間町で行われている「大間の浜まちあるき」漁師の強運おすそわけツアーに参加した。漁師の暮らしや文化に触れながら散策を楽しんだ。

**天妃像に感激つながり実感**

ツアーは、Yプロジェクト(鳥康子社長)が今春から実施している。留学生らは、東京都の学生でつくる一般社団法人「Bizjapan」のメンバーで、出身は中国やインドネシア、シンガポール、ロシア。地方創生について留学生の視点を生かした提言を行うことを目的に、19日から2日間の日程で県内に滞在し、ツアーに参加した。

島さんから「畑に風が当たると寒いので大間では『ほっかむり』をする。地元の人になるコスプレ」との説明を受けた一行は、頭に布を巻き、ほっかむり姿で出発した。

マクロ漁についてさまざまな話を聞きながら散策し、すし店「浜寿司」でイカのにぎりやアワビを味わった。大間町ではアワビの産地として知られている。中国や台湾など東南アジアで広く信仰されているため、中国人留学生たちからは驚きの声が上がった。

天妃は媽祖とも呼ばれ、中国出身の王麗さん(25)は「『天妃像に感激』とつながりを実感した。中国出身の王麗さん(25)は、中国や台湾など東南アジアで広く信仰されているため、中国人留学生たちからは驚きの声が上がった。天妃は媽祖とも呼ばれる。中国出身の王麗さん(25)は、中国や台湾など東南アジアで広く信仰されているため、中国人留学生たちからは驚きの声が上がった。

**だしでおいしく健康に**

**百石小親子で料理実習**

おいらせ町の百石小学校(増尾知彦校長)の5年生56人がこのほど、だしを使った料理実習に親子で参加した。だしを使うと塩分に頼らずに美味しく味付けでき、健康にも良いことを学んだ。

だしを活用する「だし活」実習では保護者から教えることもあった。

「まごか媽」とは、文化を感じることにアピールと思つたと述べていた。

同校では学習を行う「活」をテーマに、

児童ら寸劇で実例発表

市学校保健大会 心の健康教育学

Figure 3.9: The Press Coverage of Our Field Trip (November 25th) ©Toonippo

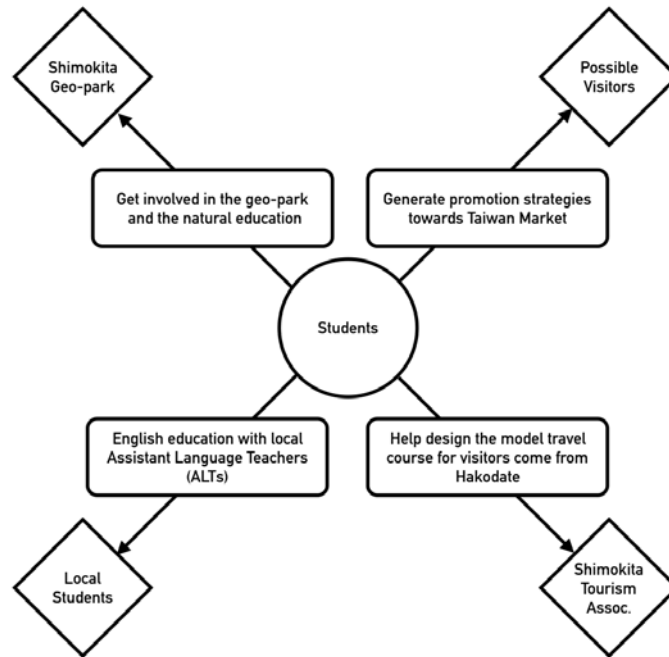


Figure 3.10: The Needs of Mutsu City on Students

- The needs on the research, design and supply the products and services to the global market
- The needs on the design and execution of the promotion strategies of the region

Japan, as a country with her amazing cultural uniqueness, but also as known as Galapagos because of this uniqueness, has to find its way to face the challenges from the globalized world. It starts from finding the solutions for the coexistence with the overseas values by building the understanding with each other, and gets even better when the values of Japan are re-discovered and developed along with the universal values. All of these works cannot leave without the assistance of the young generations, especially the students with international perspectives in Japan.

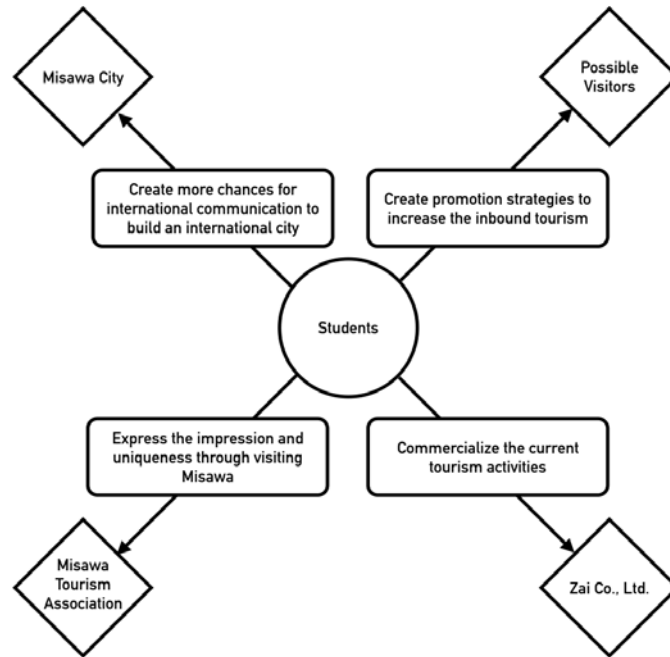


Figure 3.11: The Needs of Misawa City on Students

## 3.2 Design Process

### 3.2.1 Core Activities

In order to achieve the learning objectives, we designed to divide the whole study tour into 6 core activities to achieve a process of problem-defining and problem-solving, based on our research of problem-based learning processes (Figure 3.13):

#### Field Works

The field work is for the students to observe the status quo of the local community and find out the evidences to analyze later. The field work activities are arranged by the local stakeholders, but the LoCCo team will ensure those activities are sufficient for them to get enough findings.

There are many approaches of observation, and the participants will be required to use all kinds of the approaches they could find to get as much as information as possible. Those approaches include taking photos, interviewing, behaviors watching, and role-playing. The LoCCo team will decide the directions



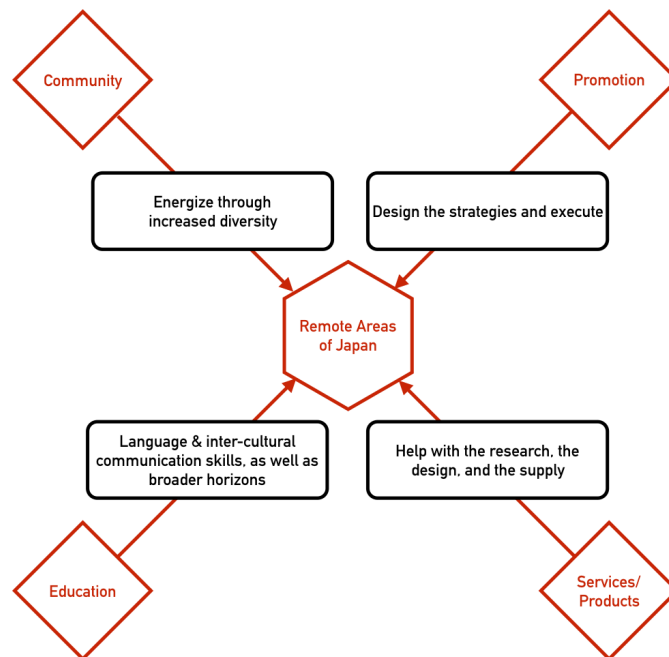


Figure 3.12: The Needs of Local Areas in Japan on Students

for the participants to collect useful information, and facilitate them to get the information smoothly through interpreting and providing hints.

### Discussion Session

The discussion session is a part of the workshop that everybody gather together to communicate what they have found on the day. Since the students may have their own discoveries through the ways they prefer, it is necessary for them to exchange ideas to ensure everybody has an overall understanding of the context. So they could stand on the same level in the next workshop sessions.

In our group discussion session, everyone has chances to talk. In each topic, we ask all participants to take turns to talk about their discoveries. As a result, the talking-listening process transfers the sensory memories to something deeper behind the experience, which always related to the reasons behind the phenomena. These insights will be the most important ingredients for finding out the real problems that they will tackle later on.

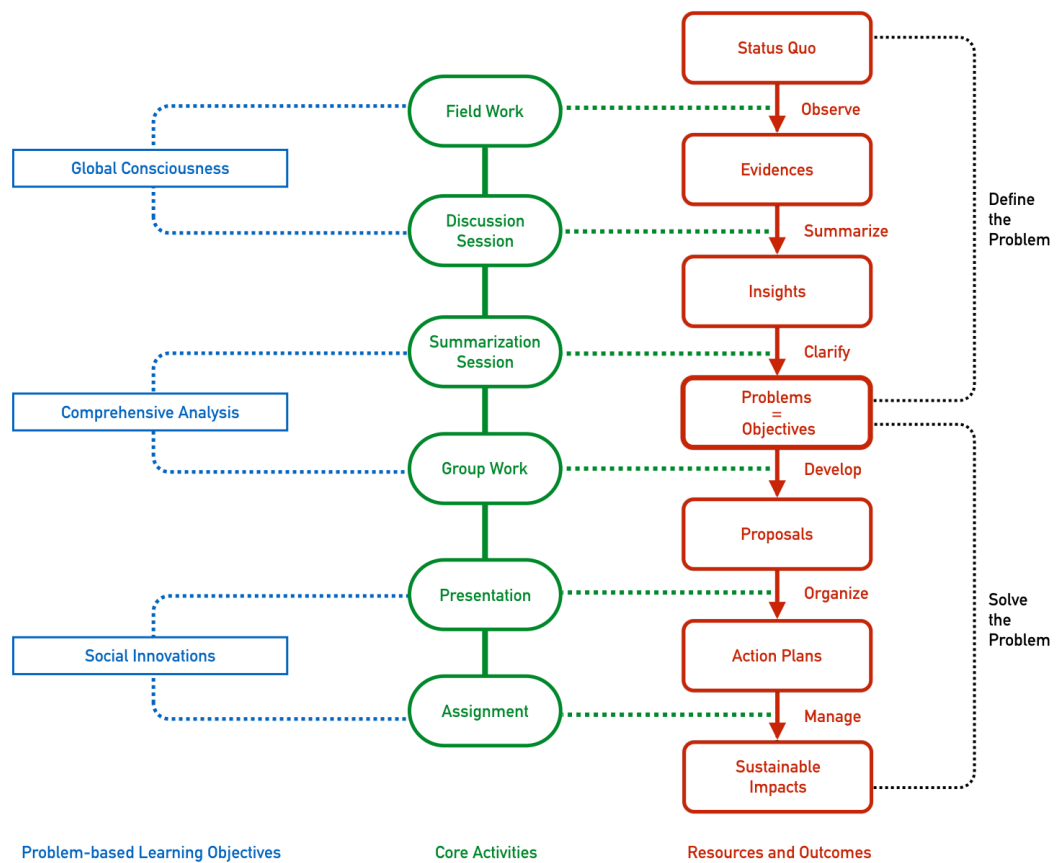


Figure 3.13: The Core Activities of the Study Tour

### **Summarization Session**

The summarization session always happens after the discussion session. This is the last session for the problem-defining process, and it is a session where the participants come out with the core topics they are going to work on.

In this session, the participants may have some time to think about all the information they have gotten so far, and each generates a conclusion of the core problem of the region that is urgent to be solved. The session could be done by individual or pairs, and finishes with a short statement to everyone of their conclusions and the reasons, in order to encourage deeper analysis for the gathered insights.

If the tour is lasting for more than one day, the discussion session and the summarization session will happen at the end of each day. And after the last summarization session, the LoCCo team will pick and merge the most representative problems to make a list of the objectives as their themes of final presentation.

### **Group Work**

The group work is a working session before the final presentation to the local stakeholders, and it usually happens near the end of the study tour. At the beginning of the group work, the core problems would be presented by the LoCCo team and everyone should pick one topic as their objective of the proposal for the presentation. After picking the topics, the participants will be divided into groups based on the topic they choose (if too many people choose one topic, the topic will be given to the ones who raise their hands first), and start to design and develop a proposal for solving the problem.

All participants will be given an A3 paper to write down their thoughts, and they are encouraged to use visual expressions on the paper to boost the communication and analysis. It also makes that every participant could contribute to the discussion.

### **Presentation**

The presentation is the most important session to gather the outcomes of the participants with different perspectives. The local stakeholders will join the presentation and give the comments to each group. The outcomes of the presentation will be later discussed by the local stakeholders and at the end of the presentation

session, a list of action plans that the local stakeholders could do by themselves or with the students.

### **Assignment**

The assignments will be announced by the LoCCo team after the negotiation with the local stakeholders based on the final proposals they provide during the presentation. The assignments are the way that connects the students and the local community together even after they come back home. The action plans are divided into packages of assignments for each of the participants based on their favors and skills. And the process of the accomplishment will be managed by the LoCCo team.

Since the tours will be always subsidized by the local stakeholders, the outcome of assignments always serves as a format of internship in return to the free or discounted study tour.

### **3.2.2 Management**

A lot of management will be needed in order to run such a study tour that involves the students from different countries and the local governments, organizations, as well as businesses.

We could not require that all LoCCo team members are fluent in both Japanese and English at the same time, so in order to run a study tour program, Japanese and English speakers have to collaborate together while taking different responsibilities (Figure 3.14).

The Japanese-speaking project leader, or the Contact Person (CP), will be taking care of all kinds of communication before and after the tour with the local stakeholders, who always can speak Japanese only. CP has to ensure that the local stakeholder will arrange everything well to provide a great traveling experience for the students. Also, CP has to negotiate with the local regions about the goals and the fundings for the study tour, in order to convey to the other project leader, the Project Manager (PM), to spread the information to the students.

The PM has to arrange all the things on the students side. If the participants have the international member(s), PM has to have the proficiency of speaking English. The PM has to recruit the participating members, arrange the preparations for the students before the tour starts, and organize the workshops during the tour. Also, she or he has to monitor the outcomes of the assignments for the

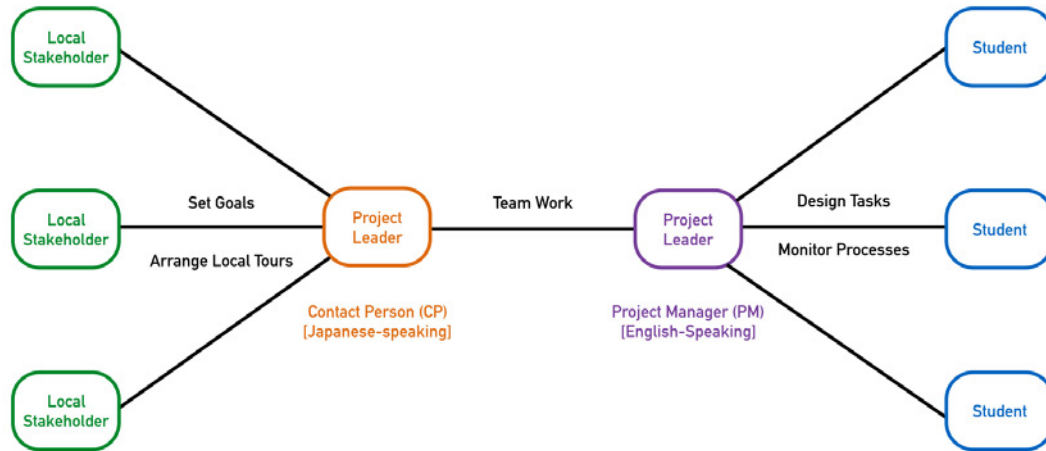


Figure 3.14: The Responsibilities of Each LoCCo Team Leader

students with the CP.

CP and PM have to work together so at least they are required to have at least one shared language they can speak to communicate with each other.

### 3.3 Design Artifacts

Under the contracts with the Misawa City Council, the study tour in Misawa City will be subsidized by the government and the local company. We designed the entire framework of the study tour with a local marketing company, Zai Co., Ltd. and conducted the tour during December 10th and 11th, 2016.

#### 3.3.1 Objectives

According to the target index for the inbound tourism industry provided by Misawa City Council, by 2018, the Key Goal Indicator (KGI) for its revenue on tourism should be doubled compared to this year. The Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) under the KGI include the numbers of the foreign tourists who stay overnight (from 12,000 to 18,000), the overseas users of experimental tourism packages which are under development (100) and the revenue for the souvenirs retailing based on the development of new products (1.2 times than this year).

As the most famous marketing company in Misawa City as well as the entire

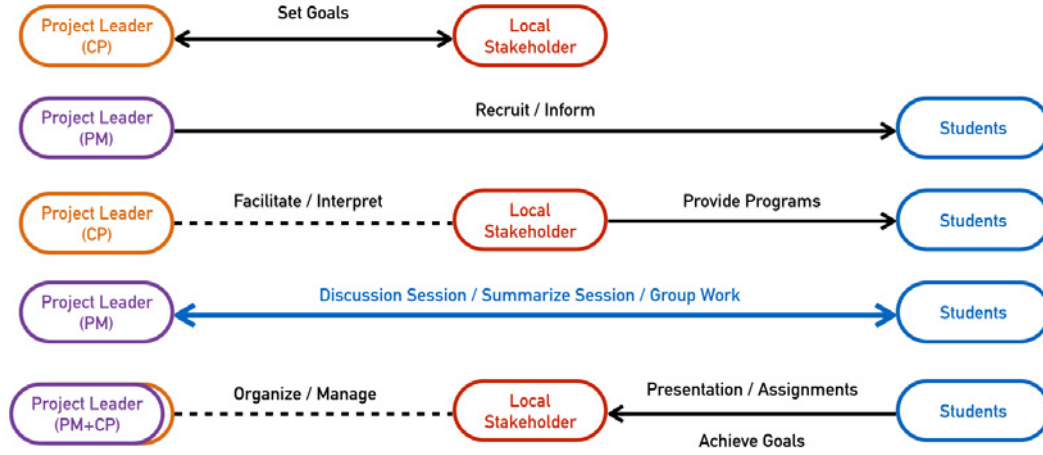


Figure 3.15: The Responsibilities of Each Participant in this Project

Aomori area, Zai is getting involved in the development and marketing for the new tourism packages as well as the souvenirs. In order to help the city to hit the target by 2018, Zai and we negotiated about the objectives of the study tour together as follows:

1. Experience the charm of Misawa and the surrounding area, provide the insights about the unique values in order to prepare for the commercialization of tourism products next year; Enjoy the outdoor activities and express the values of those experiences.

2. Research on the SNSs of your home country, and think about the best approaches for promoting the tourism of the Misawa City through the SNSs. Collect 250 posts from the SNS of your country about traveling in Japan.

### 3.3.2 Preparation

#### Recruiting

In order to recruit the students who are the most suitable for joining this program, we started a public recruitment session and designed the application form which requires the applicants to answer the question: Based on the SNS posts your friends from your home country posted during traveling in Japan, what kinds of traveling experience do you think could attract the overseas visitors the most?

We designed the posters with the link of the application form, and posted to

some Facebook groups to the international student organizations in the universities in Tokyo. And we received 18 applicants in one and half a day. The capacity for the trip this time is 6 participants and 2 team leaders, and we have already scouted 3 of them from the LoCCo project team members as well as our friends, so we have the start a screen session to select the other 3 talents that fit this program.

During the screen session we mainly focus on 3 kinds of capabilities of the candidates: ability, sustainability, and diversity.

- Ability refers to the skills and potentials, especially the language proficiencies, of the candidate to become the future leader of LoCCo project - either as a contact person (CP) to negotiate with the local government in the future, or a project manager (PM) to attract and manage the international students to achieve the goals of the local stakeholders.
- Sustainability refers to the possibility s/he would like to stay in the LoCCo team in the next year, so we prioritized the students who are planning to leave Japan after next April.
- Diversity refers to the holistic image of the team. A team with multiple backgrounds always has more advantages in providing ideas for inbound tourism to the local governments.

As a result, for the public recruiting session, we picked 3 applicants to the next study tour to Aomori, and waitlisted 1 applicant.

For the other 14 students who haven't been chosen this time, we would like to enroll some of them into the LoCCo tours in the future. We picked 10 applicants to build a Facebook group called LoCCo Priority List who have the privilege to participate in future LoCCo tours.

After this, we also created a document which introduces LoCCo Project to all of the applicants. We believe if we have more outstanding students who love traveling and would like to contribute to Japan's local area, our team would be much stronger so more local shareholders would like to collaborate with us.

### **Necessary Information and Financial Support Policy**

After fixing the participants for this Misawa Study Tour, we designed a guidebook to introduce about the objectives, tasks, schedule, transportation, contacts and

reading materials, and financial support policy for all the participants (Figure 3.16).



Figure 3.16: The Cover of the Guidebook for Misawa Study Tour

For the financial support policy, we decide to give our the subsidy in twice. The first time is when the participants arrive Misawa, which is 20,000 JPY per person, and the second time is when the participants finish their assignments, they will get the same amount of 20,000 JPY.

### 3.3.3 Workshops

We designed a schedule (Figure 3.17) with Zai which includes all kinds of activities during the two days, including the orientation, city walks, outdoor activities, store check, and the workshops. Since Zai is taking care of almost all the outdoor activities based on the large varieties of the tourism resources they have, the LoCCo team is more focused on the guidance and interpretation of the activities, as well as the operation of the workshops for the students.



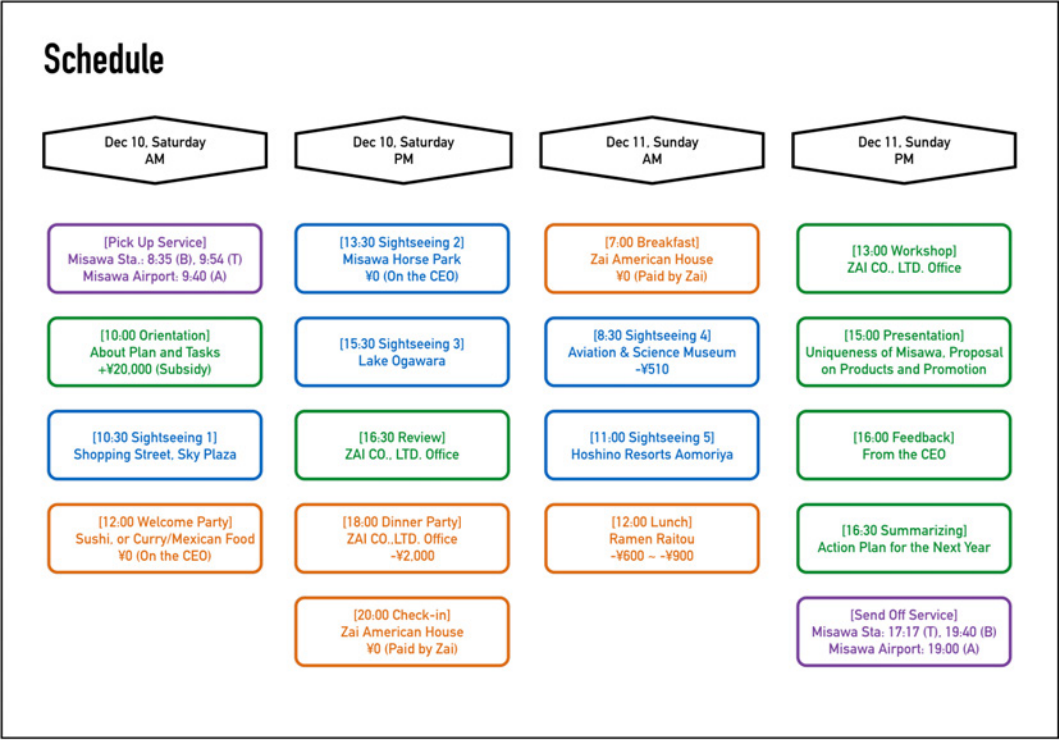


Figure 3.17: The Schedule of the Study Tour as an Initial Plan

Based on the objectives of this study tour, we customized the format of the workshops in order to bring the best outcomes from the intelligences of everyone.

## Discussion Session

Based on the value proposition canvas by Peter J Thomson, to dig the possible benefits from the current product, we have to clarify the features of the product, and this process could be done with the discussion about the experience of using the product. So we encourage the participants to express their specific impressions in the streets, activities, and the products of Misawa in details, and to think about how could the those experiences be improved to highlight the uniqueness of Misawa (Figure 3.18). We hope this discussion session could come out with more insights for the features of the current tourism situation, so we set the uniqueness of Misawa as our topic for everyone to think about the features of Misawa as well as the current tourism products.

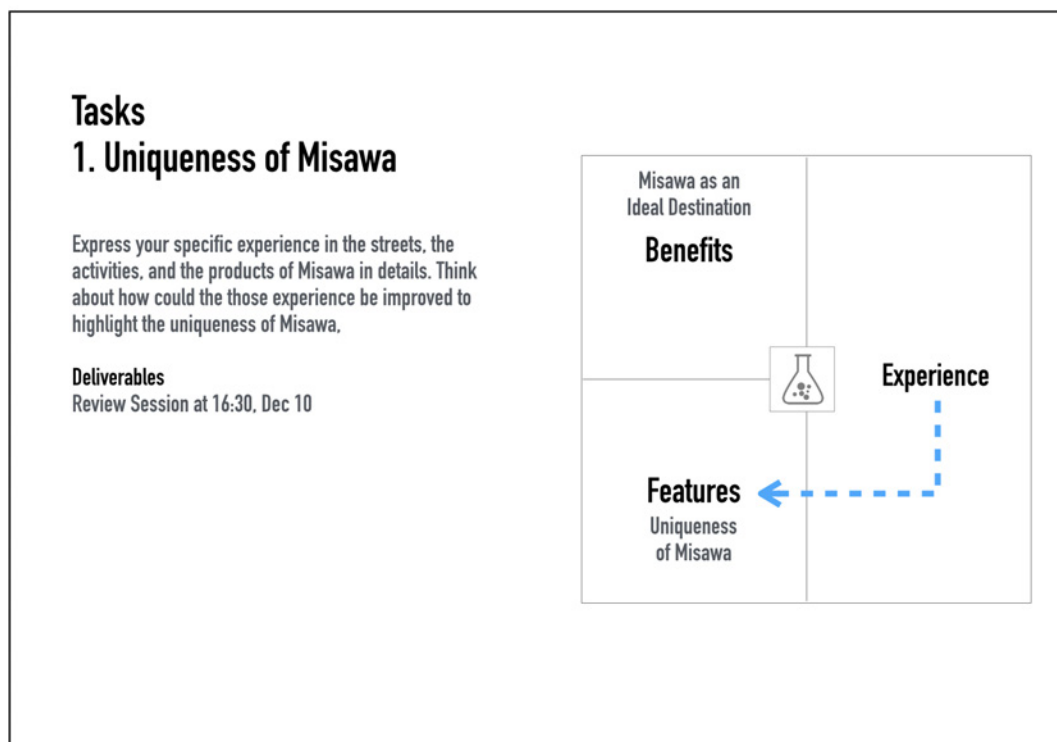


Figure 3.18: The Introduction of Discussion Session for Misawa Study Tour

### Summarization Session

After gathering the insights on the features of Misawa City, the benefits of Misawa could be mapped from the perspective of those Japanese and international students. So we set the topic of the summarization session as What Misawa could be?, letting them give conclusions for the directions that Misawa should be developed as a tourist destination.

### Group Work

As we need to give out the solution for the commercialization of Misawa's tourism products, both the tangible ones as the souvenirs, and the intangible ones as the tourism packages, we need the participants to focus on the needs of the customers as a part of the analysis (Figure 3.19).

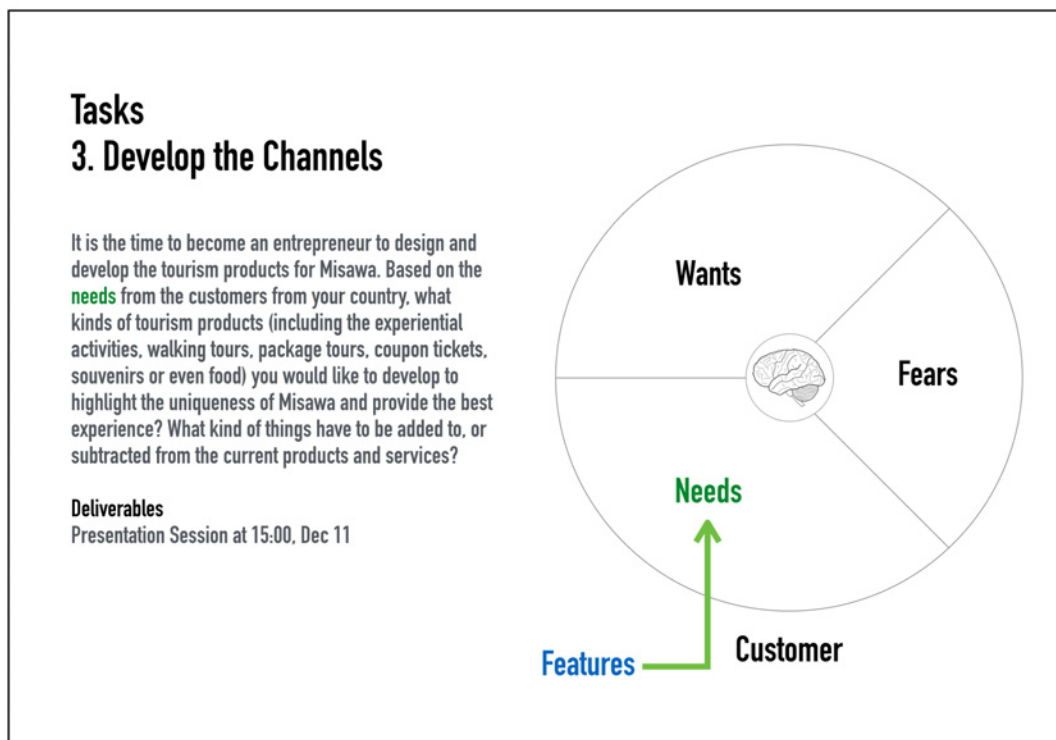


Figure 3.19: The Introduction of Group Work Session for Misawa Study Tour

In addition, we are also required to present the promotion strategies for Misawa's tourism industry, so we also encourage the participants to think about the

wants of the customers, in order to build the customer relationships based on describing the benefits of traveling to Misawa.

As a suggestion for the participants in the group work, we ask them to validate their proposals before the final presentation by thinking about the value and the feasibility of the solution (Figure 3.20).

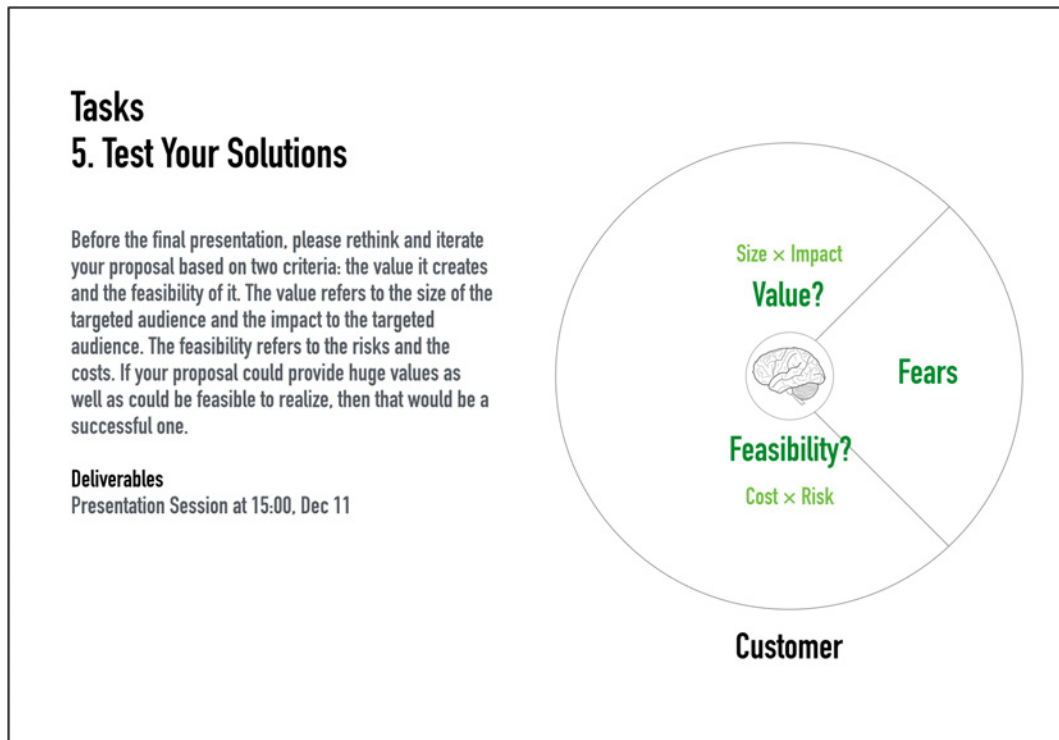


Figure 3.20: A Suggestion of Validating the Proposal during the Group Work Session

## Presentation

We divide the presentation session into 2 sessions, which refer to the proposals for the products and the proposals for the promotion perspective. And we ask the participants to change their team after the first presentation and give them enough time of group working to prepare for the second presentation.

With the change of the team, we hope the chances of communication between different participants with different background could be increased and they could be more motivated in communication and spark more innovative ideas.

# Chapter 4

## Test

### 4.1 User Test

Misawa Study Tour is the first free study tour in the LoCCo Tours program. It lasted for two days, started from December 10th to 11th, and organized by our team and Zai Co., Ltd., which is the most influential marketing company in Misawa area.

#### 4.1.1 Day One

##### Field Works

On the morning of December 10th, all the participants arrived Misawa, and the Misawa Study Tours started with a kick-off orientation meeting provided by Mr. Joboji, the CEO of Zai. On the day, Mr. Joboji and Mr. Nagahori drove all the participants around the city and visited the shopping street, horse park, Lake Ogawara and the Sky Plaza. All members enjoyed the horse-riding in the vast wilderness of snow (Figure 4.1);, as well as the breathtaking winter view around Lake Ogawara. In the evening, we also hit the local bar to talk with the soldiers from the US Army Misawa Air Base (Figure 4.2).

##### Discussion Session

The discussion session started after coming back to the American house, the place we are all living. I introduced the structures of the workshop briefly, and gave every a little bit time to remind what they have experienced during the day (Figure 4.3).

After the preparation time, the students took turns to talk about the uniqueness of Misawa City based on their own experiences in different locations. Everyone mentioned the strong image of the mixture of American Culture and Japanese



Figure 4.1: Horse-riding Experience in Misawa Horse Park



Figure 4.2: Group Picture with American Soldier in the Local Bar in Misawa





Figure 4.3: Preparing for the Discussion Session

Culture due to the American Air Base. One of the students, Minkyong Cho from Korea, mentioned that the interesting coherence of two different cultures is something you can hardly find out at anywhere else. Also, many of them mentioned the strong impact from the winter scenery in Misawa because of the heavy snow and was totally different from the atmosphere of fall in Tokyo.

The discussion was covering every place we have been to earlier in the day, and lasted for around half an hour since everyone was inspired by other students and would like to talk more about their own experiences. Although I gave them one chance of speech when we discussed on the experiences in one location, still there are many participants would like to add some supplementary comments after everyone finished their speech in the round.

### Summarization Session

Right after the discussion session, I gave each participant 3 minutes to prepare to give a summary of what Misawa could be. Each of the participants provided their own ideas, and the results are not out of those 3 topics:

1. The Unique Fusion of American and Japanese Culture

2. A Resort Place for Exploring and Experiencing the Nature
3. A Hub or Stop Point for Northern Japan and Hokkaido Traveling

These 3 topics were becoming the main directions for developing the proposals for products and promotion strategies in the next day.



Figure 4.4: Summarization Session with Mr. Joboji and Mr. Nagahori

### 4.1.2 Day Two

#### Field Works

In the second day, we visited the headquarter of Zai, the Hoshino Resort, as well as a fruit shop in Misawa. The Hoshino Resort is the main place for the tourists to stay in Misawa and is famous for its hot spring. And the owner fruit shop shows her hospitality by treating us tasting different kinds of apples in Aomori (Figure 4.5).

#### Group Work and Presentation

After having a quick discussion session and summarizing session to exchange the new discoveries we had encountered on the day, the students have to pick up





Figure 4.5: Visiting the Local Fruit Shop in Misawa

one of the three topics to further develop their ideas on the tourism products and promotion strategies. They are grouped in pairs when discuss about the products, and groups into team of 3 when talking about the promotion strategies.

After each presentation, Mr. Joboji gave a short comment to the presenters. I also asked a few questions when I know the team had the analysis of an important point but did not present it well. After the whole workshop session, he talked about the plans of small projects their company could do for the next year based on the proposals that the participants have presented.

## 4.2 Test Results

### 4.2.1 Outcomes of the Presentation

#### Proposals on Product Development

The first team, Minkyung Cho and Emil Schend, was focused on the cultural communication. They presented an idea of renovating the current Misawa Sky Plaza into an American culture center. The idea starts from setting up an American-



Figure 4.6: Introduction for the Group Work Session

style food court inside the Sky Plaza with big-sized American food for the American people in Japan who miss their home as well as the Japanese people who would like to experience America. In the weekend nights, it turns to a small American culture center and play the classic American movies. Their ideas also included an English language village, a cowboy photo booth, as well as a handbook for the visitors trying to find America in Japan. They hope they could utilize the uniqueness of the culture to target to the Americans who live in Japan, as well as the Japanese people who would like to experience American culture but have no chance to go there.

The second team, Di Xu and Do Tuan Anh, focused on the resort experience on exploring the nature. They targeted at the family travelers to provide a great experience for enjoying the nature. It will be a tourism package for families with a high-level of hospitality, various kinds of outdoor activities like kayaking, hunting and fishing, as well as some educational activities especially for kids to learn more about different species in the Misawa Area.

The third team, Daichi Ishii and Yinghan Zhang, was focused on the role Misawa City could play as a hub of the Northern Japan area. They demonstrated the necessary infrastructure that needed for Misawa to become a stopping point



Figure 4.7: The Group Work and Presentation

for foreign visitors, including more public transportation approaches and cheap accommodations. They designed the entire route for the foreigners to enjoy the great nature and traditions in Aomori and Hokkaido area and proposed a stamp relay program to encourage visitors to explore more around Misawa.

### **Proposals on Promotion Strategies**

Emil, Yinghan and Di formed a team and presented the concept of “Portal” for Misawas inbound tourism. Because of Misawas cultural and natural uniqueness, it may attract a lot of people live in Japan or even the entire Asia who would like to change their lifestyle for a while. Misawa is the America in Asia, and it is a place for escape inside this rapid-pace Japanese society. They believe the uniqueness could create great values and could be promoted through strengthening the differences.

Min Kyoung, Daichi and Do formed a team and developed a model for promoting Misawa by utilizing the students from overseas. They believe by creating the creative short movies and becoming the topic on the internet, Misawa could be well-known among the netizens through a short period of time.

#### **4.2.2 Feedback from the Local Stakeholders**

We interviewed the local stakeholders who were attending the workshops. They are Mr. Joboji, Mr. Nagahori and Ms. Narita from Zai Co., LTD. and Mr. Sakai from Aomori Global Academy.

Mr. Joboji, the CEO of Zai, commented on the format of the workshop, said that the workshop provided everyone a chance to speak, and it is very fair that everyone was getting motivated.

Mr. Nagahori, the director of Zai who is also the president of Misawa Music Lovers, commented on the progress of the workshop, said that the pace of the workshop was speedy and steady, which is beyond his expectation.

Ms. Narita, a board member of Zai, commented on the structures of the workshop. She said firstly it was so nice that someone could lead the whole conversation to make it very organized. Then she asked if all the participants know each other long time ago, and said it was so surprised that most of them are recruited right before the study tour. In fact, once she and her colleagues from Zai were worried about if the objectives they had set were correctly delivered to us, however, when she has audited the workshop, she was so shocked about the high

quality and efficiency of the workshop. She hoped we could work on the overseas promotion for Misawa City continuously, and help collect the needs of the foreign customers to develop new products that fit the global market. She said it was also a great chance for her to get the education from us.

Mr. Sakai praised that the workshop was always in control so the conversations could be progressed smoothly.

### 4.2.3 Feedback from the Students

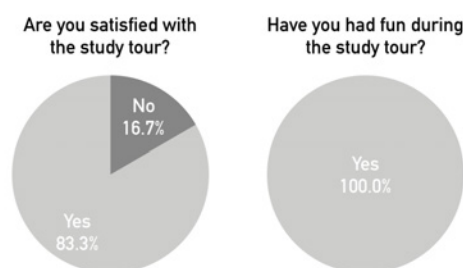


Figure 4.8: The Survey Results for the Experience of the Study Tour (N=6)

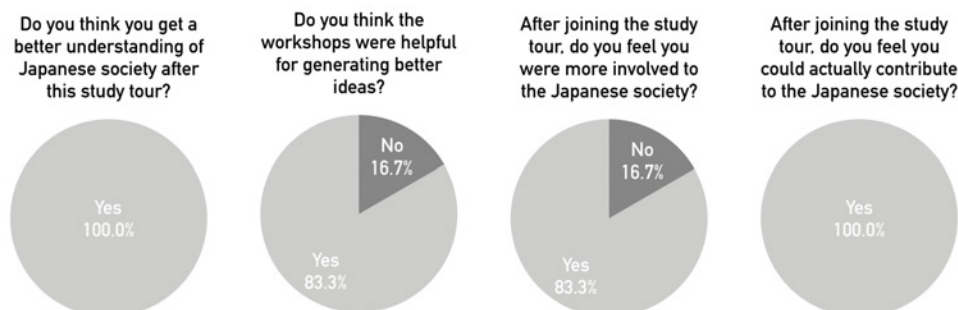


Figure 4.9: The Survey Results for the Benefits of the Study Tour (N=6)

We conducted a survey to all student participants of the Misawa Study Tour after they come back to Tokyo.

Most of the students are satisfied with the outcome of this tour. One of the students said, “I have learned how to help a community from the inside. It was very interesting to see how small communities try to capitalize on their strong

points and are trying to draw more interest in what they are proud of. I value and respect such diligent endeavors. I have seen how real love for a close-knot community looks like. I feel that my own contributions to the community were also valued very much.” Another said, “I was able to be immersed naturally in a Japanese traditional society, relishing the peaceful atmosphere within a comfortable snowy but warm-hearted city called Misawa. Not only just about Misawa have I was able to collaborate with the other team members and share diverse ideas about ways to promote the tourism in Misawa and learn more about their different countries and how the cultures differ according to the country and that will be the key to solving the marketing strategies of this project.”

They also expressed what they would like to learn in the future study tours, include the running of the local companies, the immigration policies, as well as the possibility of the joint tourism projects between countries.

However, still one of the students thought the tour is not satisfying, and saying that although the field works has provided the chances for us to go to a lot of places, they were mainly sightseeing but lack of the real immersive experience to generate insights and creative ideas. Other students, even who are satisfied with the tour, expressed the same idea of the deep involvement with the local people.

For the workshops inside the trip, the same student expressed the dissatisfy due to the lack of the experience during the field works so it is hard to express the uniqueness of Misawa. Other students gave the positive evaluation of the workshop. One said, “I would say that the study tour, especially the workshop, approached to many new sides of problems that I hadn’t thought before and I really appreciate it.” And still, one student expressed the hope that “there could be more contents in a workshop where we should learn more things”.

In terms of the organization of the study tour, one said “the only factor that can be improved is the more gender variation within the team”, while another mentioned the hope of “1-2 more Japanese who have visited many places in Japan can give us a valuable comparison on similarity and difference of the town with the others”. Also, many of the students hope that it would be better if there are better planning in the schedule.

## 4.3 Lessons Learned

### 4.3.1 Recruiting

We invited the one German Russian student, two Chinese students, one Vietnamese student, one American Korean student, and one Japanese student to join the Misawa Study Tour this time. Although, we have tried to increase the diversity of the participants by selecting the students with the multiple cultural backgrounds, somehow the group of participants still could not reflect the real needs of all travelers, especially the special needs like the food allergies or food taboos, such as the requests from vegetarian or the Muslim tourists.

In order to provide the best approaches to develop the tourism products for the local stakeholders, the inclusiveness of the design should also be discussed. In the following study tours, we will either recruit more participants with special needs by adding questions on the personal special needs, or put the inclusiveness, like vegan-friendly and muslim-friendly, as one of the significant topics to discuss within the proposals during the workshops.

### 4.3.2 Fieldworks

We arranged few visitings in the local businesses through the Misawa Study Tour including the souvenir stores, fruit shops, and antique stores. But because lacking the specific plans of the interview as well as lacking the Japanese students to do the interpretation, the depth of the insights to the local stakeholders become a bit limited.

Field trip is not just about sightseeing, but more importantly, to get immersed into the community by communicating with the local people, as well as testing the ideas by gathering the feedbacks from the local business. It is also a way to understand our real clients and get the deep empathy by standing from the perspectives of the local people, in order to provide a feasible proposal during the workshops.

In the future study tours, we will specify the tasks for the field trips in advance and encourage the students to work in pairs or groups with at least one Japanese-speaking student to serve as the interpreter to create smooth conversation.

### 4.3.3 Workshop

The outcomes from the workshops in both days seemed to be satisfying, but still, we have encountered a huge amount of problems during the workshops.

During the session of developing tourism products, although all teams provided great concepts in the product design, none of them calculated the cost of each concept so not all of them are really feasible in the real situation. So in the following study tours, we will change the format of the final presentation as a competition with the rewards of some the local souvenirs and provide a detailed criteria for the local stakeholders to select the best proposal in the end. The criteria should be focused on the value and the feasibility of the proposal, in order to create the action plans which could be actually deployed by the local government and the business owners.

### 4.3.4 Presentation and Follow-Up

After the study tour, we found that we paid less attention to the feedback session after the presentation to give the local stakeholder enough time to generate the action plan. Especially because of not all of the local participants understand English, it was a little bit difficult for them to fully understand the proposal and conduct the deeper conversation with the students.

In the future tours, we will put more efforts on the interpretation for the contents of the presentation and extend the time for the feedback session. Also, we will invite more local business owners to join the final presentation, which means the direct communication between the service providers and the potential customers, as a great chance to carry forward Japans “omotenashi (hospitality)” to a higher level in the context of globalization.



# Chapter 5

## Discussion

### 5.1 Evaluation

According to the results of the user test, we are trying to evaluate the value of this program based on the 3 criteria we presented in Chapter 1. They are the growth of the students, the solutions for the society, and the sustainability in the business (Figure 5.1).

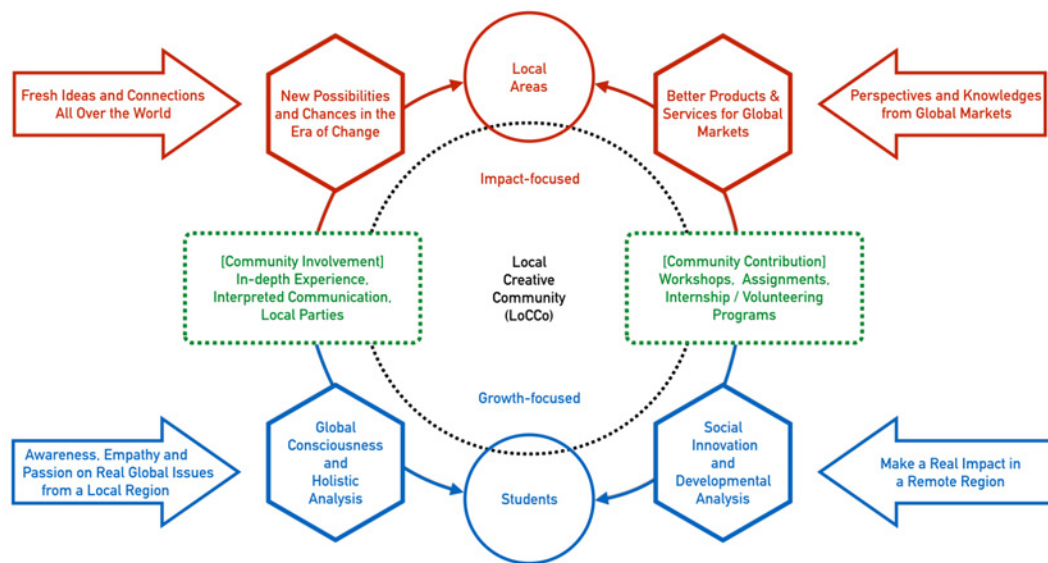


Figure 5.1: The Evaluation on the Goals of Our Project

### 5.1.1 The Growth of the Students

#### The Global Consiousness

Although we are far away from doing great to help the student participants to be immersed in the Japanese local community, the international students who joined the Misawa Study Tour this time, still found that the local community of Japan is more like a traditional Japanese society. To some extent, they get aware about the real issues like depopulation when visiting the local shopping street in Misawa City, and hold more empathy about the reason why the local government want to develop the inbound tourism. Taking the students to the remote regions of Japan does help with the improvement of the global consciouness.

Also, the diversity of the participating members helped them to deepen their global consciouness. As one participant said, Not only just about Misawa have I was able to collaborate with the other team members and share diverse ideas about ways to promote the tourism in Misawa and learn more about their different countries and how the cultures differ according to the country, the collision between different values based on the different backgrounds help them to get a deeper understanding of the world.

However, according to the survey of the participants, the field works they have experienced are still too superficial for them to get deeply through into the Japanese society. In the future study tours, we will make better arrangement on the field works with more interactions with the local residents and provide better facilitation services such as interpreting.

#### The Comprehensive Analysis

The feedback from both local stakeholder and the students proves that the well-organized workshop does help with the analysis of the local problems. With the discussion session where all students were trying to analyze the issues from different perspectives, as well as the group work session where the students worked together to build the future, the analysis of the local issues are not limited to the time and space, but become very holistic and developmental. The peer pressure in the group motivated them to think faster and in a more objective way.

## **The Social Innovations**

According to the Mr. Joboji, the CEO of Zai, those proposals that the student participants have created will be considered become the mini projects in the inbound tourism next year. At the workshops, the participants are required to validate their ideas in terms of their values and feasibilities, and the outcomes are actually satisfying. With the strong connections of our local stakeholders, this program provides a good platform for students to make impacts to the society as their first steps to change the world.

Whereas, both the local stakeholders and the students showed their hopes to make the program longer with a better involvement to the local community, so they could actually join in the execution of those proposals on the spot.

### **5.1.2 The Solutions for the Society**

#### **Problem-Defining**

The shrinking of the domestic market in Japan forces a lot of businesses put their concentration into the overseas markets, and there are the needs for them to find the foreign talents to get better understandings of the needs and the wants of the customers outside of Japan.

As Mr. Nagahori from Zai mentioned in his social media account that he got totally shocked by us and totally changed his directions of the things he is going to focus in the next year, we could find the potentials of this program on defining the local problems with our global perspectives. During the summarization session on the first day of the study tour, the directions were very clear and divided into 3 main topics based on the insights they had collected and discussed, which was beyond our expectation. We see a great opportunity for this project to become an important approach to defining the local problem in a global context.

#### **Problem-Solving**

Contributing to the Japanese society is always a difficult task for foreigners due to their language proficiency and the cultural barriers. That is why we have a PM position in our team and serve as a bridge between the foreign students and the local stakeholders. However, we still need time to examine the efficiency of the current organizing structure to see how much influence we could facilitate the students to bring to the local society.

### 5.1.3 The Sustainability in the Business

If we consider ourselves as a business, we are providing services to connect the students and the local stakeholders to have fun and work together. This is a type of a sharing economy that we are actually running a community to make values for the society, and focusing on both community involvement and community contribution for both sides. This is also the reason that why our project name is LoCCo (Local Creative Community).

The community involvement is based on the match between the both sides. On the students side, we need to offer the high-quality study tour program with low price or even be free, so it can meet the needs of the students for traveling in a low expense. And on the side of local stakeholders, we have to provide the best-fit students that may bring new possibilities and connections to the local community. For better and faster matching between local stakeholders and the students, we have to keep our core resources which are the strong connections with local governments, DMOs and companies, as well as connections to the outstanding student talents. And a platform is also needed for the further expansion to make the matching better and faster.

The community contribution is based on the management of both sides. For the local side, we need to show services we could provide to create values for the local stakeholders directly and indirectly, such as the customer research based on monitor tours, the analysis on SNS, the foreign internship recruitment, as well as the product design and development. For the student side, we have to facilitate them well to make sure they could finish their tasks easily and have fun through providing workshops and project management. And it might also be a good access for them to contribute to Japanese society and start their careers in Japan. For our program, we need good student talents to join our organizing team and become the future team leaders in each of our tour destinations.

Through the project is becoming bigger and has more influences, it is necessary to monetize it in order to maintain a sustainable business model. Currently, we are doing the project in two directions. One is organizing the free study tours and include the internship (assignment) inside the tour, and get extra commission fee from the local stakeholders. Another one is to organize in-depth study tour programs by charging the students, but without the assignments. We also believe it would be even better if we could monetize the program from the both sides, and we need some more time to explore which business model would be more suitable to our current situations.

## 5.2 Extensibility

The Misawa Study Tour is just a beginning of our business. We are now organizing other study tours to different places in Japan, as well as promoting the past Misawa Study Tour as a successful case to other DMOs all over Japan. We are also working on our website now to serve as a platform for promoting and matching.

Currently, we are mainly collaborating with the local governments to participate in the development of the inbound tourism. But we have also built up the collaborative relationships with some private sectors such as hotels and hostels to design the concepts and improved the services to attract more foreign customers. In early 2017, we will conduct our study tours in 4 new areas as well as continue the programs in our current cities (Figure 5.2). These new areas are: Komoro City in Nagano Prefecture, Bunkyo City and Itabashi City in Tokyo, as well as the Hokuriku Area (Figure 5.3), including Himi City, Takaoka City, Toyama City, Nanao City, Kanazawa City and Shirakawa Village.



Figure 5.2: The LoCCo Tours in Early 2017

We aim to solve the global issues in local areas in Japan through education, and more importantly, we aim to cultivate the next generation the capability of

第3種郵便物認可

# 中国の若者 体験ツアー

東大、早大、慶大などの  
学生で組織し、地方創生の  
企画に取り組むNPO法人  
「Biz Japan（ビズ  
ジャパン）」は31日、中国  
の若者に北陸の魅力を経験  
してもらうモニターツアー  
を実施し、関係者15人が氷  
見市を訪れた。7日まで市  
内の民宿に滞在し、氷見、  
金沢、七尾市などを巡る。

## 慶大生ら企画、民宿へ



ツアーは慶大大学院の留  
学生王匯さん(25)、慶大1  
年の趙天宇さん(20)と同1  
年の植田伊和さん(19)ら5  
人が企画し、会員制交流サ  
イト(SNS)で呼び掛け  
た。地域おこし協力隊の  
藤田智彦さん(29)が協力し  
た。

上海と江蘇省の高校、大  
学、大学院生10人が参加し、  
民宿の女将でつくる「ひみ  
活性化推進サークルRy  
u」が受け入れた。民宿「い  
けもり」と「はしもと屋」  
に宿泊する。

いけもりでは若女将の池  
森典子さんが「氷見の魅力  
を知ってください」と歓迎  
した。王さんは「地方こそ  
本当の日本を味わえる。中  
国人の若者向けの北陸周遊  
ツアーを開発したい」と意  
欲を話した。

中国の学生を歓迎する池森さん(左) ー氷見市指崎

Figure 5.3: Our Program was Reported by Toyama Shinbum, the Largest Local Newspaper in Toyama Prefecture

solving the global issues in the future. As a result, we would love to collaborate with any organizations which are interested in our services as a part or the entire solution for the educational or training programs.

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