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Integrating English Education with Practical Training: Hospitality and Tourism Internships at Hokusei Gakuen University Junior College

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Hokusei Gakuen University Junior College (HGUJC) offers hospitality and tourism internship opportunities for English major students (Morikoshi et al., 2016). The primary goal of these internships is to integrate hands-on practical career training in the hospitality and tourism industry with English language learning. These programs are conducted at various local sites as well as overseas locations. The internships include both individual placements, where students participate independently, and group tour programs offered overseas. These internship programs have evolved over the years based on the availability of participating companies and the unique opportunities provided by different organizations.

Currently, HGUJC primarily offers two types of programs for individual student participation. The first program is the "Global Internship," an elective course worth two credits. In this program, students typically secure positions in the Niseko area of Hokkaido, working in hotels and tourism-related companies for periods ranging from three weeks to two months. The second program is the "Valencia International Global College Program/Valencia Global Leadership Program," where selected students travel to Florida in the United States to work at Disney World or other hospitality-related companies in Orlando for approximately six months. Both programs offer students opportunities to work in the industry and use English in real business settings.

Each program has its own advantages and disadvantages. Group tour programs require significant time and effort from organizers for planning, and there is often concern about meeting the minimum number of participants required to conduct the tours. However, with the help of various companies and organizations, we have been able to design

interesting and suitable programs for our students. The Valencia programs are highly attractive and popular among students, but the selection process is complicated, and it is challenging to be chosen as a participant. Applicants must take an English proficiency test called Versant, followed by an interview process. The selection period is lengthy, often taking at least a couple of months. Furthermore, we must coordinate with the organizer, University Coop, which communicates with Valencia College in the United States. However, once selected, students undergo exceptional experiences in the United States. As this is a paid internship, students can offset the cost of their travel to the United States with their salary.

The Shiribeshi Glocal Internship, on which we currently rely, provides a unique opportunity for our students. Since this program is based in Hokkaido, students do not incur significant expenses to participate. Most students opt for paid internships, allowing them to save money after completing the program. Many workplaces require interns to communicate in English, helping students build confidence and improve their language skills. The primary advantage of this program is that it is organized by the regional government, Shiribeshi Sogo Shinko Kyoku, which serves as the main point of contact. As a result, it is easier for students and teachers to apply without navigating complicated paperwork. Moreover, the organizers are very supportive during the application process and the internship itself. If any issues arise, the staff from Shiribeshi Sogo Shinko Kyoku promptly address them, visiting interns or companies to resolve problems in a timely manner. They also provide pre- and post-internship orientations to cultivate students' motivation and support their career plans. Additionally, they offer events that allow interns to learn about the area and engage with local people. Although the selection procedures are not particularly difficult, some students are unable to participate due to unsuccessful matches with companies. Nevertheless, every season, three to five students are selected for the program, and they enjoy the experience. One drawback is that students' experiences in the Niseko area can vary depending on the company they work for. As many companies in Niseko are newly established or still developing, some may not have well-established workplace practices. Consequently, some students receive thorough instructions and training sessions, while others start their internships with minimal guidance. In winter, the businesses in Niseko are extremely busy, which can make working conditions stressful.

These three different programs have their respective benefits and drawbacks, and teachers should choose the one that best fits their students' needs and the circumstances of the organization.

It is important to note that these internship programs differ from those organized by the

Shushoku Shienka (University Career Support Office). The above programs provide opportunities for students to learn about the industry and gain experience in real workplaces. At the same time, students have chances to learn and use English in professional settings. These experiences will enhance students' motivation in learning English as mentioned in other research (e.g., Lin & Tseng, 2020). Furthermore, by gaining a deep understanding of the industry, students can better assess whether they truly want to pursue a career in hospitality and tourism. Whether or not they ultimately choose to enter the industry, students grow significantly through their internship experiences.

To successfully implement these internship programs, I maintain regular communication with organizers and company personnel. Specifically, I work closely with Shiribeshi Sogo Shinko Kyoku, inviting them to our campus to promote the program. I address any questions or problems that arise by coordinating with them. Whenever possible, I visit Shiribeshi to share information and even visit companies where students are interning to build future relationships.

In conclusion, HGUJC has introduced a variety of internship programs that integrate industry experiences with English learning. To provide meaningful internship opportunities, teachers should carefully consider and select the programs that best meet their students' needs and the organization's circumstances. Additionally, effective communication with internship organizers and participating companies is crucial, as is ensuring the feasibility of the programs for students, teachers, and companies.

References

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