

Report

International medical training at Aino University

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Abstract

With the decreasing population of 18-year-olds, “The Council on Promotion of Human Resources for Globalization Development” was established as one of the national strategies in 2011. The goal of this strategy is to increase the number of youths who can support the future economy of Japan and provide appropriate leadership on the world stage. The role of higher education is to develop global human resources, and for this, universities are encouraged to establish their own clear goals to contribute to this mission and play an important role. Since 2016, Aino University has provided “The International Medical Training Course” in collaboration with Griffith English Language Institute of the Gold Coast, Australia. The aims of this student-centric initiative are to offer experience of living in a cross-cultural area, to learn a global viewpoint of in-depth analysis and critical thinking, and improve English language comprehension and communication skills. This report provides a detailed account of “The International Medical Training Course” of Aino University based on a questionnaire survey involving students who participated in this course within the two years of 2016 and 2017.

Key words: International medical training course, Human Resources for Globalization Development, Short-term overseas study course, Improving English skills.

1. Introduction

The number of 18-year-olds in the Japanese population decreased to 1,180,000 in 2014 after peaking at 2,050,000 in 1992. This decrease is a major concern. As we approach 2021, it will become a serious issue for the Japanese society (www.mext.go.jp).

“The Council on Promotion of Human Resources for Globalization Development” was estab-

lished as one of the national strategies in 2011 (www.kantei.go.jp). The goal of this strategy is to increase the number of youths who can support the future Japanese economy and strive to become world leaders. The concept of “global human resources” incorporates the following three factors: Factor I: Linguistic and communication skills, Factor II: Self-direction and positiveness, a spirit for challenge, cooperativeness and flexibility, a sense of responsibility and

mission, and Factor III: Understanding of other cultures and a sense of identity as Japanese (www.kantei.go.jp).

In addition, the Council states that: “Universities must improve and enhance the curricula and system of their education so that they are in line with this age of globalization, and develop education that is attractive both for Japanese and foreign students”. The role of higher education is to develop global human resources, and towards this, universities are encouraged to establish their own clear goals for achieving this mission by playing a significant role (www.kantei.go.jp).

In partnership with the Griffith English Language Institute of the Gold Coast, Australia, Aino University has provided “The International Medical Training Course” since 2016. The aims of this course are to provide opportunities for students to live in a cross-cultural area, learn a global viewpoint of analysis and critical thinking, and improve English language comprehension and communication skills. The 3-week course includes English lessons, visiting Griffith University Hospital, taking a short lecture at the Faculty of Nursing, and holding an exchange meeting with Griffith University students. Each student stays with a local host family during this course. It is an option for all students at Aino University as one of the elective courses, and successful completion of this course will earn one credit towards their respective courses.

II. The International Medical Training Course

1. Summary of the subject

The purpose of this course is to give students an opportunity to establish a base of fundamental thinking to become a healthcare professional with a sense of globalization, while they are taking a 3-week English course and staying with a local host family during the summer vacation. The students are also expected to improve their English comprehension and communication skills with an interest in medical care, medical education, and the medical insurance system in foreign countries. With the knowledge and experience gained through this course, students will be able to make useful decisions and build their career foundations for the future.

2. Contents of the course

- 1) Orientation (twice: before departure, in Japan)
- 2) TOEIC trial examinations (twice: before departure and after returning)

3) Approximately 3-week English training at the English Language Institute of Griffith University

4) Guidance on how to make presentations using PowerPoint

5) Presentation

*Open extracurricular English lessons conducted by a faculty for the students.

4. Evaluation

Students are evaluated based on their accomplishment of tasks related to the course.

III. Students' Life in Australia

The International Medical Training Course in 2017 was held for 3 weeks from August 29 to September 19. On August 29, all students left Kansai Airport together with a leading faculty member from Aino University to Brisbane Airport. After arriving at Brisbane Airport, they were taken to the Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary and Brisbane City for sightseeing. Lunch was a casual Australian barbeque, and then they headed to Griffith University of the Gold Coast where their host families were waiting for them.

On August 30, the students took a “placement test (written and oral parts)” at the English Language Institute of Griffith University in order to evaluate their English level for classes. During the 3-week course, they had English lessons in the morning, and the afternoon was dedicated to self-study, completing homework, participating in activities organized by the activity coordinator assigned to the institute, or socializing and communicating with other international students. Weekends were spent together with their host families.

On September 7, they visited the Gold Coast University Hospital to see the differences between Japanese and Australian hospitals, and on September 8, they visited the Nursing Faculty to take a short lecture, and then they socialized with other Griffith University students to exchange their thoughts and cultures.

On September 15, the last day of English lessons, they received a diploma for accomplishing the 3-week English course and took a TOEIC trial examination in the afternoon. After the exam, they went back to their host family to spend their last night with them.

On September 16, students gathered at Griffith University with their luggage and checked in to the hotel where they stayed for two nights. In the afternoon, they organized a farewell barbeque

party with teachers, friends, and host families. The party was organized by the students; they shopped for the food, organized the layout, and cooked the food. They enjoyed eating Australian beef and seafood and reminiscing about the memories they had of Australia.

On September 18, the students left for Japan from Brisbane Airport accompanied with a leading faculty member from Aino University, and arrived safely on September 19. A leading faculty member was responsible for checking students' health and attendance every day, and dealing with students' problems if there were any. Aino University has established a comprehensive system to support the students and ensure their safety during the entire course.

IV. The results of a student questionnaire

1. The number of participating students and its breakdown

All students received the questionnaire. A total of thirty-seven students participated in the International Medical Training Course for 2016 and 2017. The number of students from each department of the school is shown in Table 1. The majority of the students were from the Department of Nursing.

2. Interest in learning English before entering Aino University

Thirty-one (86%) students had been interested

in learning English in foreign countries even before entering Aino University (Figure 1).

3. Effects on motivating students to enter Aino University.

Aino University officially informed students entering from 2016 about the International Medical Training Course; sixteen students who were of sophomore or third-year grades in 2016 did not know about the course. With the exception of these students, twenty-one students were aware of the course, and five students (23%) had chosen Aino University because of it (Figure 2). Five (31%) of the sixteen students who did not know about the course answered that it could have been a reason for choosing or entering Aino University had they known about it.

4. Self- evaluation of spoken English during the course

Thirty-one students (84%) evaluated themselves as being able to speak English, or being able to carry a conversation in English (Figure 3).

5. Experience cultural differences

Twenty-four students (65%) experienced cultural differences, and eleven students (30%) did not have any difficulties living in a foreign country (Figure 4). The difficulties experienced were mostly about the showers, food, and laundry. The students needed time to get used to the limited period for taking a shower in the host family

Table 1 The number of participating students and its breakdown

Department	Nursing		Physical Therapy		Occupational Therapy			Medical Engineering		Total
	Freshman	Sophomore	Freshman	Sophomore	Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Freshman	Sophomore	
2016	4	12	0	0	1	2	1	0	1	21
2017	1	3	7	0	0	1	0	3	1	16

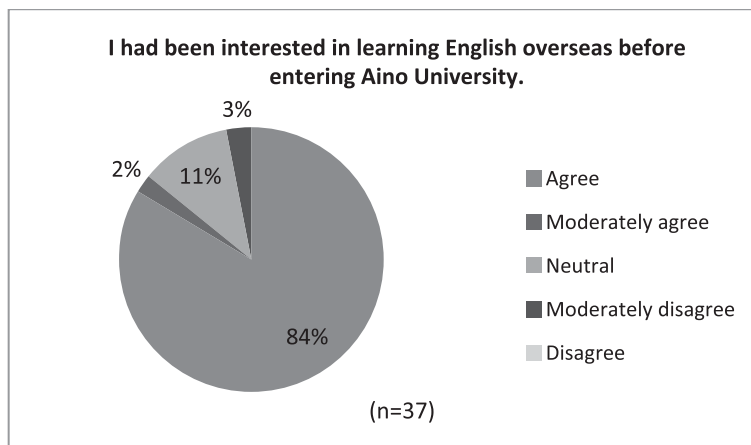


Figure 1 Students' Interest in learning English before entering Aino University

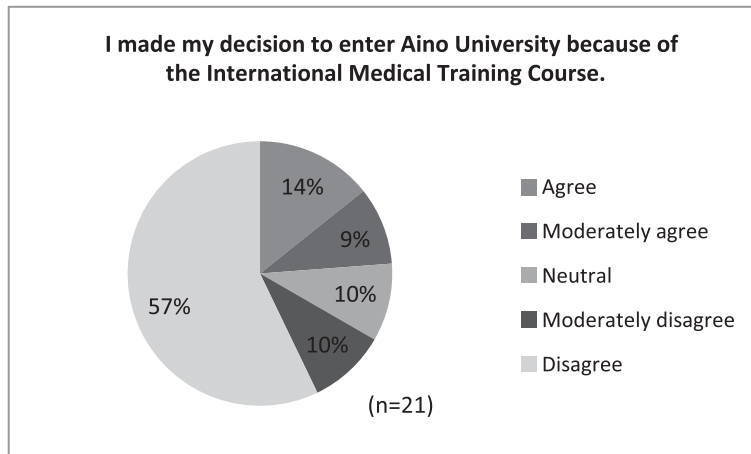


Figure 2 The effect of motivating students to enter Aino University

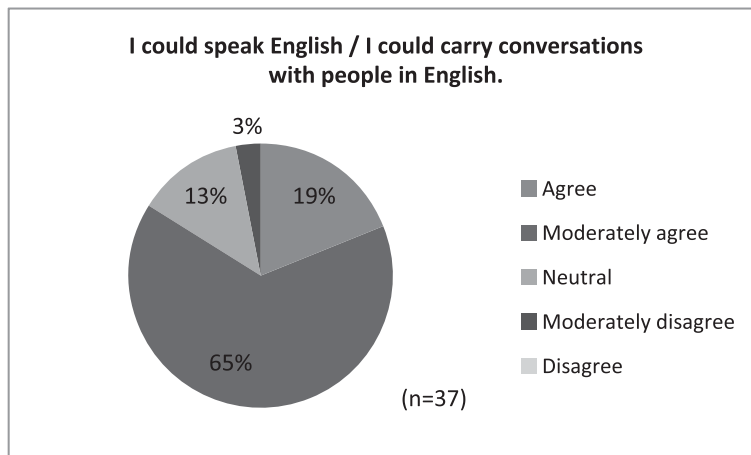


Figure 3 Self- evaluation of spoken English during the course

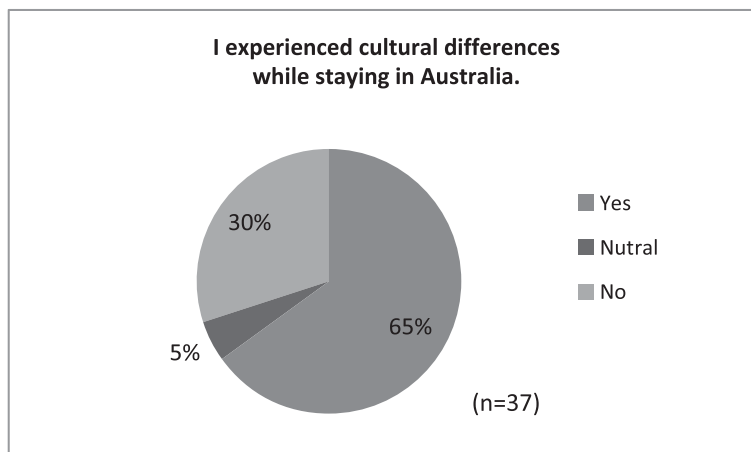


Figure 4 Students' experience of cultural differences

house and to understand the certain conditions or days when the host family does the laundry to conserve water and limitations of hot water due to the hot water systems in Australia.

6. Effects on motivating students to study English

Thirty-four students (92%) became more motivated to study English as a result of participating in the International Medical Training Course in Australia (Figure 5).

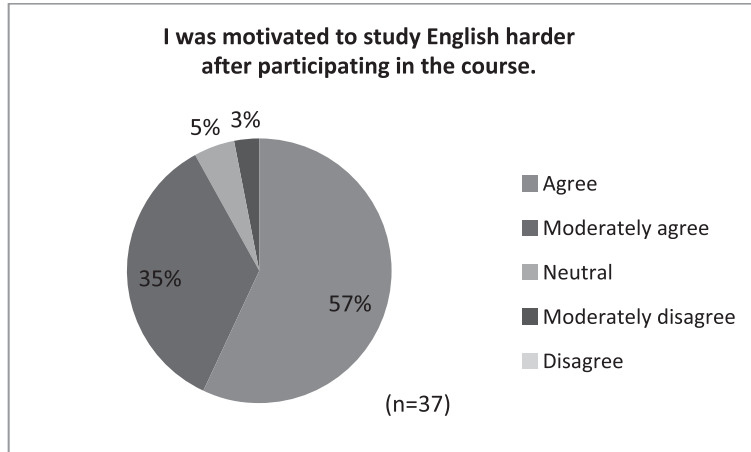


Figure 5 The effect of motivating students to study English

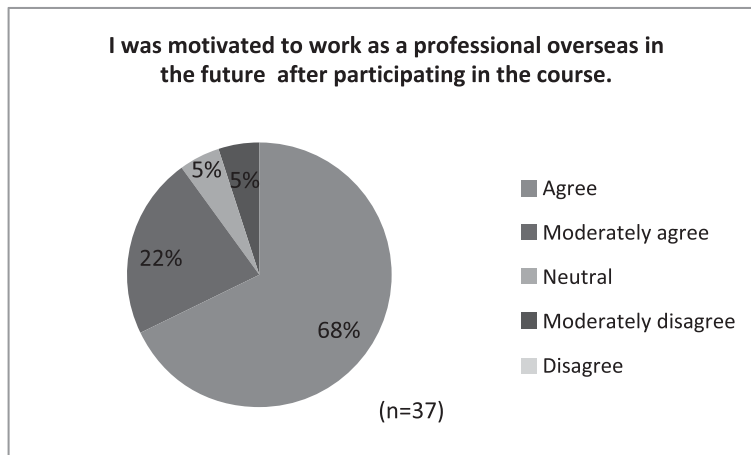


Figure 6 The effect of motivating students to work as a professional overseas in the future

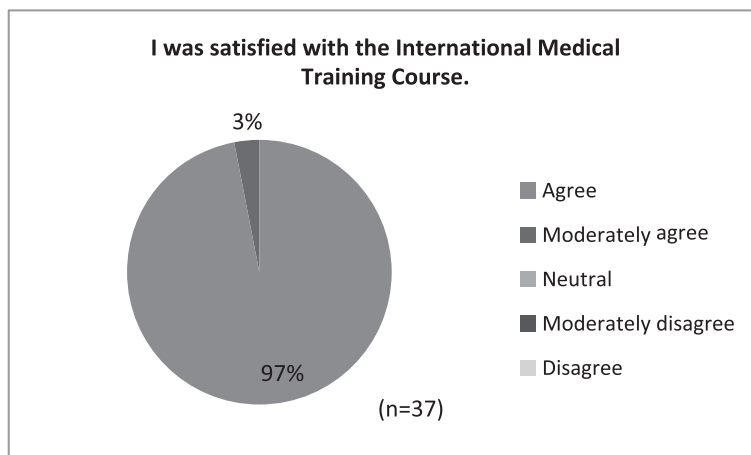


Figure 7 The students' satisfaction with the course

7. Effects on motivating students to work as professionals overseas

Thirty-three students (90%) were motivated to work as a professional in overseas (Figure 6).

8. The students' satisfaction with the International Medical Training Course

Thirty-seven students (100%) were satisfied with participating in this course (Figure 7).

V. Discussion

Almost 90% of the students had an interest in learning overseas before entering Aino University, and the International Medical Training Course became one of the reasons for choosing the university. Since the shortage in the number of university students has become a serious social problem in Japan, each university is making efforts to sustain numbers with various strategies (<http://eic.obunsha.co.jp>). Aino University has been placed among the top 50 Japanese universities for its high accommodation capacity sufficiency rate (Weekly AREA, 2017). It is essential for universities to enhance attractiveness for students in order to maintain university standards. The results indicate that the International Medical Training Course may be an attractive feature of Aino University.

The students evaluated themselves as being able to speak English or carry conversations in English while they stayed in Australia. It was suggested that they feel satisfied and have a sense of achievement after using English as a communication tool. In addition, the results showed that 90% of the students became motivated to work as a professional overseas. The levels of English comprehension and communication skills vary among the students; however, it is important for them to strengthen their confidence in speaking English. It is clear that the students gained confidence in speaking English and were motivated to challenge themselves regarding possibilities in the future after participating in the International Medical Training Course. This will contribute to promoting Human Resources for Globalization Development, especially for Factor I and II.

The students experienced cultural differences mostly related to everyday life. They had to pay attention to the use of limited resources such as water. They might not have paid attention to how much and how long they use water for showering in Japan. By learning about differences in values, especially related to everyday-life issues, such as regarding water and food, students had a valuable opportunity to understand cultural differences, and they also gained a sense of identity as Japanese. The results showed that the students can learn about cultural differences through the International Medical Training Course, and that it contributes to promoting Human Resources for

Globalization Development, especially for Factor III.

The results showed students' positive satisfaction with the International Medical Training Course over the last two years; however, there is a need to improve the contents of the course in order to enhance the quality of individuals needed to become world leaders. Future tasks of the university will be to build support systems and develop educational programs for students to keep motivating them to study English and challenging their minds.

VI. Summary

The results suggest that the International Medical Training Course is beneficial for students to promote their confidence to speak English, be motivated to challenge themselves for the future, and give them an opportunity to understand a different culture. There is a need for support systems and educational programs for students to help and guide them so that they will challenge themselves and achieve desired goals in their future endeavors.

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