A Statistical Analysis of Questionnaires Given to Students Studying Overseas in Long Term Programs.

By Robert McGuire With Translatioins
and Assistance from Ken Kawabata
and Kazuko Murakami

Introduction

The issue of the effectiveness of overseas study programs is one that has not been addressed to a large extent in the academic community. However, with increasing globalization and with Japan becoming more involved in world affairs in both Asia and other regions, a good understanding of English and other cultures is vital. According to the September 15th, 2003 issue of Newsweek, more than 40,000 students from Japan alone entered the United States last year to study. In addition, because attracting students to junior colleges and universities in Japan is becoming increasingly competitive, having a good Overseas program is an important factor that students will consider when choosing a school.

This paper is an initial attempt to statistically analyze various features of the Hokkaido Musashi Women's Junior College long-term (3 month) study abroad program. By doing this analysis it is hoped that the program can be improved, thereby affording the students better service in the future. In addition, we will be able to better determine

what programs are the most attractive to students and for what reasons.

This paper will be divided into four parts : A description of the questionnaire, an analysis of the statistics provided by students in the long-term programs, some conclusions based on the statistics and some suggestions for future changes in the programs, and finally, some closing remarks.

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was originally written in English and then translated into Japanese. It was then given to the students after they returned from their overseas experiences. Afterwards, the questionnaires were collected and back-translated into English. The results were then tabulated and analyzed. The method of analysis will be discussed in greater detail in a later section of this paper.

The questionnaire is made up of ten parts. Each section includes either a Likert scale rating of 1 to 5, one being poor and five being excellent, or a comment section for the students to write specific comments about various parts of the program.

The Questions

(A) What program did you participate in?

1. Saint Mary's University short-term program.
2. Solihull College short-term program.
3. Saint Mary's University long-term program.
4. Solihull College long-term program.
5. Oregon State University long-term program.

(B) Why did you choose this program?

1. Cost
2. Location
3. time：season and duration of program
4. My friends will go.
5. interested in the country's culture
6. want to study English
7. The school in question had a good promotional presentation.
8. other

(C) Preparation and guidance

(C 1.) Guidance from the travel agent with regard to passports, traveler's checks, and general travel information. (Likert scale 1-5)

(C 2.) Travel English lessons (Likert scale 1-5)

(C 3.) Explanation of homestay or dormitories. (Likert scale 1-5)

(C 4.) Seminar two (for long-term students only) (Likert scale 1-5)

(C 5.) Comments

(D) Foreign school's English lessons

(D 1.) Were the lessons useful? (Likert scale 1-5)

(D 2.) Were the teacher's explanations clear? (Likert scale 1-5)

(D 3.) Was the material's content easy to understand? (Likert scale 1-5)

(D 4.) Were the lessons fun? (Likert scale 1-5)

(D 5.) Was the staff helpful? (Likert scale 1-5)

(D 6.) Comments on lessons.

(E) Comments on the homestay

(F) Comments on the dormitories.

(G) Extra-curricular activities.

(G 1.) Did you enjoy the short trips? (Likert scale 1-5)

(G 2.) Were the trips and other activities well organized? (Likert scale 1-5)

(G 3.) Comments on the short trips and activities.

(H) What was the most difficult part of your daily life? (Comments)

(I) Comments on the entire program (useful／not useful).

(I 1.) Hokkaido Musashi Women's Junior College (useful／not useful)

(I 2.) Foreign college or university (useful／not useful)

(J) General comments about the program.

(J 1.) Hokkaido Musashi Women's Junior College.

(J 2.) Foreign colleges or universities.

Results (long-term program) (Students' responses are indicated in parenthesis. Comments on the responses will be made in a later part of this article.)

(A) What program did you participate in?

Responses from the different programs were pooled for reasons of statistical validity.

(B) Why did you choose this program? (Students could choose more than one answer)

1. Cost (1)
2. Location (11)
3. time：season and duration of program (3)
4. My friends will go. (0)
5. interested in the country's culture (11)
6. want to study English (12)
7. The school in question had a good promotional presentation. (2)

8. other (2)

(C) Preparation and guidance

(C 1.) Guidance from the travel agent with regard to passports, traveler's checks, and general travel information. (Likert scale 1-5)

1	2	3	4	5
(4)	(0)	(8)	(8)	(2)

(C 2.) Travel English lessons (Likert scale 1-5)

1	2	3	4	5
(4)	(2)	(9)	(7)	(4)

(C 3.) Explanation of homestay or dormitories. (Likert scale 1-5)

1	2	3	4	5
(0)	(4)	(11)	(4)	(3)

(C 4.) Seminar two (for long-term students only) (Likert scale 1-5)

1	2	3	4	5
(0)	(2)	(2)	(14)	(4)

(D) Foreign school's English lessons

(D 1.) Were the lessons useful? (Likert scale 1-5)

1	2	3	4	5
(0)	(1)	(3)	(13)	(6)

(D 2.) Were the teacher's explanations clear? (Likert scale 1-5)

1	2	3	4	5
(0)	(0)	(3)	(13)	(6)

(D 3.) Was the material's content easy to understand? (Likert scale 1-5)

1	2	3	4	5
(0)	(0)	(9)	(8)	(5)

(D 4.) Were the lesson fun? (Likert scale 1-5)

1	2	3	4	5
(0)	(1)	(3)	(3)	(15)

(D 5.) Was the staff helpful? (Likert scale 1-5)

1	2	3	4	5
(0)	(2)	(4)	(6)	(10)

(G) Extra-curricular activities.

(G 1.) Did you enjoy the short trips? (Likert scale 1-5)

1	2	3	4	5
(0)	(1)	(0)	(5)	(16)

(G 2.) Were the trips and other activities well organized? (Likert scale 1-5)

1	2	3	4	5
(0)	(0)	(2)	(8)	(12)

Analysis of the long-term program responses

The statistical analysis of the survey questions was done using two methods. This first, for question B of the survey, was a simple division of the number of responses for a particular item by the total number of responses to create a percentage. The questions using a Likert Scale were analyzed in a somewhat different fashion. The responses for each question were multiplied by their respective point value and them divided by the total number of responses, giving an average score in a range of 1-5.

According to question B on the survey, students chose their study location based on a desire to study English, 12 responses out of 42 or 28.5%. This was followed by the location of the program, 11 responses

or 26%, and an interest in the culture, also with 11 responses. Other factors that were considered were the time of the program, 3 responses or 7%, the school's presentation, with 2 responses or 4%, and cost, with one response or 2%. These findings suggest that the students taking part in this program are very aware of the cultural and academic factors associated with the various schools involved and perhaps not so concerned with the economics, the cost of the various schools.

Questions C. 1-C. 4 ask about the preparation and guidance the students received prior to their departure. Question C. 1 which asked about guidance from the travel agent concerning passports and traveler's checks had a score of 3.18 or slightly above average. Question C. 2, the Travel English lessons had an average of 3.59. Again, a little higher than average. Question C. 3 About the explanation of homestays and dormitories had an average of 3.27. The final question in this group was about Seminar two. The seminar received a score of 3.9, the highest score in this group.

Questions D. 1-D. 5 were related to the English lessons at the foreign shools. The first question, "Was the lesson useful?" had an average score of 4.22 indicating that the content of these classes met the students' expectations very well. Question D. 2, "Were the teacher's explanations clear?" had an average score of 4.13. These scores indicate that the academic programs at the schools our students are going to are highly regarded. Question D. 3, "Was the material easy to understand?" received a score of 3.81. This would seem to indicate that the lessons aren't too easy, but that they contain enough difficult material to make them challenging. Question D. 4, "Were the lessons fun?" had a score of 4.45. This indicates that the lessons were

very enjoyable for our students. This may seem to be a minor point, or, at least not a strictly academic one, but it is important for the students and for their ability to learn another language to be in an enjoyable environment.

Finally, question D. 5, "Was the staff helpful?" received a score of 4.09. This shows that the staff of each institute was very helpful to our students. Again, this is an important point contained in a fairly simple question. At some time during their study abroad experience the students will have problems, be they minor or major. It is good to know that they will be able to get help easily when trouble arises.

The final set of questions, G. 1 and G. 2, dealt with extra-curricular activities presented by the schools.

G. 1 asked the students if they enjoyed the short trips that the schools did. The average score for this was 4.6 out of 5, showing a very positive response. Finally the students were asked in question G. 2 if the trips and other activities were well organized. The average response was 4.45, again showing that the students had positive feelings about the activities.

Conclusions and Suggestions

The most interesting results came in the first question, section B, pertaining to the students' reasons for wanting to take part in the program. The students chose location (11 students), interest in the country's culture (11 students), and want to study English (12 students) as their top three reasons. The next highest reason was time : season and duration of the program, which had 3 responses. These results indicate that the students are much more interested in the academic

factors involved with choosing a school to study at than the economic or social aspects. This is important to know because it will help to better promote the schools in question.

The second section, questions C. 1-C. 3, all dealt with preparation and guidance from Hokkaido Musashi Women's Junior College. The scores for these areas were all above average, but there is room for improvement on all fronts. Information on traveler's checks and passports should be given as soon as possible in the preparation process thus giving the students ample time to get their passports and to get their traveler's checks and other financial arrangements in order for their trip. The Travel English classes need to have more of a focus on the English that the students will need for campus life as well as for getting around in the respective locals they go to. One way to do this is to ask students who have already been overseas to assist with the curriculum design for this class. The same applies for the explanations of the homestays and dormitories. It is probably a good idea to involve the students who have studied at the various institutes previously in this part of the program. They will be able to provide a better insight into the actual workings of housing at all the schools because of their direct knowledge and experience. These students are a resouce that should be utilized in the future.

Section D and G both deal with the various school's lessons and extra-curricular activities. In both sections the scores are very high, indication that the students are satisfied with what these schools have to offer.

Closing Remarks

The information in this paper is based on one year's worth of student data. In the future, as more data is gathered from the students, better ideas about how to improve the program can be formed. This paper is merely a first step in that direction.

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