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CULTIVATING RESPECTFUL INTERCULTURAL MINDSET THROUGH REFLEXIVE LEARNING

Abstract:

Japanese higher education has been using “global” as a buzzword to attract students to their institutions; however, their curricula often only focus on the theoretical and practical aspects, not on preparing students to build a respectful mindset for international business. The purpose of this presentation is to propose a respectful global mindset for international business to be included in curricula in Japan. The author has been carrying out a workshop called Workshop for Effective Intercultural Communication (WEIC) for the past four summers at Kasetsart University with students of Economics (English program). It also brings Business students of Hokkai-Gakuen University from Japan. The purpose of WEIC is to increase intercultural sensitivity for effective intercultural communication through guided learning with reflexive strategies. Students are being introduced to major intercultural communication theories through seminars followed by company visits. Students' intercultural competency was evaluated by the Intercultural Development Inventory executed before and after the workshop. Here, results show student growth in tolerance, acceptance, and respect for cultural differences where students even adapted themselves to the values of other cultural norms. However, the best learning experiences took place when entire groups of students spent days and weeks together, eating, discussing, and preparing for their presentations. The outcome of this workshop could be epitomised, for instance, by a comment that one of the Japanese students made several months after the workshop. He tried earnestly to return hospitality to Thai students when they came to Japan. It was at this moment when he actually “put himself in the perspective of others” and learned how much effort and sincerity the Thai students showed to Japanese students; reciprocal respectful mindset was thus cultivated and developed.

Keywords:

intercultural sensitivity, respectful mindset, reflexive strategy, guided learning