Critical Survival Skills in International Collaboration: Lessons Learned from a Japanese Program

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ABSTRACT
In 1999, the head of Humanitec Rehabilitation College (HRC), a private technical college in Central Japan, approached the dean of the School of Allied Health Professions at Loma Linda University (LLU) about creating a partnership whereby the Japanese students in physical therapy (PT) and occupational therapy (OT) programs would be able to complete a course of study leading to a bachelor’s degree from Loma Linda University. Eight cohorts of Japanese students spent at least one full quarter on campus at LLU. Each summer, CMD students and faculty from LLU went to HRC to offer accent-modification clinic and prepare the students for life at LLU. This presentation shares the lessons learned by the coordinator and the CMD faculty participants.

PROGRAM COORDINATOR SHARES LESSONS LEARNED

I. Define the objectives and refine the methods

- Identify goals for LLU-HRC collaboration to be:
  - Upgrade OT and PT education in Japan
  - Prepare clinicians to meet the needs of a graying population in Japan

- Initial challenges were to understand PT/OT education in Japan:
  - Most OTs and PTs in Japan are prepared in technical schools
  - OT and PT education was moving into universities in Japan
  - Universities faced the shortage of OTs/PTs with graduate degrees

II. Uphold the institution’s standards but adjust to local culture

- Lessons learned at institutional level were:
  - To harness the zeal for health outreach
    - Global Health Institute was created as a clearing house for all requests
  - To steer and facilitate academic collaboration
    - Off-Campus Review and Assessment Committee was set up

- Lessons learned produced successful results:
  - Global Health Institute now selects and supports outreach projects
  - Off-Campus Review and Assessment Committee provides guidelines
  - WASC expedites LLU’s off-campus & distance program approvals

III. Anticipate and address major concerns in MOU

- Lessons learned from working with differing attitudes:
  - Japanese administrators valued gentlemen’s agreement
    - they could not understand why a dean had to consult faculty
    - this coordinator explained faculty autonomy and academic freedom
  - They were surprised that program ended as the contract stated
    - they believe collaboration or relationship is permanent
  - Japanese faculty took time to obtain consensus
    - this process ensured everyone’s buy in

- MOU does not stipulate whether students should meet in the host country:
  - LLU students to offer accent modification clinic
  - HRC seniors to visit LLU for annual workshops

- This coordinator explained to LLU that names are phonetic translated
  - Romanized Japanese names varied in spelling e.g., Ohta, Ota, Outa

- Japanese schools hand out transcripts to the requesters
  - American paranoia about identity fraud was puzzling

- Writing competence is considered achieved by 9th grade in Japan
  - Students utilized U of Air for Japanese history and literature courses

- Lessons learned produced successful results:
  - This coordinator explained to LLU that names are phonetic translated
  - Students utilized U of Air for Japanese history and literature courses
  - Writing competence is considered achieved by 9th grade in Japan
  - MOU protects students from being abandoned before completion
  - MOU clarifies to whom students, faculty, & staff are accountable
  - MOU may have different meaning in the host culture

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