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CULTIVATION OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT SKILLS WITHIN MEISEI SUMMER SCHOOL PROJECT

Now, more than ever, people from all over the world, and especially students, participate in volunteer programs not only to donate their time to worthy causes, but also to develop certain skills necessary for gaining experience and subsequent successful employment. Meisei Summer School Project (MSSP), a multi-faceted project within the Meisei University in Tokyo, Japan, is an excellent example of an international working site for developing leadership and management skills, in which Japanese participants actively work in teaching teams with international volunteers to prepare and deliver English lessons to young learners from local schools.

Within the framework of this project, two perspectives can be considered. The first one, which is explicit, is expressed in providing opportunity to use English for local Japanese children. The second one, which is implicit, represents the functioning of the project as a learning site to acquire varied knowledge and skills: through the experiences of MSSP, both international volunteers and Meisei students will learn teamwork, leadership, intercultural communication, and risk management. I was concerned about how the second, implicit, side of this project is revealed.

The aim of this research is to analyze MSSP as a platform for the development of leadership and managerial qualities and skills, as well as to demonstrate on the example of our team's work what skills can be formed and how this can help in the future. I identified and analyzed the stages of our work in the course of the project, the approaches used to solve problems and the interaction between the participants, which had a direct impact on the formation and development of skills.

In the summer of 2020, due to the unfavorable epidemiological situation, it was decided to conduct the MSSP entirely in an online format using the Zoom platform. This peculiarity had a major impact on the cooperation with team members, as well as the functioning of the project as a whole. However, this did not prevent participants from acquiring new skills. On the contrary, it positively affected their development, since this required the use of new creative approaches to building relationships within

the team and with other project participants, making teaching plans for working with children, as well as assigning responsibilities.

Firstly, through continuous interaction with students, teaching fellows, and children, team members develop interpersonal communication skills. In this case, volunteers are formed into teams which bring together people of different social backgrounds, cultures, and nationalities. They are supported by staff who act as mentors and role models through challenging experiences. Our team consisted of nine people, including four Japanese students, two volunteers from Romania, two from Belarus and one from Hungary. Therefore, dealing with multicultural participants who had different opinions about current issues – that are most often influenced by the cultural peculiarities of a particular country – has contributed to our development as global citizens and leaders, working with and valuing the team. Thanks to regular meetings, we learned how to notice different approaches and visions to the tasks, adapt to unfamiliar features of other cultures, as well as to smooth out conflicts that could arise due to cultural differences.

Secondly, being involved in discussions of work-related issues, we can foster the development of problem-solving and decision-making skills. Our team met on average from four times a week before the start of lessons and two times a day during the period of direct teaching. Our main task was to develop lesson plans and fill them with the necessary content. Accordingly, it was imperative to learn to listen to others, consider different options to solve the problem, apply them in practice to identify the most suitable one. To make it efficiently and to find the best possible option we adapted decision-making and summarization communication strategies through a consensus-building process based on previous general explanations or background information in order to avoid any misunderstandings. The overall idea was that all members should benefit from the decisions made by the group. It eased and structured our discussions, contributed to the resistance of fast decision-making, since, as strategic communicators in cross-cultural negotiations, we preferred to understand the atmosphere in the group.

Thirdly, working in a team within a project allows us to put an emphasis on delegation and managing work skills. Since the week of teaching English consisted of five days, we decided to delegate the work on each day to teams of two people. As a result, each lesson was taught by two main “teachers”, and the rest of the team members helped in conducting break-out sessions for practicing the dialogue between children and kept warm and enthusiastic atmosphere with them. Delegation has provided us not only a breathing space for strategic thinking to focus on the lessons we were in charge of, but also various psychological benefits. This is because, trustworthiness and faith in the work approach of the teammates not only increases their level of confidence, but also, accordingly, forces them to find the strength to work harder, since in the end, the efforts of individual people determine the overall result.

Having analyzed the various skills acquired during MSSP I can state with confidence that participation in this project contributes to the formation and evolvement of a person capable of management and leadership. As we can see, MSSP is an outstanding platform for developing the ability to work in a multicultural team, dealing and communicating with people, initiative, proactivity, system thinking - all these skills that can be successfully formed and developed through volunteer practice in the project.

Such personally transformative experience not only emphasizes leadership and management skills development, but also favors further employability enhancement.

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CARGO CULT

There is such a concept as a “cargo cult”, which makes an individual or a group of individuals try to reproduce any experience of other individuals, without understanding its principles.

In fact, the cargo cult has existed for as long as our society does. Shamanism and totemism are examples of unconscious imitation of other people’s actions. In a narrow sense, a cargo cult is a religious movement, whose followers believe that rituals will help to receive “benefits” from more advanced civilizations. This is how the term appeared: cult of cargo or cargo cult [1, p. 205].

It must be said that this phenomenon is much more common than it seems, and the victims of the cargo cult can be found in different areas. In business environment, for example, it can happen in the following cases:

1. A young company tries to seem more experienced and “grown-up” by implementing style, structure and attributes of established and larger companies.
2. A Belarusian organization copies the external style of work of similar foreign organization without understanding the key points of its business model, so that rarely helps to achieve success.
3. An established organization does not want to develop and just repeats those actions that led to its success in the past.

Generally, cargo cult in business is an attempt to duplicate the external attributes of something instead of conscious building of effective rational work.

Ukrainian startup Sixa, which appeared in 2015, has become the prime example of the cargo cult in recent years. At the time, the startup was working on a cloud computer that would allow a user to connect to a remote server and run heavy games and complex calculations on their PCs, regardless of capacity. Then, in 2017, the team released their own VR headset, but the year before that PlayStation VR and HTC Vive appeared.

In 2018, cryptocurrencies and blockchains became popular. Sixa immediately announced their own blockchain platform and ICO. All this time, the startup attracted investors and appeared on media platforms. In 2020, it appeared that the founder had disappeared with a \$ 5 million investment. Thus, entrepreneurs fell victim to several cargo cults at once, including the pursuit of fashion, mindless copying of successful strategies, and complete dissonance in causality.