

Report on Participating Special Exchange Programme at Kyoto University

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Coming to Kyoto University as an exchange student was a precious time and opportunity for me. I had a chance to attend many courses of the International Graduate Program for East Asia Sustainable Economic Development Studies, including: Field research in Japan, Qualitative Research Methods, International Development Assistance Policy, and Cross-Cultural Management. From my previous studies, I studied economics, focusing on international economics as my major and started doing a thesis on labor economics. Thus, it was a perfect time for me to study some new and interesting parts of the field of economics.

All of the classes I attended made me broaden my perspectives and think of several new ideas. Field Research Japan is a course that really opened my eyes to field research surveys and the real working of each place I visited. The first place I visited was Kyoto Makers Garage a city-funded facility that helps and supports new startups and those who needs some comfortable place to pursue their own project, big or small. The staff are full of knowledge and experience in how to support and teach the skills required to pursue ideas, develop a prototype and realize them as products. That is useful for those who have no idea what to do to develop their ideas and create their innovation but have no capital or tools. The second place I visited was a larger company incubation facility, Keihanna Innovation Center (KICK). Here I learn and gathered a new view of their working and connections. After that, I visited a tea tasting facility and could learn about Japanese tea culture in the beautiful city of Uji.

The Qualitative Research Methods which I took was an adequate class to adapt and improve my thesis. I was able to learn new methods and tips for working with qualitative data and transforming it into quantitative data to use in the next step of estimation and analysis. I also attended the International Development Assistance Policy class in which I could learn from several experienced staff from many institutions and big companies, such as the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Toyota Tsusho Corporation, and speakers from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). I could gain insights into their working, projects and relate to current international development by hearing the experiences of the actual staff of each of these organizations. The course gave me details and insight into development that I cannot get from the lecturer, the internet or textbook. Finally, the last class I attended was the exciting course “Cross-cultural Management” that made me think about how to adjust myself and open my mind to live and work with people from a different cultural background. I hugely enjoyed this class which I felt was beneficial for life as well as my degree—I could learn how to communicate, negotiate, understand, work, and live with others that have a different style and way to live.

Overall, for me the content of the program is attractive. It was a great opportunity for me to exchange my ideas with my classmates and engage practical issues with them in class. The subjects covered were entirely new to me and thus added to my past studies on my undergraduate and master programs.

My time at Kyoto University was more than just studying. I met many new friends from many different countries such as Indonesia, China, Uzbekistan, France, the United State of America, etc. that have a different culture, language, and interests. I had an excellent chance to communicate, enjoy class, make study trips and exchange experiences of both our home countries and Japan. My accommodation was quite far from the campus so I could use the time in another part of Kyoto to learn new things outside of the university area.

The courses were related to my thesis in terms of the methods to develop countries and looking at the different conditions faced and created by people. After graduating I prefer to work in the private sector or for a state enterprise. All of the courses taught me the theory of each subject, but gave me much more. I feel that I can use all of the experiences of being an exchange student in my future work. I gained critical skills with which to approach new issues and learn diverse elements in the subject. Moreover, I gained the all-important ability to work with people with different ideas, cultures, perspectives, and positions. The program was very fulfilling in that it gave me the abovementioned ability.