

Public Achievement-style Education at Tokai University - Background and Practice

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1. The History of the Citizenship Education at Tokai University

Tokai University has a background of being founded on the basis of the folk high schools of Denmark (the Folkehojskole system advocated by N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783-1872)). In 2006, the university has established the Student Project Center to cultivate students' abilities for social participation. This is guided by the university's educational mission based on its philosophy to foster students' competencies to "think autonomously, cooperate with others, deal with challenging issues, and accomplish goals." The role of the center is to provide support for student projects, in which students work to tackle social issues while developing themselves as individuals amidst their interactions with others. Currently there are 41 projects and 1,942 registered and active students at seven campuses across the country. Throughout the process of development over the last 10 years, several challenges have come to light. One such challenge is that of coordinating learning in project activities and classes. In order to facilitate learning through project activities, it is necessary to carefully design mechanisms to connect what the students have experienced and thought while working on projects with their learning and growth. For such mechanisms, it is essential to incorporate the process of self-exploration in university classes for the students to explore the influence of their actions in solving social problems. In view of this, the university has introduced "public achievement (PA)-style education", aiming to promote educational activities to cultivate citizenship while reflecting the interests of each student with sound coordination between classes and projects.

2. Tokai University's Challenge to Promote Public Achievement: New Initiative for Citizenship Education

PA educational activities have been carried out for young people since 1990 primarily in Minnesota, United States (Boyte 2015). It is seen as a new aspect of citizenship education (Kodama 2003). PA is the practice of political and social participation, aimed at nurturing motivation as a citizen alongside the skills needed to build a democratic society, through creating opportunities for authentic participation (Furuta 2015).

In 2018, Tokai University has restructured its curriculum based on the educational concept and methods developed in PA as an initiative to promote citizenship education. It has launched three PA courses – "Concept of Citizenship", "Concept of Volunteers", "Understanding Local Communities" and "Understanding Global Communities" required for the first-year students of all departments. These PA courses aim to bring out students' self-interests and connect them to their public life, and facilitate their

civic engagement including participation in the student projects to independently and actively work on solving public issues in a society. Those students who seek to develop their social participation competencies and citizenship further can proceed to PA-style elective courses, some of which provide an opportunity to explore their experience in project activities, or to develop their own ideas to establish a new project.

3. Tokai University's PA-style Education in Practice

3-1. The First Step in Required Courses: "Understanding Local Communities"

The three required PA courses mentioned above, each of which consisting of seven 100-minute lectures/workshops, support students to take the first step for cultivating their PA competencies and citizenship throughout their college days and even entire life. For example, "Understanding Local Communities" aims to promote students' understanding of functions, values, characteristics, and issues of local communities from a public perspective and facilitate their interest and awareness to participate in sustainable community development as a citizen. The course begins with a workshop for students to reflect on their own experience at different stages of their life in a local community they have lived and share such reflection with others. After a lecture on diverse challenges local communities currently face from both domestic and global viewpoints, students explore issues and resources in their communities, list local stakeholders, and suggest possible collaborative solutions both as individuals and in groups. The groupwork also aims at providing students an opportunity to experience collaboration in a team.

3-2. Further Steps in Elective Courses: "Introduction to Project: Participating in Sustainable Community Development"

The university also offers diverse advanced practical courses as part of its PA-style education for those who wish to further develop their PA competencies and citizenship. For instance, one of the authors promotes students' participation in actual community development challenges in the course "Introduction to Project: Participating in Sustainable Community Development". The course takes out the students to Miyamatsu-cho, Hiratsuka City, a suburban community near campus which has been a site of a major housing and commercial development. Amid a critical change, the community is facing issues including the communication gap between the old and new residents, the increasingly dysfunctional status of the conventional community association, the declination of the local shopping avenue and so on. In this course, students propose and implement a project as a team with local stakeholders for the community to overcome issues and transform itself toward sustainability with civic engagement. In this process, the students empower themselves as citizens to create a sustainable society.