



# Global Study Program

Cooperative Learning Abroad

2013

Schooling & Community

Chiba University

Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences

Schooling & Community





## Learning Environment: Schooling & Community

In this course, students explored impacts of schooling and community on students' learning experiences from critical, reflexive and international perspectives. In particular, we focused on the construction of a normalized educational system and culture in a local community in Finland by examining learning environments such as schools, library, bookstores and family, as well as linguistic and spatial practices among community members. The students of Chiba University and Seinajoki University of Applied Sciences considered how those normalized learning environments impacted individuals who might find themselves having an area of mismatch.

This course was interdisciplinary in scope and practical in focus. As such, the class first laid down the theoretical foundations for understanding normalized learning environment. Then Chiba and Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences students engaged in active, collaborative and experiential learning through a group project on a specific topic related to educational equity and diversity. The students reflected on their assumptions, thoughts and actions, and then collaboratively created and presented practical approaches to the topical issues.



Steps	Purpose	Conducted Schedule
Intro	Gain basic understanding of each other and about education in Finland and Japan	[Day 4] Introduction of both universities 3 Lectures on education in Finland
		[Day 5 (afternoon)] Lectures on education in Japan Group work
Field Research 1	Understand local conditions	[Day 5 (morning)] Visit design project
		[Day 6] Visit Finnish design in Teuva
		[Day 7] Visit city center
		[Day 8] Visit design expo in Helsinki
		[Day 9] Visit city hall
[Day 10] Family Visit		
[Day 11 (morning)] visit daycare center		
Idea Generation 1	Review facts, findings and generate ideas	[Day 11 (afternoon)] Lectures by high school teachers, adult education center Group work
Field Research 2	Revisit local conditions	[Day 12 (morning)] Visit Rytmikorjaamo project
Idea Generation 2	Prototype education program ideas	[Day 12 (afternoon)] Group work
		[Day 13 (morning)] Group work
Presentation	Present the idea	[Day 13 (afternoon)] Presentations





Before starting the main program with students from Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences, we spent some time to understand daily life in Helsinki, the capital of Finland, and to experience the way local people live in the countryside, through a brief stay at a summer cottage equipped with sauna and located beside a lake. We thought that it was important for us who had never been to Finland before, to be able to compare life in Helsinki, which has been named one the easiest places to live on earth, and life in Seinäjoki, a more rural town where most of our program took place.



A variety of lectures were prepared by Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences for us to learn about the Finnish education system, teaching environment and social media. We also had the chance to exchange with Finnish students our most memorable learning experiences. And we had the opportunity to visit a class of the Department of Design, in which students were busy designing a picture book.





The center of Seinäjoki city was designed by Alvar Aalto and gathered impressive structures, including the church, city hall, library and theater. We had the chance to talk with the Mayor of the city, who guided us through the city hall and taught us about Seinäjoki's history and contemporary conditions. Seinäjoki does not look as vigorous as Helsinki, but it remains a highly valued cultural center of this part of Finland.



The church and the city center included community spaces to be used by the residents. We visited the church which was adorned with mural paintings made by Tove Marika Jansson, the author of Moomin. Seinäjoki has, indeed, developed an entire tourism industry centered on the art of Tove Janson and Alvar Aalto. This region is also famous for its wood-work industry which has a long history. There is a modern complex facility which offers lessons to young wood-work artists and functions also as a shopping center.



Besides the field research trips, the students from Chiba University and Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences worked in small mixed groups in the university's classroom. They engaged in a few brainstorming tasks to rethink about their normalized views, especially regarding the community culture, school system, and spatial organizations. For example, the students drew images of their calendar in their minds and shared them with others in class. By so doing, the students got an opportunity to see how each individual saw a "reality" differently, which helped them understand multiple perspectives.



Using the information and facts collected during the lectures and field research, each student group engaged in discussions to point out some of the concerns the Seinäjoki community and/or schools might have. By negotiating each other's differences in perspectives, every group selected its own focal issue and came up with a possible suggestion to improve the situation.





As a final product of the program, each student group presented their ideas to improve the possible situation in the local community and schools. Within the limited amount of time, the students tried their best to complete the collaborative task. For example, one group introduced how individual space in a lounge room at the university could be secured without breaking a sense of community by altering the normalized use of furniture and space. Other groups also attempted to integrate their findings from the lectures, discussions and field research into their final presentations. The process of collaborative work to come up with one comprehensive presentation by negotiating each other's differences became a precious learning experience for the students.



In GSP Finland, the students of Chiba University and Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences had the opportunity to know about him-/herself and others, and experience a way of intercultural communication through the collaborative work. This program helped students realize how communication was more than just language, and how diverse we were beyond nationalities.



## Participants

### Chiba University

Naoya Hashimoto (3)	(Team) Caffeine Addicts
Asahi Hiramatsu (2)	Asahi
Yuki Kinoshita (3)	Elegant Elephants
Toshiyuki Nakagawa (3)	./ . com
Hitomi Nakamura (2)	B-dash
Makoto Nishida (4)	Asahi
Haruka Satomi (2)	Caffeine Addicts
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Aoi Tsumura (1)	./ . com
Atsushi Uehara (1)	Elegant Elephants
Yuka Yanagisawa (2)	Elegant Elephants
Tomohiro Yasui (4)	B-dash



### Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences

Toni Jämsä	Asahi
Katri Järvinen	./ . com
Anna Lassila	B-dash
Eero Mäntyharju	Elegant Elephants
Giau Nguyen	./ . com
Hannu-Pekka Piiparinen	B-dash
Toni Valtee	Caffeine Addicts
Iina Öörni-Sorvari	Caffeine Addicts

