

SpiceWorx's 9 day program changed Japanese university students from "I want to go back to Japan right now" to "I love Philippines" and "I can fit in Asia."

Metro Manila is definitely not Tokyo.

On the night of August 27, nine Business students from Rikkyo University arrived at the hotel in Quezon City, Metro Manila, Philippines, tired from the three-hour travel from the Manila International Airport. In those three hours, they've been introduced to what has been customary for the residents of the Philippines' National Capital Region: the infamous Metro Manila traffic. Also along the way, they experienced which may have been a shock to them like exchanging Yen to Peso in a Foreign Exchange shop inside a shabby hut and seeing many homes of informal settlers on road sides. It was indeed an eye-opening view of the poverty in a developing country.

Luxury is not what's waiting for them in the hotel. Low pressure showers and shared rooms with a modest size are far from the comforts a 4-star or 5-star hotel can offer. For the next 8 days, the students will be staying in a living environment very different from what they have been accustomed to back in Japan. Just on the first night, the Rikkyo University students learned that Metro Manila is definitely not Tokyo.

There is more than what meets the eye: Discovering the positive side of the Philippines.

Rikkyo University tapped SpiceWorx as the coordinator of the 9-day, 8-night Cross Cultural Exposure Program in the Philippines. SpiceWorx tied-up with the faculties of the Linguistics Department of the University of the Philippines, the country's premier university. In two days, Rikkyo students were acquainted with Philippine Economy, History, Culture and Language. "Magandang araw po", "Salamat po", and "Gusto kita" are some of their new learned phrases. They showed amazement with facts, practices and cultural items unique to the Philippines which they were not aware of prior to the trip. Through the lecture and interaction with teachers and SpiceWorx staff, little by little, they started noticing good things about the Philippines.

Rikkyo students also had the opportunity to interact with UP students through a Joint Cross Cultural Mini-Workshop. It was an intellectual exchange between the students that explores their different perspectives on the topic of happiness and money. They also learned how differently Filipinos see failure. One of the Japanese students shared that Japanese tends to look at failure as a way of losing face or credibility to others while Filipinos see failure as a learning experience and thus are willing to give second chances to others. This was very enlightening for the Rikkyo students because it tells them not to be afraid of failing. They also learned about the Filipinos concept of family that it includes not only the parents and siblings but cousins, grandparents, aunts and uncles. They have likewise seen and felt one of the best traits of the Filipinos: the Filipino hospitality. Thus, they were able to make friends with the UP students in a short time.

At the end of the workshop, no consensus was established regarding the debate on the importance of money in having a happy life but both Japanese and Filipino students ended the day with new ideas, understandings and friends.



RU students learn about doing global business through exemplars.

The program included field trips to various companies in the Ortigas and Makati City business districts in Metro Manila as well in Batangas, a province just outside Metro Manila. It is one of the anticipated activities in the program. Rikkyo students and the SpiceWorx team braved the morning and afternoon rush hours of Metro Manila. En route to the different locations, some students were diligently practicing their presentation script and others were looking at the scenery along the way like the buildings and establishments in the city and mountains and green fields of the countryside.

The two-day visit to the six companies in six different industries taught the students the realities of the business environment in the Philippines. This included learning about the advantages and challenges in doing business in the country. During the visits, Rikkyo students listened to and had meaningful and mature exchange with company leaders, and toured the facilities. The company visits were good opportunities to look at successful and effective global business practices of well-established enterprises.



Learning, embracing and celebrating cultural differences can lead to better understanding of self and others.

From the heavy traffic flow and unfamiliar food choices to shopping mall tours and interaction with Filipinos, the nine-day long trip to the Philippines provided the Rikkyo University students a glimpse of the daily life in the country. Out of their comfort zones, the students experienced first-hand how it is to be in a culture different from theirs. The discussion on Cross Cultural Communication helped them reflect on and understand more about the differences they've discovered. They were introduced to the Describe-Interpret-Evaluate (DIE) framework which can help them look at new and different experiences without becoming judgmental.

RU Students prepare to be competitive in the international business arena by improving English skills.

Good communication skills is an important facet of any business relations. One of the objectives of the program is to strengthen the English communication skills of the students. They were given chances to present an overview of Rikkyo University and the RU College of Business to various audiences. The lectures and workshop with UP students were facilitated in English to encourage the students to think and share their thoughts in English. These program activities allowed them to be more comfortable using the English not just in discussions but with other interactions. After the study tour, the students expressed becoming more confident talking in English and more motivated in improving their English language ability further.



Experience is the best teacher.

The very highlight of the program is not the activities itself. But the realizations and reflections they've brought back home with them. As they've shown during the Debriefing on the last day, concepts from the classroom discussions and observations from their daily encounters paved way to personal changes and new commitments. Rikkyo University students left the Philippines with something new about them. They've established friendships with Filipino students, built new perspectives for better intercultural understanding and gained better self-confidence. Regardless what their initial goal was, may it be to become better in English, to learn more about the Philippines or to understand poverty, the experience has cultivated a desire to become more involved and be more committed to learning and self-improvement.

All nine students gave the overall program experience a rating of "Excellent." This reflects the appreciation for the experience and learning despite the perceptions and discomforts they had on the first day. The totality of the study tour program would hopefully be lifelong lessons to them, bringing them closer to becoming successful participants and leaders of the global business in the future.

The success of the Cross Cultural Exchange Program with Rikkyo University is an addition to SpiceWorx's history of bringing outstanding results to clients. As proof of providing high value services, we have maintained a 91% Satisfaction Rate for our past training programs. SpiceWorx considers it an accomplishment to see its participants change and discover new aspiration. In our projects, we live up to our mission to be a catalyst of success for our clients.

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"Catalyst of global business success born in Asia."

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