

How to compose study tour for training <Part 1>

The role of study tour in training

Introduction

The acceptance of technical training participants is one of the types of technical cooperation implemented by JICA to solve various problems faced by developing countries. It is an important pillar of supporting human resource development, for those who will be responsible for development of the relevant fields. The training period varies from as short as two weeks to more than one year. The training curriculum also varies from observation type, knowledge learning type, and skill acquisition type, depending on the purpose of the training course.

The proportion of "study tours" differs in these training, but what is common is that they provide a valuable opportunity for training participants to observe the actual site of technology application. AAI has been engaged with rice and vegetable cultivation courses at JICA Tsukuba center, aiming to develop human resources related to these cultivation techniques. In addition, we have been involved in planning, managing and implementing various training programs, including project counterpart training under overseas technical cooperation projects.

This series will describe the points for composing effective study tours showing practical examples based on our experiences.

Significance of the "study tour" in skill acquisition type training and points to be considered

We believe that a "study tour" mainly has three roles in our entrusted training courses conducted at JICA Tsukuba. Firstly, the participants will observe how cultivation technologies and other things learned in lectures and practices are realized in the actual site, and what kind of modification/amendment is being done. In this case, it is important to link the content and timing of the visit with lectures and practical training.

Secondly, the participants will be stimulated on how to use the techniques and/or deepen understanding of what they learned through observing various cases. For example, basic ideas about marketing can be obtained through lectures, however, it is actually varied depending on the situation, so it is important to know various actual examples.

Thirdly, the participants will learn about actual approaches at the site and the ingenuity of on-site staff, which can not be learned through lectures and practical training. For example, listening to raw voices concerning, consideration of the safety of agricultural products and collaboration between the research station and extension section is the information which can not be obtained without visiting the site.

Since these three roles are related to each other, it is possible to cover multiple objectives at a single observation destination. However, it is important to compose the tour plan with consideration given to "how to show" and "how to convey", so that the participants must be conscious of these viewpoints.

Significance of the "study tour" in counterpart (CP) training and points to be considered

The major purpose of the CP training is to make use of the experience of CP visiting and observing the site in Japan in effective project implementation in their countries. Since the activities after returning to the country are clarified, it is relatively easy to specify the purpose of study tour. However, the period of CP training is rather short, generally a few weeks, therefore it is necessary to make the plan so that necessary knowledge can be obtained effectively within a limited time. It is important to arrange the visiting destination to meet the needs of CPs, through understanding both activities of the project and the characteristics of the destination.

"How to show" and "how to convey"

It often happens that a Japanese example can not be applied to the participants' country as it is, since the situation in Japan is quite different from that in developing countries. Therefore, in order to make effective use of the knowledge gained from study tours after participants return to their home countries, it is necessary to consider "how to show" and "how to convey" carefully.

For example, agricultural cooperative systems and specialized vegetable/crop production areas of Japan are completed at a high level, which will stimulate the participants to imagine future plans and activities that they are aiming for. On the other hand, if the formation of farmers' organizations and/or production areas are still in early stages in their countries, it would be more beneficial to learn the historical process and social background to the current agricultural cooperatives and production areas which have been established, showing efforts and ideas of people who have devoted themselves to developing these systems. Regarding the agriculture extension system, currently the roles of extension workers in Japan can be significantly different from those in participants' countries. In this case, it is one of the ways to clarify the difference. And it is also meaningful to convey the role that extension workers played in the development of postwar Japan, including former life improvement activities.

Even at the same place of visit, the knowledge gained is quite different according to the methods of "how to show" and "how to convey". Therefore, the most important viewpoint in composing a study tour is "What and how do you show?", based on the purpose of training.

Tsumagoi Village, a large production area of cabbage: Cabbage fields spreading all over the area which have an impact, but the participants would learn differently depending on "How to show" and "How to convey".

