

International Program Taiwan workshop experiences

School of Design, Industrial Design Course, 2nd Year

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I participated in the program at National Taiwan Normal University (NTNU) from 4 to 10 March 2024. Although it was only a short week, it was a very fulfilling and valuable experience with a total of 17 fellow students.

Nine students from the School of Design, Kyushu University and nine NTNU students took part in the program, communicating mainly in English. It was exciting to interact with people of the same generation from different countries, and we enjoyed spending time together and blending into the real life of Taiwanese people, including after school and on holidays. I was impressed by and very grateful for the depth of the Taiwanese people's hospitality, who welcomed me with very generous hospitality.

I had visited Taiwan on a personal trip before, but this time I was able to discover many different aspects of the country, which made me realize the significance of participating in the workshop program.

One of the main aims of this program was to "experience abroad as a small step in preparation for long-term exchange", and staying for a week in Taiwan, a place that is completely unknown to me, where I do not speak the language and where the social system itself is unknown, was a good opportunity for me to visualize the anxiety I would face if I went abroad on my own for a long period of time, as well as the skills I would need. It was a good opportunity for me to visualise the anxieties and necessary skills that I would face if I were to study abroad alone for a long period of time.

Day 1, 4 March 2024

I travelled alone from my home in Japan to my accommodation in Taiwan, and I remember how relieved I was when I met up with my schoolmates safely. Even though there were signs and announcements in English, I was still nervous because there were many minor points that were unclear to me, such as how to get on the train and how to wait at traffic lights. At the same time, I felt a great sense of achievement and excitement at being able to come alone. The Chinese (Taiwanese) language was helpful in many cases because it was written in Chinese characters, so I could somehow guess the meaning, but I felt that if this had been in a Western region, language displays other than English would not even be a clue for me.

That day, I left my luggage behind and immediately went for a walk around Taipei. I enjoyed

going out to a nearby night market. The city was lined with Japanese food chains and many Japanese products, and I felt a sense of physical proximity and historical connection.



Day2, 5 March 2024

The first day of the workshop started in the morning at NTNU. Both Japanese and Taiwanese students were nervous when they first met each other, but through ice-breakers and lunch time, they gradually became friends and began to actively ask each other questions. Although they came from different backgrounds, the way they put together a conversation and their temperaments were very similar, and there were many occasions when they got excited about common topics.

In the afternoon, we visited Min'an Primary School to see the frontline of STEAM education. The facilities and curriculum were so well equipped that it was hard to believe that it was a public primary school, and we were able to hear many stories that would be helpful to us as

non-design students. The curriculum was a natural extension of the Japanese arts and crafts curriculum, where STEAM skills are naturally acquired through crafts. The school building is large and the closeness between the headmaster and students was impressive. I could feel the teachers' hard, tried-and-tested service spirit and was amazed at how different it was from the Japanese public primary school I once attended.

Day 3, 6 March 2024

In the morning, we visited Taipei Municipal Zhongshan Girls' Senior High School. We observed the forefront of STEAM education in higher education and were impressed by the way IT was skillfully integrated into the classroom.

To keep up with the development of IT technology, they observed how a variety of devices are prepared and actually used in the classroom. It was interesting to see how the curriculum was organised from a different angle to STEAM education in primary schools.

In the afternoon, after attending the course again at NTNU, everyone had a good time together over dinner.



Day4, 7 March 2024

After arriving at NTNU and attending a lecture on the definition of STEAM, the students prepared for tomorrow's presentation: each group of six developed a new proposal for STEAM education and compiled it into a document. It was more difficult than I had imagined leading the discussion in English amidst a wide range of opinions. There were frustrating moments when I felt like I could communicate well in Japanese, but in English it took time to speak up and I wasn't sure if I was conveying nuances well enough, but when we finally came to a proposal that everyone agreed on, I felt a sense of achievement.

I stayed after school to finish my assignments and visited the NTNU library. The study space was very well equipped and the design of the space was fascinating. In the evening, we went to Din Tai Fung, one of Taipei's typical tourist attractions, to deepen our exchanges. On this day, there were many occasions when I wondered if I could have been of help if I understood Chinese (Taiwanese) as well as English, which increased my motivation to learn the language.



Day 5, 8 March 2024

This was the last day of school at NTNU and the final presentation was given. We were inspired by the Taiwanese people's magnificent appearance, who were used to giving presentations. After receiving the certificates, the students were dismissed, and once again we were thankful for the friendship we have built up during the workshop, but we were also very sad to say goodbye.

In the afternoon, we spent a meaningful time sightseeing at the Zhongzheng Memorial Hall and visiting a Taiwanese start-up company support.

Day 6, 9 March 2024 (10 March, returned Japan)

On the last day, we visited the National Palace Museum and Jioufen for sightseeing. In the evening, we climbed a mountain near 101 to see the night view and spent a wonderful day, a fitting as the end of our trip.

