

# What is the Role of Co-coordinator?: From Internship's Experience

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## ABSTRACT

Graduate Students in engineering at The University of Tokushima can take part in an educational program which is offered long-term internship opportunities (at a company or the government). Onishi, one of authors, took part in this educational program. She is studying environmental conservation at the university and is interested in environmental conservation activities led by residents. Striking a balance between environmental conservation and human economic activities is seen as important to society. However, the continuing in environmental conservation activities is difficult. Therefore, collaborative activities attract attention as a way of the continuing in environmental conservation activities. A person called “co-coordinator” is a key to make many people to participate in the sustainable collaboration activities. The main role of co-coordinator is connecting people who are interested in environmental conservation activities. The purpose of joining in environmental conservation activities is different from person to person depending on where they belong to or where they live. Onishi took part in the educational program to learn the techniques of adjusting the differing interests. She did her internship at environmental consulting company in Kamikatsu town, Tokushima prefecture. She participated in several environmental conservation activities and work experience as a coordinator. Through this experience, she learned not only the technique but also the difficulty of the work. This paper reports the results obtained from her experience.

**Keywords:** The role of co-coordinator, Collaboration, Environmental conservation activities, Long-term internship

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## I. Introduction

In recent years, skills of facilitation for the discussion are used in a wide range of areas. For example, the skills are used for activities on environmental conservation or local revitalization. It is necessary to build a consensus of many people. Why do all people need to build consensus? Generally speaking, “consensus building” is a communication process that shares thoughts of actors or adjusts opinions for the decision making and action among members. There are social issues such as declining birthrate, a growing proportion of elderly people, stringent fiscal conditions and diversification of individual values in Japan.

Citizens, governments and academic experts have to promote collaborative projects by addressing these issues. Promoting collaborative projects can enhance the satisfactory

results and keep these projects going. By “collaboration” here, various actors equally discuss and act to solve the problems. Therefore, we think it is necessary for all people to arrive at an agreement.

## II. The Outline of Long-Term Internship in This Study Case

### 1. Motivational Goal of Participation in Long-Term Internship

Onishi, one of the authors, is studying an environmental conservation at the University of Tokushima. She is interested in environmental conservation activities led by residents. Participants of the environmental conservation activities differ in purposes or interests. Skills of a co-coordinator are coordination of differing interests for through these activities. She took part in the educational program to learn the skills of adjusting the differing interests.

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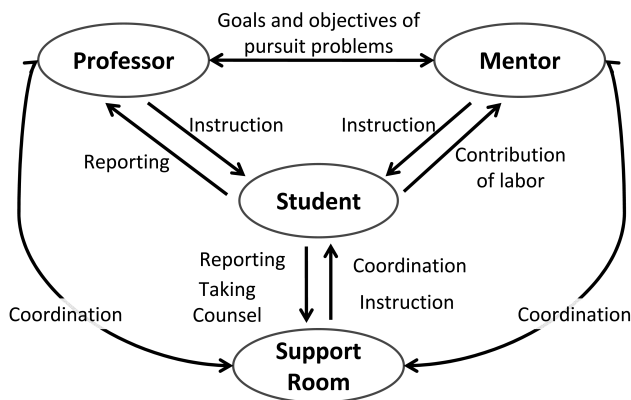


Fig. 1 The relationship among actors in long-term internship

## 2. Internship with Company

Environmental and Town Planning Co. Ltd. (ETP) is an environmental consulting company in Kamikatsu town, Tokushima Prefecture. This company supports and suggests consensus building to revitalize environmental conservation based on activities in Tokushima prefecture. Onishi decided to do her internship with ETP company.

## 3. The Relationship and Role Among Actors

Fig. 1 shows the relationship among mentor, professor, support room and a student in long-term internship. Mentor and professor have common goals and objectives to pursue problems. They are going to solve the problems in different standpoints, but they are working close to each other. A student learns solution of social problems from various perspectives by receiving instructions from mentor and professor. Support room coordinates to make her internship flow more smoothly.

## 4. Schedule and Contents for the Internship

She received her internship one day per week from April to March. She learned the skills of promoting collaboration by participating in several environmental conservation or local revitalization activities. For example, activities in her participated “Conference of revitalization in front of Kamojima station”, “Meeting to revitalize Mugi town”, “Conference on biodiversity of Tokushima” and “Workshop about Bandai wharf revitalization” (Fig. 2).

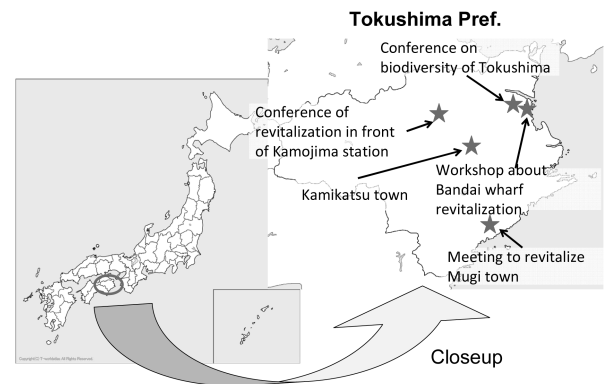


Fig. 2 Location of each activity

These activities are collaboration with residents, academic experts, and the governments. Conference of revitalization in front of Kamojima station, Meeting to revitalize Mugi town and Workshop about Bandai wharf revitalization were local revitalization activities organized using available local resources. She recorded and assisted workshop. In Conference on biodiversity of Tokushima, participants discussed to suggest the civil opinions to development of the Biodiversity Strategy of Tokushima. She worked as a facilitator and made plans for the program of workshop. In these internships, she learned the skills to facilitate the discussion of various actors.

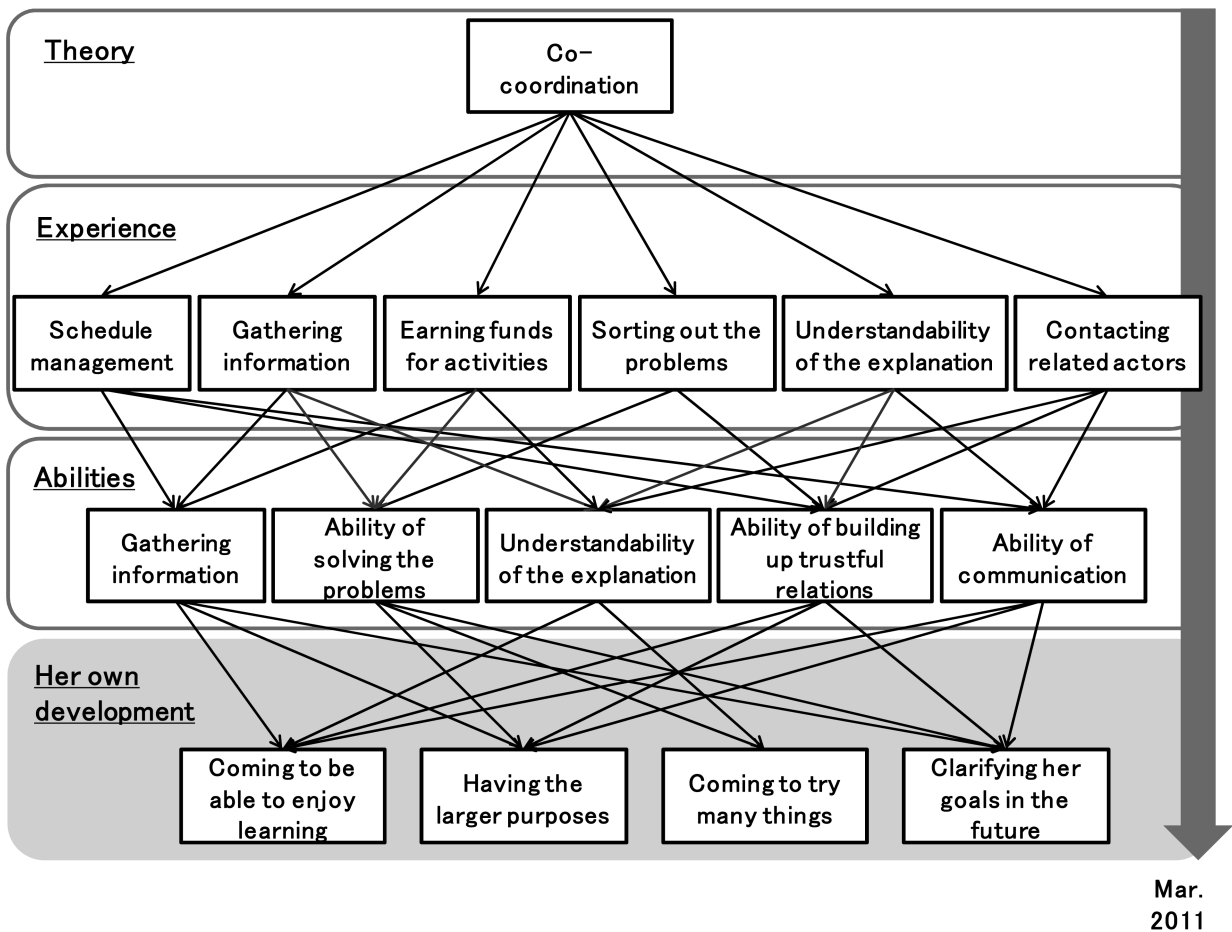
## III. Results and consideration

### 1. What She Did and Got in Her Internship Training?

Fig. 3 explains the relationship between what she learned through her internship training and her target in the future.

In theory, it is said that a person called “co-coordinator” is a key to get many people to participate in the sustainable environmental conservation activities. However, she did not understand what the co-coordinator is. So, she examined some literatures on co-coordinator. And, these literatures and cases were discussed by Onishi and academic experts. They defined about the word of “collaboration” and the element of sustained collaborative activities in this discussion. As the result, they defined that “collaboration” is to share purpose of activities and to be able to decision-making by participants’ own. By the discussion, they also organized that “the element of sustained collaborative

Apr.  
2010



Mar.  
2011

Fig. 3 Learned and obtained from the long-term internship

activities” is “Co-coordination”, “Passion for activities”, “Social-capital”, “Skills”, “Sustainable supply of funds”, and “Social network”.

She realized the skills of co-coordinator by participating in several activities. For example, “Schedule management”, “Gathering information”, “Earning funds for activities”, “Sorting out the problems”, “Understandability of the explanation”, and “Contacting related actors”. Realizing these skills is useful to decide her target in the future.

Experience of her internship led to obtain abilities of co-coordinator. She obtained five abilities through her internship. These abilities are “Gathering information”, “Ability of solving the problems”, “Understandability of the explanation”, “Ability of building up trustful relations”,

and “Ability of communication”.

Her obtaining abilities and her experience through her internship linked her own development. There are four biggest changes for her. First, she came to be able to enjoy learning. Second, she came to have the larger purpose. Third, she changed to try many things. Fourth, she came to clarify her goals in the future to relate a variety of people.

## 2. Self-Evaluation Before and After an Internship

She evaluated herself before and after her internship from 1 to 5pt about items of Table 1. Fig. 4 shows that how each items changed before and after her internship.

**Table 1 Self-evaluation items**

1. Basic ability
1-1 Schedule management
1-2 Reporting, communicating
1-3 Movement based on a sense of safety
1-4 Overall evaluation for fundamentals
2. Will for training
2-1 Receptivity for suggestions
2-2 Challenging attitude
2-3 Respect for an experience of a leader
2-4 Enterprising spirit
2-5 Question mind
2-6 Sense of responsibility
2-7 Overall evaluation for the will for training
3. Sociability
3-1 Response and use of words
3-2 Correspondence to strangers
3-3 Talking with the leader about own failure
3-4 Emotional stability
3-5 Sense of mission in the organization
3-6 Overall evaluation for the sociability
4. Business ability
4-1 Proposal ability and creative power
4-2 Expertise
4-3 Powers of concentration: Ability to concentrate
4-4 Persevering attitude for solving a problem
4-5 Overall evaluation for the business ability
5. Overall evaluation

This graph is gotten as below formula.

Score = (score of after internship) – (score of before internship)

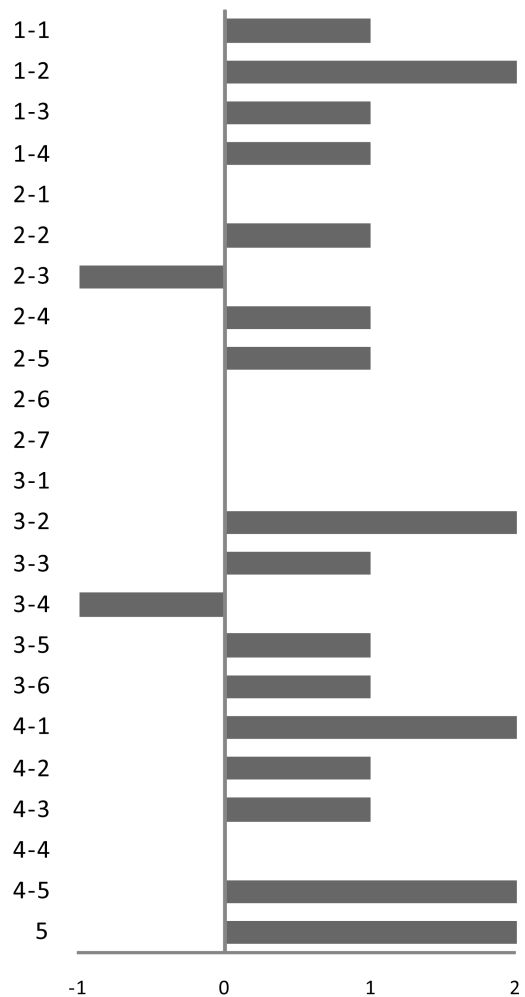
Score = 0 (score of after internship) = (score of before internship)

Score > 0 (score of after internship) < (score of before internship)

Score < 0 (score of after internship) > (score of before internship)

If she feels “growing up”, each items change a plus (to right side from the vertical line in the center). But, if she feels “lacking”, each items change a minus (to left side on the line). All items changed a plus about Basic ability and Business ability. These are her efforts through her internship.

However, there are changing minus items about will for training and Sociability. According to this result, she came to look at things objectivity herself. She realized that she



**Fig. 4 Results of self-evaluation**

must ameliorate the items changed to a minus through the training in the field sights.

In this way, looking at herself leads to contribute to decide her learning course in the future.

#### IV. Conclusion

##### 1. Her Goal in the Future by Experience of an Internship

She realized that six skills of co-coordinators and the role of promoting sustainable and collaborative projects can enhance the satisfactory results and keep these projects going. And she realized that our study results are used to solve social problems in the society. In addition, she

has felt want to take up the work like connecting people as her lifework through her own development.

## 2. Evaluation of Education by University–Industry Relation Depend on a Student's Viewpoint

This education program has the maximum merit that students are able to develop greatness. They can find out what's lacking themselves for play an actively role in society.

On the contrary, if it reduces the chance of learning, the students don't have relationship among mentor. The students have to grasp what they want to learn. Also the mentors need to understand this educational program. One of solution we proffer is having the opportunity to share each other's thoughts and experience.

Other demerit is difficulty of handling intellectual property. It is important for the students to get more understanding of intellectual property by exercises.

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