Session 4　“Option of Entrepreneurship-Creating Your Own Work”

**Harada**/ First, let me introduce the activities of my NPO (non-profit organization). Our main job is to create study textbooks and on-line learning materials related to entrepreneurship, and, at the same time, to give training for instructors using these materials. And, to give opportunities for school students, inviting active entrepreneurs to speak of their experiences in the classroom, and to support the schools in developing their original products using resources in the community, on a web study site（http://www.youthenterprise.jp/）to exchange information.

（Slide 2-5）

As for other activities, I mention, in Japan many local shopping streets now have deteriorated. In such old-fashioned streets, we support the activities of children to organize events to re-vitalize the community, making some souvenirs to sell, etc. For adults, we develop and run practical courses to learn how to start a business.

And as a job assistance project, for welfare facilities to advise on how to make attractive products to increase labour’s wages and to run courses and training for staff. We also have a project, referring to companies, to assist possible job placements or employment support for our users with disabilities. With or without disabilities, regardless of considering or not considering to start a business, we think that entrepreneurship, which is the power to challenge something new to achieve, is necessary for everybody to living on. That is the reason why we promote these projects.(Slide 6-13)

Today we invite 3 guest speakers. They are entrepreneurs, working hard. Through their experiences, we want you to understand that entrepreneurship is required of everyone. And this Session will be the opportunity to consider possible economic self-sustainability and social participation, and also what kind of support will be required.　The first guest-speaker is Mr. Namchok, who has difficulty in walking, caused by accident when he was 14 years old. Working on development of web sites, he launched a business platform called 4AllAble for disabled persons in Thailand. In 2014, he visited Japan as a 15th batch of trainee in Duskin Leadership Training. (Slide 14)

**Namchok**/ I was surprised to be invited as a guest speaker. Before I came to Japan for Duskin Training, as a spinally-injured person by accident, I was worried very much about how many years I would live. But, taking part in the training, I came to know that there are spinal cord-injured persons who have long lives in Japan. Having found an answer for my question, I strongly could believe that I could live with self-assurance. This conviction for life supports me to this day. In Japan, there are good accessibilities, which permit me to visit many places. I was trained by Mr. Itani, Representative of Center for Independent Living, Hoshizora (Starry Sky), I liked everybody there, having much fun with a lot of parties. In Thailand, I could not do something like this. I felt and realized the real inclusive life together with persons with disabilities.

After returning to Thailand, I had a business model that I wanted to do, which was an idea about accessibility and inclusiveness. I thought out a platform (on the net) named, “4AllAble”. Therefore, I worked with a travel agency and with a friend in Thailand on tour operation, such as hotel reservation and transportation. For a business model, we also plan to include job opportunities, education, and sports in “4AllAble” and also to offer the services of equipment required by persons with disabilities and online services for them. We can sell products through the platform, so we will invite companies that may have interests in participating. We are going ahead one step at a time. Now, we are working to change our ideas to real goods. The actual service will begin next year, but accessible tourism has already started. (Slide 2-5)

Our main business area is accessible tourism, and over 70% of the platform is already developed. At the moment, we have developed the system to collect data and to share the information, enabling persons with disabilities to be able to travel alone by themselves. We collect data about accessible tourism for persons with disabilities and offer the information about accessible places to persons with disabilities. (Slide 6)

As a next step, we will extend our business to the online market. In this market, we want to enable persons with disabilities to be able to do a business with another country, such as Cambodia. For example, our platform plans to sell handmade products, but we also can sell in our platform Japanese wheelchairs and other products from Pakistan and from other countries. We try to establish a global e-commerce market, in which everyone can take part in business. This can be a big chance not only for persons with disabilities but also for companies. (Slide 7)

About sports and entertainment: When I studied in the USA, I took part in a hockey team and enjoyed it very much. We participated in competitions too. We formed the sports team and uploaded our profile onto a website. I think it would be good to organize a site where everyone can share their knowledge related to sports. Then, other persons with disabilities would know what is going on and can take part in the platform. (Slide 8)

About the job market: It is a very interesting area for persons with disabilities. In Thailand, persons with disabilities have difficulty when looking for jobs after leaving their school. Because, persons with disabilities generally do not know what kinds of job are available, so they even do not know what kind of job they are looking for. So, we will include a job market place in the platform for persons with disabilities who are looking for a job, and companies can insert the information on jobs on offer. Persons with disabilities can insert their applications. We will try to transmit more job opportunities in the future. (Slide 9)

About education: We offer online study courses. For example, a person with disabilities, when applying to the vocational training school, is sometimes refused admission. But, through an online study course, the person with disability can study anywhere to achieve the skills required for the job market and employment. It means that persons with disabilities can learn from online courses to get special knowledge and develop their abilities in the area. (Slide 10)

In addition, we aim to launch also the business for persons with disabilities in various countries. In yesterday’s sessions, the very interesting cases of Cambodia and Mongolia were presented. I heard that the Mongolian guest speaker is also working for accessible tourism activities, and I am very interested in this. I thought, using technology, that accessible tourism can be attained. (Slide 11)

Of course, we encountered some hard issues: One example, in Thailand, is how the IT business is functioning but still is not understood well. So, as a first step to launch the project, I had to fight alone. But fortunately, I am blessed with a partner who understands well the IT business. A good partnership was established in which we can consult each other on anything, and it has gone well. (Slide 12-14)

Last, I would like to transmit my message: I am very lucky to come to Japan at this time, because I can share time with people from various countries with the same passion and thinking. I am excited to exchange information with them. I would like to use the information that I get here, and my experiences from Japan in my Platform in Thailand.

**Harada**/ The next speaker will be Ms. Onaka. She was born in Hyogo prefecture and lost her hearing when she was two years old. While she went to a vocational school of cooking and confectionary and became the owner of a café, she also has played various other roles, such as teaching and familiarizing sign language, becoming the owner of a hair-colour salon in the age of 39 years, and gaining a qualification in colour coordination.

**Onaka**/ First, please let me show you a short video. It lasts two minutes.

（Video is presenting）

**Onaka**/ Did you enjoy the video? That is from a TV program titled, “Life without hearing ability, life with hearing difficulty”, which came on the air at the end of last year. It was awarded the top rank in the “Human Challenge Award 2018”. Among short films aired by NHK (Japan's public broadcaster), audiences voted it the most impressive one. The first client who appeared in the film was surprised to know that I am deaf. Some clients did not know of my deafness, and some clients asked, “Is this a place to use sign language?” Some persons are interested in sign language but do not have time to take the sign language study class. Some clients took the opportunity and learned it little by little. This makes me feel very happy.

To tell you of my personal history, I lost my hearing ability at 2 years old. After that, I attended a school for deaf and lived in a student residence. When I was a third-year student in senior high school, I had consultation for a career program. I loved to care for children, so then I thought to become a children’s nurse. But the school teacher for career guidance told me, “When you became a children’s nurse to attend them, if they cry or heavily injured and cried out, do you think you can hear and be aware of it?” Because children’s nursing is a job related directly to the safety of child, I had to give up that possible career.

I also liked very much to eat, so I was admitted to the cooking school to become a professional chef, with the recommendation of my mother. I expected also to learn together with hearing people after graduating from the school for the deaf. I graduated from the cooking school in one year without any problems. I loved Italian cuisine and wine. So, after graduation, I visited the owner of Italian restaurant to seek employment. But, perhaps because it was the first time for him to meet a deaf person, he did not look happy. He said, “Sometimes you may need to communicate verbally in a quick manner. Then, sign language would not be useful.” So, I gave up again. (Slide 2-3)

But I never gave up my dream of cooking, and after my marriage, I developed voluntary activities in events related to cooking in the Association for the Deaf, in my community. Then, I met the final straw. The owner of a coffee shop near my home became ill. My father in law told me, “The owner is looking for someone to take over his business.” I felt this opportunity to be linked by fate, so soon I challenged for it. But others feared a communication problem, because of my deafness. The former owner sometimes received orders for coffee by telephone. I thought about cooperating with hearing staff who can use sign language. I got the job on condition of hiring some hearing staff. My family also told me that they would cooperate. Without the help of these people, over these 12 years, I could hardly have continued with my cafe. (Slide 4)

This (slide 5) shows the shop from the outside. Here is the entrance. At night, the bar is opened. Slide 6 shows the cooking class for deaf children to bake a cake. The last (Slide 10) shows what I care about in my job as a reference for whomever thinks to be an entrepreneur. (Slide 5-10)

**Harada**/ The next speaker is Mr. Yusuke Hatsuse. He was born in Nagasaki prefecture and became visually impaired by losing in both eyes the visual field center, caused by glaucoma in the age of 24 years. Mr. Hatsuse established his own company, named Universal Style Co. Ltd., in 2011, by making use of his past experiences and sometimes playing the role of lecturer in seminars.

**Hatsuse**/ As a child, I vaguely wanted to be a medical doctor. But this dream changed in my high school days, when I wanted to study law and be a lawyer to support disadvantaged people. I started to play judo in the junior high school and was designated as a certified strengthening player of judo in the third grade of senior high school in the prefecture of Nagasaki. But that was my best in career of judo, so I finished my playing career with some feelings of reluctance. After that, I failed a university entrance examination and continued to study one year more, but at that time I lost almost all the visual field of my right eye. After admission to university and starting to study for the national law examination, my left eye also got worse. I suffered from glaucoma. To pass the national examination to be a lawyer, to read a lot of printed information is required. When I came to use braille, I had no way other than abandoning my dream.

About one year later, I became a visually impaired person. In the summer of my fourth grade faculty student, I met judo for persons with visual impairment. The judo training hall has a flat and smooth floor. The practice of Judo is done with the partner upright. I felt judo to be a sport that sighted and non-sighted people can play together equally. For me, it was also a springboard to reach an acceptance of blindness. Sometimes I won the national championship, and after that I aimed to be selected for Paralympics. (Slide 2-4)

Striving to get into the Paralympics in judo, I thought that job-seeking for me also was available, but actually I was refused by 120 companies. In most cases, I was refused at the first applicant screening. I applied and applied but was refused repeatedly, even from small, unnamed companies. The only company that adopted me was a job placement company, through its special subsidiary. (Slide 5)

In that company, I worked as a disabled employee and played in the Paralympics, but still I did not feel good. At that company, there were few jobs, and at 5:30 in the afternoon, everybody lined up to stamp their time cards to finish work. I felt cozy without a problem, but I thought that, if there were few jobs for me, then I would create my own job. In 2011, when the Great East Earthquake occurred, I remembered the words, “There are no guarantees to assure the same tomorrow.” So, finally, I went out to become an entrepreneur. Participation in Paralympics helped me to accept my visual impairment, but it was only after starting my enterprise that I could laugh away my visual disability. (Slide 6)

Today, I am a representative of two companies. One is the Universal Style Co., Ltd established in 2011. The main job of the company is consulting about job insertion for persons with disabilities. Here, I can feed back my experiences of refusal by more than 100 companies. I do not think that I am a person of excellence, but I felt some gaps by being refused by more than 100 companies. One reason can be that nobody taught persons with disabilities how to write application papers. I have worked in a special subsidiary company with many persons with disabilities, so I also use this experience in my business. Another company is the Style Edge MEDICAL Co., Ltd. The main job is to work with industrial specialists. We manage training gyms, as well as giving advice for health management. When the company employs a person with disabilities, or the staff come back after serious diseases such like cancer, then the advice of a medical industrial specialist is required. I launched this company considering that, through this work, the diversity of employment and human resources can be protected. (Slide 7-8)

“Do not count what you had lost. Try to use what remains with you, as much as possible.” This advice was said by the father of the Paralympic Games. Sometimes, it is difficult for me to answer quickly, to catch information with the required agility. When that is difficult for me, I can ask my colleague to do it, and I dedicate myself to what I can do. When you think about starting a business, this attitude becomes essential. Just focus on what remains with you and what you can do. This is an emotional support for me. (Slide 9)

The last thing what I would like to share with you is, “Change yourself by acting to change the world.” For almost two years after my eyes got worse, I thought of many things to do, but nothing changed, because I just was thinking without acting. I would like to say to you all, say out loud what you think, ask somebody, talk to somebody, create something and sell it. If you consider starting a company, you should use your time once a week for that purpose. Today, your action in coming here, in itself, is a first step toward entrepreneurship. I also try to keep on acting. Why don’t you act together with me? (Slide 10)

**Harada**/ We already have made up some questions beforehand for the guest speakers, so let me ask them. If the schedule permits, then I would like to invite questions from the floor. The first question is: What kind of difficulties did you have when you started up your enterprise, and how did you overcome such difficulties? What kind of support was helpful? Please answer in turn.

**Namchok**/ My difficulty was to figure out what was the ideal of business model. In Thailand, if a person in a wheelchair tries to take action, it would be limited just to social services. It was difficult when we tried to launch a business that was not for charity service. When I met somebody, he asked me what background I had. People know what is IT, but they do not know about doing IT business. When I explained my framework to make big projects, a person with disabilities might think it is a charity service and product, but it is not. It must be a 100% business. With just by my effort, it was impossible, but with collaboration from friends, I could do it. Sometimes I struggled by lack of money, but I continued to move ahead to grasp the chance. If I had not kept my passion, I could not have continued. But I thought that if I just keep going, I may meet some investors for the system.

**Onaka**/ In my challenge, I faced many difficulties. Some clients had a preferred seat, but if the seat was occupied, the client would not wait for it and left the cafe. Because of my deafness, sometimes communication with clients did not go well. So, the turnover rate of the seats was bad; it was one of my difficulties. I have an issue with smoking. So I stuck up a bill: “No Smoking”. But some clients from the time of the former owner wanted to smoke in the cafe. So, coordination was difficult for me. They smoked before, but I had to ask them not to smoke.

**Hatsuse**/ My advice to whomever wants to start the company is that if you do not have enough money, you would be better to think about the business that can be developed without much money. So, I chose the business of selling knowledge and know-how of employment of disabled persons. No seed money was required. What was needed was just my effort. But after starting a business, you may be tried by your human capacity, relationship with other people, and your stance with good faith, all that you have fostered until today.

**Harada**/ In relation to the story of Mr. Hatsuse, even if you tried to start a company that did not require much money, you would not have a stable income during the preparation period of enterprise. So, I recommend that you take at least some measures to secure your life, even when a large amount of money is not required. The three entrepreneurs, how did you manage the financial issue?

**Hatsuse**/ At the time of starting up, I had just 1.5 million yen of capital funds. But for living costs, at that moment, I already lived with my wife, and I thought that I could depend on my wife to survive. I thought, when I could not make good sales, I would get by, because I lived together with my wife. I recommend to you the challenge to start a business after keeping living costs for the first 6 months. The company, Universal Style, is an employment agency, so the profit rate is rather high.

**Harada**/ Oh, you have a good wife, you are a lucky guy. Now, Ms. Onaka, please.

**Onaka**/ The former owner left the interior decoration and utilities of the cafe. So, for me, there was no need to prepare start-up money. But once I started the shop, the business was unprofitable. To improve profitability, I thought to vary the menu. Our clients made some requests, such as, “I want to get a drink here.”, “The Cafe CODA could be the place for learning”, “If you have class for cooking cakes, or seminars for kimono, I would like to participate.” So, I tried to listen carefully to these voices of clients and to hold some events, which contributed to the sales results.

**Namchok**/ At the beginning, because I did not have money, all I could do was just to survive. At first, I worked hard to survive, just with a few dollars per day. I tried to spend only the minimum amount, for instance, the payments for staff, computer server, out-sourcing, etc. It took two years to secure these costs. Meanwhile, I launched a platform. Thinking about our active users, I calculated that if we had more than 50,000 active users, the company would be profitable. So, I tried to attract the interest of users. Profitability depends on the number of active users. Anyway, I learned much during the preparation period.

**Harada**/ So, if you have a specialty, and you have ideas you are useful in business, the startup money can be got in some way. Now the last questions: “What was the difference when you started up the company to compare with when you were an employee receiving salary?” and “What were the most important elements for success in business.”

**Hatsuse**/ It is a difficult message, but in the company that I incorporated for the first time, the salary was very low. I thought that the same level of salary could be got from any other company. This means that the feeling of risking independence was rather low. Now, if I bunk off, there is no income, but all I worked for can be the profit of my company. This is the most challenging part of my job. I have had more income than when I was a salaried worker, and, thus I have become interested in more and more. As a reason for success, I always respected the “tie” or “relationship” among people. In the first days after starting the business, I accepted any kind of job offered. Of course, I assumed any job in good faith. Piling up these results, I was led to the actual situation. Thank you very much.

**Onaka**/ I would like to mention a key to success. I hold an event for meeting a boyfriend or girlfriend, or a marriage consultant party. The event is held on the 16th of February every year. As of today, nine couples were formed, and among them, three couples have married. I try to support them to be happy, and I also feel very happy to know about them.

**Namchok**/ Before I worked as a freelance, I did my job just as others indicated. Now, I am an entrepreneur and always thinking about keys to success and how to improve more. I also think about investment. Working as a team also is very important. It is important always to confirm that you are going ahead in the right direction. Now, all of our staff work very hard.

**Harada**/ This session has developed the theme of creating business. The three speakers talked about their businesses as private companies looking for profits. For any kind of business, you may require funds or support. You all, please develop entrepreneurship and involve many people to get the foundation required to realize your dream. If you already have launched a business, even when it goes well, sometimes you may consider enlarging the business, or you may have difficulties, and you have to overcome something to avoid defeat. I would like to continue cooperation and to go on together to create a better society.

**MC**/ This concludes Session 4. Thank you very much.