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Second Annual Survey Results of Muroran Institute of Technology’s Foreign Students’ Satisfaction

Margit KRAUSE-ONO

(Received 15th Jun 2012, Accepted 17th January 2013)

International students at Muroran Institute of Technology (MuroranIT) answered a partly reworked questionnaire about their circumstances and levels of satisfaction. Their answers a) confirmed the results of the previous year and b) revealed their attitudes towards life in general in Muroran. Further factors necessary to ensure foreign students’ satisfaction could be found.

Keywords: foreign students, level of satisfaction

1 INTRODUCTION

MuroranIT is a technical university located in southern Hokkaido at the Funka Wan on the Pacific. The university can be found at the rim of the city of Muroran. It borders woods and mountains and is surrounded by a residential area where many students, teachers, and staff of the university live. Of the approximately 3300 students, 90% are male.

As at many other former state universities, various departments and offices at MuroranIT have gone through extensive restructuring. Four years ago, the former International Office was transformed into an International Center. Since then the staff has more than doubled, with five people now working in the office, and two, instead of formerly one, Japanese-language teachers with offices located next to the International Center. Both of these teachers have experience living in foreign countries, and one is particularly experienced and knowledgeable about Southeast Asian countries.

The Head of the Center is a member of the University Board, and the four Technical Departments and the Department for Common Subjects of the University are each represented by two members on the International Center Commission that holds regular meetings.

Within the past five years, the number of foreign students has more than doubled, from forty-five in 2007 to about a hundred currently enrolled. Unfortunately, no study of effectiveness has accompanied the transformation from “office” to “center.” In February 2011, the first survey to examine the circumstances and levels of satisfaction of the international students with MuroranIT was conducted. The main aim of that study (Krause-Ono/Yamaji, 2011) was to determine if foreign students at MuroranIT faced common difficulties or problems and what factors were involved in their levels of satisfaction.

This year’s survey was conducted in order to further investigate those points. In order to obtain even more concise answers, certain questions were rephrased and made easier to answer, especially where numbers were involved.

*1 College of Liberal Arts
2 METHODS

The questionnaire was available in Japanese and English and included questions to foreign students at MuroranIT about the following: their country of origin, various aspects of their daily life and their studies, their levels of satisfaction regarding the International Center, their views of their professors and Japanese peers, and this year an additional section about ‘life in Muroran’. The author of the questionnaire and its goal of improving the university’s service to foreign students were explicitly stated, in order to reduce as much as possible any bias that might influence the students’ responses. The students responded anonymously to the questionnaire during the month of February 2012, a period deliberately chosen because many students leave the university in March. The mode of answers to the questionnaire, containing a combination of multiple-choice answers and open comments, allowed for the assembly of both quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell, 2009). For example, several questions that aim to measure the levels of (dis)-satisfaction of the students leave room for open comments on the reasons for their responses. Thus, a close correlation of quantitative and qualitative data was made possible, and the results mirrored the actual situations of the students (Burns, 2000).

3 RESULTS FOUND IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Unfortunately, only thirty-five students, or about a third of the MuroranIT foreign students (101 in February 2012), answered the questionnaire. Nearly all the participating students were from Southeast Asian countries, with the majority coming from China (15) and Malaysia (8). Another three students were from Laos, two were from Korea, two were from Indonesia and the four other students were from Thailand, Egypt, Iran, and the Philippines. Three students did not answer this question. Most of the students (28) were either in undergraduate (11) or graduate courses (17), and half of them (18) have been at MuroranIT for at least one year and some up to four years or more. This means that many of the students were studying at MuroranIT with the aim of completing their undergraduate or graduate studies.

Nearly two thirds of the students (22) were between 23 and 29 years old: nine of them younger than 23; and four were over 29, which means that in most of the cases they were older than most of their Japanese peers. Also, twenty-seven or 77% of the students received some kind of scholarship. In particular, most of the Malaysian students (seven) came with a scholarship from their country. Thirteen students received a scholarship from MuroranIT, five from JASSO, one from MEXT, and one from an institution of the community. Seventeen of the students or more than 48% answered that the scholarship was enough to live on, whereas eleven or 31% answered the opposite. Eight students or close to 23% had no scholarship and their parents (7), or themselves (1) paid the costs. Fifteen or close to 43% of the students also held jobs on the side, however, the amount earned ranges from below 10,000 Yen to up to 30,000 Yen. Close to 66% of the students (23) who answered the questionnaire lived in some kind of housing provided by the university and 12 of them lived in an apartment rented privately. 27 students or 77% reported being (very) satisfied with their housing conditions, and another 4 or 11.4% were neither satisfied nor unsatisfied, rating their housing condition as ‘so-so’. Only one student was not satisfied. The data so far shows facts and figures about the verifiable backgrounds and the circumstances of the international students. The data that follows reveals the perspectives and attitudes of the students towards the International Center, their classes at the university, and towards life in Muroran. The answers of the students have not been edited.

3.1 About Japanese classes

Just as in 2011, there is no special English program for international students at MuroranIT. However, Japanese lessons are provided to all students, regardless of their level of proficiency in Japanese. This year’s survey also provided questions about the lessons. 60% of the students indicated the time allotted for the lessons to be just right, which is 8% more than last year. However, only four or 11% of the students would have liked more lessons, which is 7% less than last year. All the students who responded to this question were either (very) satisfied (85%), which is 23% more than last year, or did not give negative ratings (14%), 6% less than last year, concerning the quality of the Japanese lessons.

When asked about what they rated as good in the Japanese lessons, close to 66% of the students (23) wrote positive comments about the helpful content of the lessons, their atmosphere, and the friendliness and knowledgeability of the teachers:
- 留学生に必要な日本語を教えてくれること。
- 先生の日本語の授業をうけました。よい点は、授業の内容は授業に限らず、各方面の知識も教
Second Annual Survey Results of Muroran Institute of Technology's Foreign Students' Satisfaction

えっていました。
- 先生と交流できる
- 留学生に必要な日本語を教えること
- 慣れることも多く、これは一番いいと思います。
- 自分で勉強してはわからないことばとかがわかり
るようになったこと。
- 先生の授業内容が豊富で、形式が多種多様です。
- すごくおもしろいです。先生はやさしくて、丁
- 寧な説明が詳しくて、いい勉強になりました。
私の日本語能力が思ったより速く上達すること
が出来ました。
- 日常会話の正しい日本語を教えました
- その授業を受けてない
- 先生が細い説明することがあります
- 先生はとても親切だと思います。日本語の授業
- はおもしろいと思います
- 先生の話がゆっくりして、きき取りやすいこと
です。
- 1)先生がおもしろい 2)色々な日本のことも勉強
したかった。
- 日本語の練習がたくさんです。非常に便利です。
- 先生の授業では日常生活の知恵まで勉強できま
した。とても良いと思っています。
- 面白い。不通の授業にも役立ちます。新聞を
読む授業が知ることもできます。
- ①新聞記事を利用すること②日本の文化を紹介
すること

When asked about negative aspects of the Japanese
lessons, only three out of the ten comments criticized
the lessons. The other seven comments were concerned
with administrative matters, such as the time at which
the lessons take place. In most of the comments, the
students regretted that because they were too busy, they
were unable to attend the lessons regularly:
- 日常的な会話の練習はちょっと少ないと思いま
す。
- 中級の授業がすくなくですが、初級のような
数があるといいです
- 授業の時間数は少ないと思います
- 実際日常生活で使う物事の単語を教える授業は
なかなかないのです。
- ①文法的な説明がちょっと少ない
- 内用、授業進度がおそくて、達成率が低です
- We learn too much things not related to the real world
(not practical)
- Me, I am not good in accommodating Japanese
language.
- I think everything is good.
- The class time is in the evening, and while in the class
everyone feel hungry.
- My schedule for mixing it (Japanese lessons) along
with my laboratory activities.

In this year’s survey questions about students’ self-rated levels of Japanese at the time of their arrival and their current level were not included. It was felt that parameters need readjustment; however it could not be done on time. In the next annual survey this item will again be added in an improved form.

3.2 About the International Center

All the students (100%) were (very) satisfied with
the services and the functions of the International
Center at MuroranIT. When asked what they thought
was especially good, 39 students or 72% wrote
comments such as these that follow. (Since some
students answered the Japanese questionnaire and
others the English version, we list here their original
responses.):
- 留学生にサポートすること
- 生活面はすごく便利です。
- 奨学金や学費減免などに関するメールが送って
もらう。
- 一緒にあそびに行く
- やさしくて、学生の事を考えてくれます。
- 親戚や友達の感じで国際センターの職員の皆さ
んが勉強や生活の問題について相談に乗ってく
れる、とても助けます。
- 皆さん是やさしい
- 何でも教えてくれます。
- 留学生たちに多くの活動を主催しました。これ
は特に良いと思います。とても良かったです
- こまったときにたすけてくれること。
- 先生方はすごく優しい。私達留学生にかゆ
い所に手が届く世話をします。私達の生活行
き届いた配慮をします。留学は楽しくなります
感謝しております。
- 困ることを解決してくれました。先生方がい
つもやさしくしてくれました
- 親のように優しく接してくれる
- 先生たちはせんばやさしくて、たくさんありました
- 見学旅行はたくさんがあります。とても面白い
- イベントがいいことです。
- ①よく助けてくださった ②活動もよって、様々
な日本にしらないこともしているようになる。
- 国際交流センターの人とはとても親切です。
- センターの皆さんは家族みたいの存在です。
- 留学生のため、いろいろな活動を組織してもら
いました。熱心な学生に感謝します。生活につい
てもいろいろたすけてもらいました。
- ①様々な活動で我々の生活を彩らせる②生活や
MARGIT KRAUSE-ONO

3.3 About acceptance by Japanese peers in class:

Twenty-four students or 68.6% felt accepted by their Japanese peers in class, and five of them or 14.3% did not. When asked for their reason for not feeling accepted, the students’ answers varied, and one student even stated the opposite:

- 話が少くない
- やはり今日本語まだうまくないですから、喋りにくいです。
- あいさつ以外に接触がかなり少ない
- They hardly talk to me, unless I started the conversation first.

Some students placed the blame on themselves, and others focused on language as the problem. However, it should be noted that six students or 17% did not answer this question.

In a question that followed, we asked the students if there was anything they would like their Japanese peers to do. Nine students, or close to 26%, wished for the following:

- テストの前に過去問お願い……
- もっと積極的に、元気に
- 日本人のクラスメートといい仲間にしたいと思っています。
- 中国語を勉強しましょう。('_`) (冗談です)
- お互いにもっと交流を増すこと
- Think out of the box (don’t be rigid).
- I would like to learn some useful expressions or words from them.
- Also learn English along with my efforts to learn Japanese.
- Yes, try to learn English a bit so that we as foreigners can express more.

In conclusion, most of the nine students wished for more interaction and communication with their Japanese peers or wanted them to show more open-mindedness regarding the foreign students’ language and culture. This is very much in accord with last years’ comments.

3.4 About satisfaction with classes and the care received in the departments

Twenty-six students or 74.3% were satisfied with the classes in their respective departments, which is 6% more than last year. Three students or 8.5% were not satisfied, and six students or 17% did not answer this question. When asked about their reasons for being dissatisfied, three students answered:

- 先生と学生の交流が少くない。学生たちは授業に興味がない。
- Lack of hands-on training, experiments and field tours
- Language ability to comprehend including reading and speaking.

When asked whether they were satisfied concerning the care they receive from the teacher(s) of their department, 28 students or 80% answered positively, four students or 11.4% answered in the negative and three students or 8.6% did not answer at all.

The students rated the care they received by their professors in their respective departments as follows: eighteen students or 51.4% gave 90 and 100 points, seven students or 20% gave up to 80 points, three students or 8.6% gave up to 70 points. Up to 60 points and up to 50 points were given by two students or 5.7%
each. Three students did not answer this question.

3.5 About life in Muroran

In order to further find out about students’ overall satisfaction it was felt necessary to add this item. The students were asked whether they have many chances to meet with citizens/ people in the area, to which 27 students or 77% answered affirmatively and only eight students or close to 23% answered in the negative.

The students were also asked whether they think Muroran is an easy place to live in. Examples were provided such as: bus/trains/transport is good; good for shopping; apartment or the dorms are good to live in; the people of Muroran are kind etc. Thirty-one students or 88.6% answered with ‘yes’ and only three students or 8.6% answered with ‘no’. Each group was asked to give their reasons. The students who answered positively mentioned:
- 天気がいいし、皆さんが親切です。
- 人が親切。景色がいい
- なんとなく
- 室蘭へ来た第一感特に静かです。少ない人口だし、非常に静かだし、海と山の景色に恵まれていているだけではなくし、大好きです。
- のんびりまったりすごせるから
- 室蘭の方はすごく親切です。室蘭市は静か、きれいなまちです。空気は新鮮です。生活はとても楽しいです。
- 室蘭の人は親切です
- コンビニと近い
- 室蘭の人の親切のこと。気候がよいところ
- 平日は静かなので、すみやすいです
- 室蘭の人は親切だと思います
- 室蘭の人の親切相关内容。气候がよくあるところ
- 交通がすごく不便です。
- 冬になると、外に行くのがちょっと不便です
- 駅から遠いので、車を持っていない人にとってはとても不便です
- People quite afraid of foreigners, not so talkative.

In total the students very much appreciate the compact size of the university, the people in its surroundings, as well as being situated in a natural and non-polluted environment. Only three students find the transport not sufficiently convenient.

Finally, we asked about the students’ overall levels of satisfaction. Two students or 5.7% did not answer this question, however none of the other students gave less than 70 points. 80 and 100 points were each given by six students or 17.1%. Seventeen students or 48.6% gave 90 points. This is pretty close to last year’s result.

At the end the students were asked to give free comments, which seven students or 20% took the opportunity to do:
- 意見です。①図書館は 9 時までの件です。すごく早いと思います。9 時あとに、私はときどき C 棟に行ってつづけて勉強していましたが、暖房がついてないから、さむい…… ②構内のインターネットが C 棟と N 棟しかつかえないが、ちょっと不便です。
- 留学生活は楽しいです。室蘭工業大学の先生方に心から感謝しております。今までいろいろお世話をしていただいて、本当にありがとうございました。学校にいる日々にクラスマートたちと友達になれ、互いに助け合い、一緒に研究してよかったと思います。みんなと楽しい思い出もたくさんできました。皆さん将来自分に相応しい分野で活躍するために一緒に頑張りましょう。
- 3 月に卒業ですが、国際交流センターの先生たち非常に感謝しています。先生のおかげで工大で安心に勉強することができました。皆さん将来自分に相応しい分野で活躍するために一緒に頑張りましょう。
り、日本語の練習のうえで、日本の社会をそこしでも理解できることによって、留学生の日本生活が富むようになるのではないかと思います。
- 今まで室蘭工大の生活は最高である。自分はもっと後輩を誘いたい。
- 室工大は留学生に対する関心度合が他の大学より高いと感じられる。授業の種類も幅広いし、専攻以外にいろいろな知識も勉強できるのがいいと思っています。
- 別にありません。でも色々なけいけんしたからまんぞくしました

4. CONCLUSION

The overall result of this year’s survey confirms last year’s result in most points. Several questions had been rephrased and or had been made easier to answer by providing clear choices, especially when numbers had to be given. To have added the last item about ‘life in Muroran’ proved to be an important question. The answers very much confirm the impression staff and persons involved already held, namely that the foreign students valued their studies at MuroranIT because of the university’s size, its location and the type of university. This was expressed by comments such as: just the right size, close to nature, a strong connection with the community, everything and everybody is nearby, a technical university with labs, where students have to study together.

The work of the International Center is rated highly by the international students. The Center takes care of the international students, not only in administrative matters, but also by helping them with housing issues and linking them with community organizations. It also organizes the international students’ year-round events. More and more Japanese students join the “International Exchange Club” (国際交流クラブ) because they want to know more about other countries and cultures. Encouraged by the Center, several professors have started to make connections with universities in Korea, China and Thailand. Short-stay exchanges of a week or two were organized, which again resulted in an increase in the number of long-term international students. However, a weak point could be that mostly the same professors are engaged in these activities. To better shoulder this burden, the participation of more professors would be welcomed. It would also further increase foreign students’ satisfaction.

Unfortunately, only a third of the foreign students answered this survey in February 2012. In comparison, in February 2011 half of the students had answered. The questionnaire was available in Japanese and in English. However, to achieve a better turnout it might be necessary to provide questionnaires also in Chinese and in Malay. This study also has the limitation of using only a written questionnaire. Actual interviews would help to enhance the data. Finally, to compare and to enhance the decisive factors responsible for high levels of satisfaction experienced by foreign students, further studies at universities of the same size and type, especially other technical universities, will be necessary.

COMMENTS

Questionnaires as well as detailed results will be provided upon request.
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REFERENCES

室蘭工業大学在籍留学生の満足度に関する第2回年次調査
クラウゼ小野・マルギット*1

概要
筆者は昨年に引き続き、留学生の中心的支援機関である室蘭工業大学国際交流センターに対する評価や日本人（学生）との交流、学習（研究）環境、住環境等について留学生へのアンケート調査を実施した。国際交流センターの対応や現在の環境に関しては全体として高い評価が得られたが、やはり問題点も散見された。その結果からは今後の取り組みへの重要なヒントも得られた。

キーワード：留学生、満足度

*1 ひと文化系領域