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

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International students at Muroran Institute of Technology (MuroanIT) 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

MuroanIT 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 MuroanIT 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 MuroanIT was conducted. The main aim of that study (Krause-Ono/Yamaji, 2011) was to determine if foreign students at MuroanIT 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.

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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

えていました。

- 先生と交流できる
- 留学生に必要な日本語を教えること
- 喋ることは多くで、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
- その授業を授けてない
- 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てくださった。
- 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。不通の授業にも役に立ちます。新聞を読む授業がニュースを知ることでもあります。
- 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
- 社会的な知識などを得ることができる
- くわしい説明

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。
- 中級の授業だがすくないですが、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
- 生活方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
- おやみたい、学生の事を考えてくれます。
- 親戚や友達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。
- 皆さんはやさしい
- 何でも助けてくれます。
- 留学生たちに多くの活動を主催しました。これは特によいと思います。とても楽しかったです。
- 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です。私達留学生にかゆい所に手が届く世話をします。私達の生活に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。
- 困ま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
- 先生たちはぜんぶやさしくて、たすかりました
- 見学旅行はたくさんあります。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)活動もよくて、様々な日本にしろないこともしているようになる。
- 国際交流センターの人はとても親切です。
- センターの皆さんは家族みたくの存在です。
- 留学生のため、いろいろな活動を組織してもらいました。熱心をすごく感じます。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

勉強に関する熱心が強い

- 面倒見が良い。みんな優しい
- The best. Staffs are very friendly and helpful.
- Agility, good ability to solve the problems, conducting ceremonies, they are always smiling, center is highly appreciated for making contacts with Japanese formal issues like municipal transactions and registration for children, hospitals.
- All members in center are very kindly, and we can get lots of useful message in time.
- Everyone is so kind forstudents.
- The service on how to handle with students.
- Kindness from officer.
- Teacher's capability and skills to teach.
- They are very friendly and helpful.

In summary, the keywords of the comments were similar or the same to last year: “friendly, concern, helping, polite, interested”. These comments show that the students’ attitudes towards the center did not change, regardless of whether the students were newcomers or long timers.

When the students were asked about the “not so good points” of the center, only four minor ones came up:

- 日本人学生と交流することを多く行いたいです。
- あまりないですが、意見として、Facebook でページを作った方がいいと思っています。
- 留学生のためにいろいろやりすぎるので、留学生が自分で自分を頼ろうとしなくなる。
- My schedule for mixing it (Japanese lessons) along with my laboratory activities.

None of these comments were critical of the attitude of the center’s staff or their dealings with the students, rather to the contrary.

When asked for a score or the number of points they would give the center, 31 students or 88.5% would rate the center between 90 and 100 points.

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 students 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を作り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るだけではなく、大好きです。
- のんびりゆ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。寮は便利です。Paletteがありますから、買い物は便利です。バスや電車はちょっと不便ですが、大丈夫と思います
- バイトをする時、お客さんはすごく日本人のバイト員より外国人の方に態度がやわらかいです。
- とても便利だと思う。
- 買い物の便利です。
- 人がやさしい。気候が良い。すべてが良いです。
- いいとは言わないけど、このくらいならちょうどよかったと思います
- Very calm, not so hectic, basic necessities are provided.
- Muroran is ideal place to study, calm and nothing to do in the night!
- Because it is very near to the store, university, library and etc. Although it is a bit difficult to ride a bus to go to the mall or town, but I did enjoy the ride.
- The weather is very well in Muroran especially in

summer, and the people is also kindful. But maybe a bit difficult to do shopping for the students who have no car.

- All the services are very good but except the bus service, not very good.
- Peaceful and everyone here is so kindness. No air pollution and here is very nature.
- Generally, yes! Initially, no for a tropical person like me. The quality of life in Muroran offers one basic and good for healthy living.
- Low cost of living cost.

The students who answered with 'no' gave the following reasons:

- 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させていただいて、本当にありがとうございます。学校にいる日々にはクラスメイ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多くできました。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ています。
- いつも提議したかったのですが、毎週一回ぐらい工大の住民たちを募集して日本語会話教室を作

り、日本語の練習のうえで、日本の社会をす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かなと思います。

- 今まで室蘭工大の生活は最高である。自分ほ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おります。
- 別にありません。でも色々なけいけんを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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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

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