

A variety of international cooperation activities in Japan

(A Report on the Activities of Global Competitive Subcommittee within JSCE Committee on Civil Engineering Consultants)

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1. Background of the Activity

Recently, domestic programs involving building infrastructures are experiencing stagnation due to a reduction of budget allocations for public works projects. As a result, overseas projects will be increasing more than ever. In order to maintain sustainable development of our country in this globalizing situation, the younger generations should be educated into thinking on a global perspective. They should develop their communications skills and have the opportunities to make contact with various overseas projects.

For this reason, the Global Competitive Subcommittee has established since December 2006 with the strong support by Professor Kusakabe, former chairman of the JSCE Committee on Civil Engineering Consultants. The purpose of this subcommittee is to offer practical information and the chance for young, aspiring engineers that plan to work in overseas projects for future international contributions.

During the first season (Season I) operating from Dec. 2006 to Aug. 2008, conversation meetings “the Dreams” for young engineers and students were held seven times. The activities were reported by Hashimoto *et al.* (2009), and the achievement of the conversational meetings “the Dreams” were compiled into a single book (JSCE, 2008). Since Sept. 2008, season II has begun in hopes to answer the question, “How the International Cooperation in the 21st Century Should Be” and to cultivate engineers who wish to set a vision in international activity.

The activities for season II are regarded as an extended plan of season I, with the focus being on international cooperation itself instead of the focus on the engineers as in season I.

2. Activities in Season II

For our next steps, we focused on the activity of international cooperation itself, which were illustrated and perfect by various agents. There are many agents represented such as the national government, municipally, non-profit organizations (NPOs), and the university. In addition, there are many activities performed by each agent such as the ODA project, the export of technology, as well as investment and funding.

This season, we not only tried to discuss the activities based on solely factual data provided, but we also visited

Table. 1 Activities and targets

Level of agent	Targets	Activities
Nation	Indonesia & Taiwan	Overseas Inspection
Municipality	Kitakyushu city	Discussion
Grassroots	Japan Water Forum	Interview
University	ICMFA	Interview

overseas projects, the office of agents and university; experiencing them hands-on while having discussions with the agents themselves (**Table. 1**). This paper reports on the new insight that has bloomed from this concept, “Just what is our international cooperation in 21st century?”

1) Activity of Nation level (Indonesia and Taiwan)

As a part of the activity of season II, we conducted a field survey to see overseas projects in Indonesia and Taiwan with the students of each country. At the same time, we had a discussion with the students, and the new insight gained at the meeting was reported Hashimoto *et al.* (2010).

2) Activity of Municipality (Kitakyushu city)

The city of Kitakyushu has much experience in solving the environmental problems generated along with rapid urbanization. With this, they are currently offering their technology for treating water to a sister city, Dalian, China. These activities are regarded as a typical example of an “activity of municipality”(Kitakyushu, 2012).

In order for us to further study their involvement in detail, we invited Mr. Hideo Naitoh who is working in the government of Kitakyushu city as a lecturer, and had a discussion about the international cooperation b municipality (**Fig. 1**).

3) Activity of NPO (JWF)

The JWF (Japan Water Forum) is one of NPOs striving to relieve the world from suffering due to water problems, and to allow people all around the world access to sufficient clean water (JWF, 2012). Among their activities, their “JWF Fund” is a funding support program conducted once per year, allowing for direct, prompt support. Activities similar to this are currently booming all around the world. We then interviewed Kaori KONDO who

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Fig. 1 Invited meeting with Mr. Naitoh (Kitakyushu city)

is working as a manager at JWF in order to talk about incentives, and the difficulties experienced (Fig. 2).

4) Activity of University (ICMFA)

The ICMFA (International Construction Management Forum in Asia) consists of 18 universities spanning 13 different countries in Asia. These universities work together to implement the education necessary to fortify nations and to develop human resources (ICMFA, 2012). We thus interviewed Professor Kusayanagi taking the chair of the forum.

3. New insight through the activities

Although each sector may include the concept of "international cooperation", the formats of each are completely different. At a project scale, cooperation from the nation level has a huge advantage. Conversely, the grassroots activity has the advantage of close cooperation, allowing for quickness of implementation and consequently assisting those who need assistance.

On the other hand, municipalities are able to maintain a deep, long-term cooperation boasting cumulative knowledge built from various experiences. Consequently, the notion of "international activity" is thereby developed by linkage of universities such as the ICMFA. Each sector has their own advantages, and each sector understands the importance of respecting one other. Therefore, international cooperation is built upon the activities of each section and each agent.

4. Achievement of season II

At first, nobody was an expert at international cooperation. Therefore, the activity in season II started with regular study meetings about the ODA and other basic studies. In the process, student members were given indispensable opportunities to experience various things concepts about international cooperation. These experiences are not usually included within a standard curriculum taught in a Japanese university.

The essence of this activity was specifically for the nature of this extracurricular experience. The involvement of this activity was performed by working people and student members, and the activities were meaningful for the education of young engineers. Furthermore, seeking



Fig. 2 Interview with Kaori KONDO (JWF)

opinions from people who are of different generations provides for unique viewpoints and various ways of thinking. Although, the discussion did take a bit too much effort and time.

As a part of our activities, we produced a book that was later published by JSCE (2011). We discussed about the various views and way of thinking throughout the book for students to further grasp the concept of international cooperation.

5. Activity Plan in Season III (Future plan)

We desire to focus on the characteristics and power of Japanese mentality that has originated from our history and culture. To figure out the international competitiveness of Japan, we shall discuss about how Japanese people should be in the global society and what "Traditional Japanese spirituality" is. This is the main fundamental topic we will focus on. In order to host a meaningful discussion, we plan to gather people from various occupational fields that are in some fashion related with the global society.

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