

The Second Note  
on  
The Trials of Enriching the Lives  
of  
International Students  
in Niigata

in the Wave of Reformations of the University Systems  
in Japan

Masanobu Mark Nakamura  
Professor, International Student Center  
Niigata University

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Abstract

In the abrupt and rapidly developing wave of educational reforms and semi-privatization of the university system in Japan the role of the International Student Center(I.S.C.) seems to attract special attention as the organization which has the possibility to have a coordinating function in the future university system. Primary educational reforms increase the requests for participation in the curriculum by international students and I.S.C. which gives new and various opportunities to both the students and I.S.C. Continued efforts have been made to expand the contacts and relationship with various sectors of Niigata society and the vicinity which hopefully will create opportunities to enrich the lives of the international students in Niigata.

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### 1. The Wave of the Reformation and The International Student Center

#### 1-1. (Towards Privatization )

Japanese government set up the policy to reform the education systems with mainly two reasons. One is to reform the system to match the great wave of information and communication evolution which is occurring worldwide at present and the other is to decrease the number of the staff of the government-supported universities. The latter is to lessen the burden on the national budget which has been expanded and now considered at size beyond the national financial capacity.

The latter reformation is taking the form of quasi-privatization of national universities in a few years' time. Every national university is now seriously self-checking what will be the ways to survive.

#### 1-2. (Toward the International Competitiveness)

So far Japanese national universities were competing only domestically. Privatization movement and the structural demographic changes in Japan are forcing national universities to consider their competitive power to be more international.

The decreasing young population in Japan pushes universities to consider more seriously increasing the international students on the campus. In the trend of privatization national universities are changing their attitude to consider students as the customers and coming to think that marketing for inviting international students is more necessary.

1-3. (Niigata University Special Project of Research on Internationalization and the New Concept on the Future Function of the International Student Center-I.S.C.-)

A special project to look into the possibility of international competitiveness was executed and the result was reported in July last year. The research was financed by the president's special funds.

The report emphasised the central function of the coordination of the I.S.C. in the scheme to form a new organization to enhance the internationalization and international exchanges of the university.

It is envisaged that I.S.C. will not only take care of the international students and help Japanese students to study abroad but also it will take responsibility for coordination and integration of the efforts of faculties and work as the center of international activities of the university.

1-4. (Scheduled Short-Term Exchange Programme in English attracts attention to the I.S.C. as the Coordinator)

Niigata University plans to start, as soon as the Autumn of next year, a new exchange programme for a short period of half a year or a year with classes conducted in English. This type of programme is only possible with the cooperations and supports of all the faculties in the university. Since the formation of the working group on this new project the interest and attention to the function of the I.S.C. as the coordinator is increasing. Side by side with the most recent proposal from the "21st Century Committee" to the prime minister to make English as the second language in Japan, education in universities in English and I.S.C.'s roles in such development will become one of the important tasks in the near future.

## 2. Three Major Achievements of I.S.C. in FY1999

### 2-1. (Three Reforms and Achievements)

ISC attained three major achievements in fiscal 1999.

The first one is to have had the agreements of the major faculties to pay special attention in the entrance test for post graduate courses for the government supported international students who arrived recently to Japan with zero Japanese.

The second one is to have created the through-the-year courses of Japanese language.

The last one is to have succeeded to get a position in the university council which is the supreme organization to decide the basic policies of university operations.

The above were possible with the strong initiative of the director of the I.S.C. and the coordinated efforts between professors and I.S.C. office staff.

### 2-2. (Graduate Schools Entrance Tests Reforms)

Japanese government is paying efforts to attract quality students from all over the world with various motivations, some educational, some diplomatic. Since Japanese language is considered one of the most difficult languages there is certain hesitation among the international students to select Japan as a place for the advanced studies. They seem to get the impression that it may be possible to study in Japan without using much Japanese and using mostly English, particularly at the advanced courses.

On the other hand, many Japanese universities are still posing entrance examinations even for post graduate courses in high standard Japanese, exactly as for Japanese students. This situation causes confusion and disappointment. The government encourages international students to study in Japan and universities are not ready to match such efforts.

ISC took special action to solve this problem. The director and I visited all the faculties and post graduate organizations to ask their consideration to improve the situation. The reactions were quite positive and all such applicants were accepted and they are vigorously following their own studies.

### 2-3. (Throughout the Year Japanese Courses)

I.S.C. used to have two major courses of Japanese. One for the six months

preparatory Japanese course for the government sponsored students. The other is for other students time to time arranged which are called "supplementary Japanese courses". The latter courses open only for a short time at the vacation periods and methods of teaching were not necessarily persistent.

I.S.C. decided and started to establish around the year Japanese courses and enabled any students to come at any time to join these classes. The first such courses started in April 1999.

The revolutionary nature of this development came from the complications of the university budget system. Without the cooperation of the I.S.C. office staff who are in charge of the accounting and book-keeping the courses were not possible.

#### 2-4. ( University Council New Position gained )

In many trials of reformation of the university management the structure of the council was revised to accomodate more organizations in the university. Noticing this change I.S.C. moved quickly to avail itself of the newly created position. After certain efforts, I.S.C. was elected as a member for the last remaining post. I.S.C. hereafter has the position to be directly involved in the supreme deciding structure.

### 3. Extracurricular Schedules having Equal Importance as Studies

#### 3-1. ( Inter-cultural Exchange as the Basic Objective )

It is often discussed among teachers that teaching comes after the research works. It is because the value of a teacher has been scaled mainly by the number and the quality of the papers published, but not by the efforts to teach students. Thus some teachers try to evade teaching trying to use his time and energy to do his research work as much as possible.

In this kind of circumstances it is no doubt that the teachers of I.S.C.s of the national universities tend to avoid to be included in the daily troubles of the international students leaving them rather to the office staff.

Office staff of I.S.C.s of the national universities are not selected to cope with the daily numerous problems of the international students. They are positioned there just as the rotation system provides. Most of them neither speak English which is now the only common language among the newly arrived students, nor are they accustomed to deal with the problems of students.

Within such an environment the efforts of teachers to put emphasis on the extra-curricular activities are significantly important. But at most of the national university in Japan such efforts seem to be much lower than a sufficient level.

### 3-2. (Concentration of Information and Efforts to make it easy to understand)

It is often observed that the Japanese-written informations or invitations are simply put on the bulletin board for the international students. Only a few students understand what they are and these valuable opportunities have been lost without being noticed, which is also discouraging for the planners of such events. This situation has double faults. One is to lack the effort and kindness to make the information understandable and the other is to lack the effort to help them in their selection of the opportunities. Since most of the international students are not familiar with the customs or traditions of Japanese society, they are not necessarily qualified to judge which event is valuable or not. There should be some help in this direction. The first important action in encouraging the international students to participate in extra-curricular activities is to concentrate the information and make them easy to understand. Also, if possible, to add some hints for their selection judgement.

### 3-3. (To create the Active Atmosphere)

Extra-curricular programmes can produce an active atmosphere among the international students. Since such activities stimulate their interest to look into the Japanese history and tradition and compare them to their own it creates a positive attitude and enhances participation in various local activities where they learn many things by doing so.

It is essential that the new students can maintain the positive and vigorous attitude to accustom themselves to a new cultural environment. Studies,

mainly of Japanese language, often discourage their self-confidence and tend to minimize their spiritual sphere. They are often lost in how to expand their curiosity and find it difficult to be confident in what they gained. Extra-curricular programmes can amend many aspects of these problems. But it would be only possible when such programmes are well planned and carefully examined and properly proposed.

#### 3-4. ( Opportunities to Exchange with Japanese Students and Citizens )

Extra-curricular programmes offer good opportunities to get in touch with Japanese students and citizens which are otherwise not easily accomplished. It is often argued that the international students have rare chances to mingle with Japanese students and even less opportunities with citizens. Extra-curricular programmes can be good solutions to these problems since such programmes have, in most of the cases, something to do with other members of the university or the local society. Since such programmes are multi-dimensional, Japanese students and citizens have easy and useful motivation to be involved in and thus help the international students unconsciously.

One important point to be noticed is the function of the teacher in the procedure. At the encounter of international students Japanese students and citizens often hesitate in the ways of approach. A little help from the teacher will enhance the good relations at the start and intervention from time to time will help foster positive cooperative relations and understanding among them.

#### 3-5. ( Informal Networks among Teacher and the Students work )

After doing various activities together besides the teaching I have now the list of about eighty international students with whom I can immediately contact with and talk in an intimate manner. This list includes the groups of the leaders of the major ethnic groups, such as Chinese students who occupy almost half of the international students' population. This means my list covers almost all the students in the campus at present, which counts around three hundred.

This informal and rather private network is valuable in many ways.

- 1) I can arrange things in friendly circumstances and confidence
- 2) I can arrange any type of combination for certain type of activity

- 3) I can arrange in the way to suit the students' satisfaction
- 4) I can give the other party their necessary information
- 5) I can amend or change the programme in a short time, not causing unnecessary fuss, etc.

In short, I can make many possible arrangements of related parties' in a satisfactorily smooth manner and in a relatively short time.

### 3-6. (Some Positive and Creative Actions)

The extra-curricular programme can produce some creative actions which could influence the other Japanese students or even the university structure. One of such examples is "Clean the Campus Initiatives" by the international students. This is the action to clean the campus in the way that such actions can be observed by other Japanese students. The collection of rubbish was such that the action ended with satisfaction in two ways; one that we have done good thing to our campus and the other that the amount was so great that the action was effective.

This type of action also created the interest of the university management.

### 3-7. (Example of the Extra-curricular Schedule)

Here is the example of the extra-curricular schedule for the most recent group of the intensive Japanese course and others.

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## **EXTRACURRICULAR SCHEDULE 6**

**Jan.27 ~ Mar.10.2000**

**Your participation is encouraged to the following events**

**Jan. 27, Thu. 18:00 at RA305 for light supper then to JONNOBI onsen. Application to M.N. till 25th. Yen 500 for onsen. (Note 1)**

**Jan. 29, Sat. International Festival 2000 at Next 21, 6th Fl.**

**10:50 Around the World with Music and Dance!**

**16:20 "Think About the World" discussion. (Note 2)**

**Jan. 30, Sun. 10:30 ~ 14:00 at West City Hall, 15 minutes walk**



from the Campus, "Gyoza, Chinese dumpling, eating Meeting".  
Direct to the place. (Note 3 )

Jan.31, Mon. Dead end for application to "Yasuzuka Snow  
Festival Home Stay" Application to I.S.C. Office.(see  
Feb.26,27)(Note 4)

Jan.30, Sun., Jan.31, Mon., Feb.1, Tue. FREE special invitation  
for KABUKI

Jan.30: 11:00~, 16:00~, Jan.31: 18:30~, Feb.1: 18:30~  
Application to M.N. All international students of Niigata  
University. ( Note 5 )

Feb.18, Fri. 17:00 ~ at Daiichi Shokudo, Canteen No.1.  
International Exchange Buffet with the local groups, host;  
President MD. Arakawa. (Note 6)

Feb. 19 ~ 27, Niigata International Film Festa at Next 21, Cine  
Window, Ryutopia or Unison Plaza. Details by fliers or M.N.  
(Note 7)

Feb. 22, Tue. Akakura Skii Tour: for all the Int'l Students.

9:00 Ikarashi dept.

14:00 arrive at Hotel Shuuzan

Feb. 23, Wed. Enjoy skiing at Akakura Central Skii Park. Lunch  
by each.

13:30 dept. Akakura.

16:10 arrive Ikarashi.

Guranty money Yen7,800 which later paid back to your bank  
account. (Note 8)

Feb. 26, Sat. ~ 27, Sun. 9:27 train from Niigata arriving at  
Naoetsu at 11.11. OTHER OPPORTUNITY OF SKII. "Yasuzuka  
Snow Festival Home Stay" details by flier or M.N. (application by  
Jan.31)

Feb. 28 ~ Mar.1, Mon.~ Wed. Nara, Kyoto trip for Monbusho-  
students and others of the Intensive Japanese Course. Mr. Ikeda  
in charge. (Note 9)

Mar. 10, Fri. 10:30 at I.S.C. for 11:00 CLOSING CEREMONY &  
RECEPTION

Inquiries: M.Nakamura.(262-7508) e-mail: marknaka@isc.niigata-  
u.ac.jp

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Note 1: 20 people attended including Japanese students, teachers of other universities and citizens.



An onsen or hot spa is located quite near to the campus and it is an ideal place to experience the different climate and nature at Japan in a relaxed and healthy atmosphere. Dipping in the same bath naked enhances the intimacy among participants.

Note 2: International Festival is annually held by NGOs with some financial help from Niigata City. There many international students participate as the principal role-players. They organize and perform and enjoy it with many local people. It is a valuable opportunity for the international students in many ways.

Note 3: West City Hall is the nearest city hall to the university. They propose certain programmes with the international students in mind. From time to time, for some programmes, international students make speeches on their countries or other topics.

Note 4: In this case we encourage the international students to participate since this snow festival is a unique opportunity to enjoy snow and skii. This year the biggest ever number of students participated.

Note 5: This is the cooperation of the city facility and the university. Seventy students enjoyed this occasion. Special explanatory paper was prepared to understand the performances and a teacher acted as the intermediary at the tickets arrangement at the hall to avoid the confusion.

Note 6: This is the annual occasion to explain the university policy to the supporting local groups and to enjoy exchanges. International students were encouraged to participate in order to know their neighbours.

Note 7: This is the case that certain guidance is definitely necessary. Many programmes from certain places, with easy access and time, were chosen and the films were introduced with English explanations.

Note 8: This type of event produces quite a different application status by the way of publicity and promotion. Informal information networks explained at 3-5 was fully activated with tremendous results.

Note 9: This trip is another valuable opportunity for the international students to know the Japanese culture and history.

### 3-8. (Wider Distributions and Deeper Attention)

The above circulation started with the intention to enhance the extra-curricular activities for mainly the students of intensive Japanese course who are directly under the control of the ISC for six months. The bulletin now attracts wider and deeper attention of the international students since it is easy to understand and more attractive. Also, most of the events on the bulletin are open to most of the international students. The preparations are under way to circulate such information at the home page of I.S.C.

### 3-9. (Formation of the Alumni Meetings at the Prefectural Level)

ISC of Niigata University is accepting students of other universities for six months intensive Japanese courses. Now these students graduated from these courses and are studying in other universities and keeping contacts with their former classmates. Since these universities are scattered in Niigata Prefecture this contact and occasional meeting each other form

another interesting opportunity to create new networks and knowledge of the prefecture and Japan. This new networks will certainly create various opportunities among the universities particularly in management and policies.

## 4. School Study Revolution and its Effects on the International Students

### 4-1. (Sogo-Gakushu, Integrated Study Plan, is soon starting)

Japanese educational systems are rapidly changing now. It is no exaggeration to describe it as the largest revolution since the end of the World War II.

There are several reasons to explain the revolution.

- 1) The basic Japanese social system is changing, namely from the “centrally controlled system” to “market oriented system”.
- 2) The above change is diluting the attractiveness to get into the central governmental system which has been the central reason for tense entrance examination competition.
- 3) Young students thus have lost the clear target of competitive studies.
- 4) Smaller population of younger generation is creating uncompetitive environment toward the high education systems.
- 5) Japanese high education systems are revealing their weakness in coping with changing demands of students.
- 6) Japanese industries are confronted with expanding global competition and they are getting unsatisfied with the quality of the students.

The above tendency is creating the nation-wide argument to improve the educational systems from the very bases.

One of the answers is so-called “Sogo-Gakushuu” or integrated study plan. This is to try to educate children as a personality but not to stuff them with the fractions of knowledge.

### 4-2. (Education for International Understanding)

As one of the emphasis of the educational revolution targets to improve the

understanding of Japan's position in the world, schools started to programme curriculum in that direction.

Now it seems to have become a fashion that schools are trying to organize opportunities to make their children come in contact with the other nationalities.

The aims of such education are, in most of the cases, as follows:

- 1) To study other countries in more detail.
- 2) To study the existence of many different people, situations, thinking, etc.
- 3) To study what will be the better way to co-exist with such different people and different situations.

One of the typical case is to invite some foreign people to the class and discuss with them. Fortunately at present a certain number of English teachers, particularly the teachers under the governmental scheme, are available near-by and they are often asked to help with these programmes. At the same time, the foreign staff at the section of the international exchange are supporting these programmes. But with the increase of such schemes the number of foreigners became insufficient and the invitations began to reach the international students of the university.

#### 4-3. (Examples of the Participations)

I.S.C. of Niigata University has been positively reacting to these requests. These invitations have various merits to the international students as well as the university itself.

- 1) I.S.C. can support local educational organizations.
- 2) International students can establish intimate relations with the local society and get experiences which are otherwise quite difficult to obtain.
- 3) This gives opportunities for university to cooperate with the local schools

The most recent examples are shown below:

Mar. 16, 99 Nagaoka Higashi Middle School, second grade students PTA initiated the action. Some exchange members of the prefectural office and several members of the international students of Niigata University joined through my coordination. Average two foreigners in each class answered to the questions of students who freely visited class rooms. The language used was Japanese.

June 8, 99 Niigata Sakuragaoka Primary School 4th grade children  
(around 10 years old)

Four international students from Niigata University joined the programme. One student went to each class and answered to various prepared questions and played together. School lunch was served in the class room and the international participants were invited to the lunch. After the lunch they played together in the school ground. I was with them as a coordinator.

July 3, 99 Niigata Muramatsu-Higashi Primary School at their  
“International Summer Festival”

Seven international students joined in the programme. No teacher could join it but the previous detailed coordinations were executed and the participation finished with great success.

October 20, 99 Niigata Ikarashi Primary School, 4th grade children  
Eight students participated. This primary school is situated very near to the university and children of some staff are studying there. Two students for each class and each class formed two groups. Group leader was elected and the leader presided the questions of the group to the student. Flags and maps were prepared with many questions. The impression was that the meetings were well prepared.

October 26, 99 Ikarashi Primary School, 6th grade children visit I.S.C.  
Initiative from PTA. Six children visited Japanese intensive course class and the visit was considered to take a part of the course. I worked as the coordinator and teacher.

November 15, 99 Niigata Aoyama Primary School 5th grade children  
Six international students participated without teacher. Previous preparations were carefully made and enough information and instruction were give to the students-participants. The meeting was a success.

November 17, 99 Ikarashi Primary School 4th grade children, series 2  
After several discussions the programme was constructed with the two parts and the latter part was now executed. Most of the internatinal students

were the same members with some inevitable changes. Being the second time to meet the meetings were more intimate and friendly. Children really regretted to farewell to the visitors.

November 22, 99 Sakuragaoka Primary School 5th grade children at their "environmental problems study"

Sogo-gakushuu is expanded to environmental studies. To examine and compare Japanese situation children wished to listen to the cases of the other countries. Two students participated to explain relatively specific themes on their country. No teacher participated.

November 30, 99 Niigata Sakaiwa Primary School 6th grade children  
One student participated in the "dance" section of the International Festival of the school. He was a good dancer and he taught a modern easy dance to the children. He was quite successful.

#### 4-4. (Some Basic Rules of Participations)

I.S.C. controls the flows of the requests from schools to make the international students participate to their programmes and established some basic rules.

- 1) Decision of the participations are made by the students themselves. It should be confirmed that such participation does not spoil their study.
- 2) I.S.C. gets the consent of the advising teacher of the student participating
- 3) I.S.C. teacher(s) is better be involved in the programme from the initial stage and accompany the students as much as possible.

The rule 2) stems from the fact that each student is directly under the guidance of a particular teacher and the extra-curricular activities would influence directly or indirectly his study plan and it should be under the knowledge of the adviser.

#### 4-5. (Evaluation of the Participation)

It is a new development that the international students are invited to participate in the school activities. It has been a difficult thing for a school to organize such a curriculum. For the international students it has been virtually impossible to visit schools and participate in their study activities.

Thus this was the first confrontation between to the schools and the students. It was no wonder that the applications of such invitation started using rather informal network. In fact, almost all of the above cases came through personal or informal channel, i.e. through my friends. PTA's initiatives were also for the same reason. One of the leaders happens to know me and contacted me.

Under such circumstances some coordination was definitely necessary. Such coordination was necessary to keep and increase the confidence of the both parties. Coordination was necessary at the midst of the activities since many unexpected small problems occurred in both sides. This is the reason that at least one teacher needed to participate.

So far the participation were with great success. The reasons could be analysed as follows:

- 1) The initiatives in the schools were made by teachers or the leaders of PTA who are particularly eager to develop the international understanding.
- 2) School children are so interested in meeting and talking with the international students which created a very vivid, warm and welcoming atmosphere. This element seems to be the most important reason for the success.
- 3) The international students were carefully selected so as to fit the expected circumstances of the schools. Since I know most of them personally I could select the students case by case and after discussing personally about the programme.

The students say they fully enjoyed the occasions.

- (1) They were treated like special guests and respected.
- (2) They had the positive experience because their knowledge was valuable to children and their Japanese worked well.
- (3) They see many new things, i.e. inside the schools and children, which stimulates their interests in knowing about this important part of Japanese society and systems.
- (4) They have the positive feeling that they are contributing to the Japanese education which improves their confidence.

It can be summerized that the participation opportunities were quite valuable to the students who have participated. It also gave the impression to the schools that the University is open and cooperative to their activities. The future task will be how to cope with the rapid increase of such requests



for participation after hearing successes of the preceding exchanges.

## 5. Furnishing Students Facilities and the Improvements of Competence

### 5-1. (Furnitures and Futon)

One of the major roles of I.S.C. is to help the newly arrived government sponsored students to establish their daily lives, i.e. helping them to furnish their rooms. The capacity of the dormitory for students is limited and a certain percentage of the new commers should find their own apartments and furnish them. I.S.C. pre-reserve the apartments, so the immediate necessity is the furnishment.

The initial furnishment has a financial problem. The first stipend comes normally at the end of the first month and the allowance at the arrival is minimal, therefore most of the students have not enough funds to furnish their apartment. The first and minimum furnishing is the bedding and Japanese traditional bedding, futon (foldable bedding) is the cheapest investment. I.S.C. managed to contact various sources who have extra futons for these students. Most of the new arrivals have got their futon through this arrangement. At present some ten sets of futon are reserved for the coming new group at one of the seashore house by the owner's kindness.

### 5-2. (The Store Room Facility for Flexible Transfer)

Until the establishment of I.S.C. the furnishment was done by the student her/himself with some help of the same ethnic group and the advising teacher.

Since 1998, I.S.C. received several offers of furnitures and futon (Japanese bedding materials). These offers came through informal and private relationship mainly from the owners of the companies where they found some furnitures which became unnecessary. Untill the summer of 1999 these furnitures offered were immediately distributed among the students. Now I.S.C. luckily has obtained a small storage facility in the campus which greatly helps to distribute the furnitures with a more appropriate speed and manner.

On the other hand I.S.C. is trying necessity to establish some management system to keep the store room goods appropriate. There is certain gap between the goods we receive and the things students want. The difference creates some useless stocks in the store room.

### 5-3. (System of Re-Cycling Goods among Students)

Considering Japanese students inclusive, all students are constantly moving by circulation of roughly four years. At the end of their campus life they find many things to be disposed of before their moving to the other place. On the other hand new group enter to the campus life and they need many things to establish their new lives. Among these groups a certain circulation of goods system is working but it is not necessarily satisfactorily. It is believed that many things are simply disposed of while the goods have value. I.S.C. has already had offers from Japanese graduating students of daily useful goods to the international students which were duly accepted and delivered. It is now the time to establish a more fundamental and permanent system of recycling goods among students. These activities probably need the assistance of volunteers of people living near the University.

## 6. Enlarging Relationships and Network

### 6-1. (Enlarged Networks)

While I was trying to arrange new and beneficial things for the international students and also Japanese students in Niigata, I established four organizations so far. They are namely;

- 1) English Drama Company Inviting Committee
- 2) Niigata EU Association
- 3) Niigata Russian Youth Exchange Association
- and
- 4) Niigata Italy-Japan Association

I am representing all of these four organizations. These activities are helping me and eventually I.S.C. to enlarge networks in Niigata area thus benefitting the welfare and contacts of the international students at not only

Niigata University but also at the other universities and colleges.

6-2. (English Drama Company Inviting Committee and the EU Association)

As one of my previous occupations was the Director General of Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation, which is the largest foundation between U.K. and Japan, I have naturally established human networks accordingly. This resulted in the invitation of the International Theatre Company London to perform in Niigata from 1997 on. Following the recommendation of the prefectural cultural foundation we have established a committee which consists of many academics and voluntary circles. In this activity there occurred a suggestion to create a Japanese-British Society since such organization does not exist in Niigata. In the process of organizing such a society the overwhelming movement of European Union started which made us change the idea to create rather a EU Association which was formed at October 1998.

Since the establishment of the Association it has worked well to enhance cooperation between Japanese students and the international students; students with local people; international teachers and students.

Two workshops of international understanding were made with the sponsorship of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs where a great percentage of the participants were international students. One money collection for the donation to the international land mine clearing activities was made at the city center where international students worked as the central force.

Tokyo EU Delegation accepted the idea to make panel presentation at the Niigata city centre and this two week "Euro Exhibition" ended with a great success gathering more than four thousand people. Minister of the Delegation visited Niigata and payed visit to the governor and the meeting was televised widely and topics appeared in the newspapers. These occasions all became ideal opportunities for international students' participation and cooperation of many related sectors.

6-3. (Russian Youth Exchange Association activated Russian Students )

In October 1998 a friendship treaty was concluded between Russia and Japan and one of the projects was to invite at least 1000 youth from Russia to Japan in five years starting summer of 1999. Niigata, having the airport

with regular flights to the far-eastern part of Russia, became an important gate city for this programme. Nevertheless because of two difficulties, 1) each visit is organized with very short notice, 2) Niigata stay is organized at the very end of the schedule as participants wish to have special experience as a home visit or home stay. This was fairly difficult to organize, as there was no accepting body and this Association was quickly formed to cope with the situation.

The Association accepted seven groups already exceeding 100 youth from mainly the far-eastern part of Russia. The unexpected effect of this activities was that it enhanced greatly the cooperative action among Russian students and the Russian society in Niigata. In various parties and meetings they meet often and joined in the events which actively united their friendship.

Now after several positive exchanges Niigata seems to have gained fame as a friendly spot among the organizations on the Russian side. These exchanges are not only giving the opportunities to the Russian students but also to students of other nationalities, because the Association tries to make every meeting as international as possible inviting a variety of people.

#### 6-4. (Home-visit Programmes and its Future Prospect)

One of the interesting development of this Russian Youth Exchange Association is that this activity is rapidly expanding the scope of possible home stays, possibly for future coming of international students for longer terms. Everytime there is a visit the Association is trying to expand the list of home stay host families. It is not easy to find the home stay family and it seems the only way is to prepare the list by person to person relationship.

Finding the home stay families is one of the hardest tasks of every I.S.C. and it is considered that the home stay is the best way for an international students to know and accustom with a different culture and language.

#### 6-5. (Italy-Japan Association and Niigata's special history with Italy)

This newly created Association will be able to give further chances to the international students and will be able to unite many elements in Niigata. It is by chance that Japanese and Italian governments decided to have a historical event of "Italy in Japan 2001" from April 2001 for one year. The

Association has started a project team to examine the Niigata possibilities to participate in this great international event. It is sure that in the wave of various procedures the Association will be able to give many opportunities to increase the interesting and stimulative occasions to the students and the related groups and companies.

6-6. (Lecture Requests- as a Sign of the Enlarged Relations)

Requests to make lectures, work as a coordinator, or to participate in the forum are increasing. This can be probably taken as a sign of enlarged relationship with various fields of Niigata and the vicinity. Each occasion itself is another opportunity to make the audiences or the participants know about the activities of I.S.C. and the international students. These enlarging relations and publicity will, hopefully, contribute to the expansion of the future various possibilities, such as internship in the companies, home stays, etc.

The list of the occasions I have participated as lecturer or others is as follows:

June 97: Shiga Pref., Ryuou-machi, "Dragon Seminar" Lecture on "Town Development" and coordinator of the workshop.

Aug. 97: I.S.C. Niigata Univ. Open lecture on "Wisdom of Asia"

Nov. 97: Tottori Pref., Commemorative Lecture at the establishment of the Human Right Center on "We and the Human Rights"

Dec. 97: International Exchange Committee, Niigata Univ. Open Seminar on "International Students in Niigata Daigaku"

Fev. 98: Shiga Pref., Shigaraki-machi, Equalization Forum on "If I were a Woman"

July 98: Nagano Pref., Shiga-mura, Staff Study Forum on "Residents' Participation in the World"

July 98: Public Seminar of Niigata Univ., on "Four Financial Centres in the World"

Dec. 98: Urawa College on "Learning Multi-languages"

Mar. 99: Yamagata Pref. Youth Seminar on "Asia through the Eyes of the International Students"

Mar. 99: International Symposium, Niigata Univ. on "Possibility of

### International Exchanges in Niigata

May 99: Niigata City Constitutional Day Gathering on "Toward the Equal Society"

May 99: NTT Users Association Meeting on "Japanese from Outside"

July 99: Niigata Kiwanis Club Monthly Meeting on "Is Japan sinking?"

Oct. 99: Niigata Univ. Student Club Managers Training on "Life and Clubs"

Nov. 99: Tsubame-Sanjo Junior Chamber of Commerce on "Japan in the World"

Nov. 99: Japan Sea Rim Council on "I.S.C. - its Activities and Prospects"

Nov.99: Kikkoman Future Seminar on "Message to the Future"

## 7. Some Problems and the Future Prospects

### 7-1. (Harassment with Female Students)

In Japan sexual harassment cases are becoming more and more apparent and attracting attention. In many universities the cases were disclosed and became the targets of criticism. I.S.C.s are experiencing such cases with female international students vis-a-vis advising teachers. Now most of the international students in graduate courses with an advisor often invites such unfavourable suspects. The possible problem has a complicated nature. The relation between the advisor and the student stays fixed in most of the cases and when some troubles occurred among them it tends to become a serious problem. It happens that the only solution from the student's side would be to create a difficult situation for the advisor and the harassment appeal could be used for this purpose.

Anyway it is a clear sign that there exist dissatisfaction between the student and the advisor. I.S.C. ,in this case, becomes a hiding place and the last help for the student. I.S.C. under this circumstance should make a difficult negotiations with the faculty concerned and the advisor. Since the inter-university organization as I.S.C. this is quite a difficult task not to create any hostile reaction from the faculty and/or advisor.

## 7-2. (Matching Future Student and Advisor)

A recently increasing problem which I found difficult is the direct contact from the future student and the matching of such a student with a possible teacher. One case is from the student who passed Japanese government test and is looking for the adequate place to study. Such contacts are mainly by e-mails which is time to time followed by phone call. I.S.C. tries to find a possible advisor but recent trials have been not very successful.

The reasons may be as follows:

- 1) The description of her/his background and scope of study is often not precise and detailed enough.
- 2) It is almost always the case that it is very difficult to find the teacher who can exactly cover the requested research or study area.
- 3) Most of the case the teacher contacted is already well occupied and s/he tends to try to avoid accepting the extra burden. Insufficient description of the documents becomes a good excuse to make a negative reaction for acceptance.

What I have experienced was that one teacher introduces the other and the other does the same. Meanwhile the possibility decreases rapidly.

Probably the fundamental reason for this difficulty is that the university appraisal system is not based much on education. Accepting the international student adds tremendous burden to the advisor. It seems that rather limited number of teachers are willing to accept international students.

How to organize the system and increase the willingness among teachers to accept international students will be one of the major tasks of I.S.C. in the near future.

(Niigata, February 2000)