



Japan Society of Civil Engineers

International Activities Center

IAC News No.125

Discussion Session between the Subcommittee for Making Civil Engineers More Internationally Minded and the UK Section

- Issues in Making Civil Engineers More Internationally Minded as Seen from the UK -

A discussion session between JSCE's Subcommittee for Making Civil Engineers More Internationally Minded and its UK Section was held on January 18, 2023. During the discussion session, after the introduction from the UK Section about the differences between the Japanese and British civil engineering industries (see "the Differences between the Japanese and British Civil Engineering Industries" in IAC News No.121*), a broad range of topics such as the gap in the work environment from that of Japan, the problem of Japanese civil engineers' English proficiency level, globalization issues, and the skills required of top management were discussed from the first-hand anecdotes of new and former UK Section members with experience working in the British civil engineering industry. The event contained content that is thought to be beneficial for those engaged in the civil engineering industry in Japan, and so the following is a report on what was discussed.

As examples of the gap in the work environment, the different work approaches in Japan and the UK and the tolerance of diversity were mentioned. In comparison to the civil engineering industry in the UK, which has a large percentage of personnel of different nationalities and races, and global companies in Europe where English is the official language used to communicate within the company, the tolerance of language and cultural aspects at Japanese companies have been said to be a possible issue in promoting diversity and the recruitment of global personnel.



London Bridge

On the topic of Japanese civil engineers' problems with English, it was put forward that at present, the lack of English proficiency of the Japanese in conducting work on the international stage is tied to the low level of productivity in operations. In Japan, although English is taught in the department of civil engineering at some universities, it was pointed out that this does not necessarily lead to civil engineers working overseas, and that in order to acquire English proficiency at a level that enables said civil engineers to carry out work globally, it is necessary for English to be taught to students as young as possible as a government scheme and for individuals to study abroad from their time at university.

As issues for making civil engineers more internationally minded, it was pointed out that in Europe and America, the contribution of each society of civil engineers is passionately discussed toward achieving carbon neutrality by 2050, whereas in contrast, in Japan, there are seemingly delays in addressing this trend. The fact that it is difficult to access global information due to the language problem can be said to be a major issue in the failure to keep up with the trends of the international community and possibly advance “Galapagosization” (the isolation of Japan) in Japan’s closed and domestic-focused civil engineering industry.

As skills required by top management, one civil engineer mentioned the importance of “project management skills”, which are a set of skills different from those acquired in the process of climbing up the career ladder to a management position. It was pointed out that in advancing Japanese companies’ global business in the future, the strengthening of the management structure and management skills is essential and it is the acquiring of these skills practically through competition that is the first step to true globalization.

Going forward, Subcommittee for Making Civil Engineers More Internationally Minded will continue holding discussion sessions while narrowing down some of the key themes that were put forward during the latest discussion session.

※IAC News No.121: <https://www.jsce-int.org/pub/iacnews/121>



Fish and chips



Westminster Abbey

【Reported by Subcommittee for Making Civil Engineers More Internationally Minded】

- Student Voice No.12 - Experience is the best teacher

Hello, I am Azam Amir from Pakistan, and am a civil engineer by profession with a master's degree in Structural engineering. I always had a dream to complete my doctorate in civil engineering at a world-renowned university and my pursuit of higher studies enabled me to get in touch with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Pakistan office which facilitated me in getting admission at Shibaura Institute of Technology (SIT), Tokyo, where currently I am a Ph.D. scholar studying under the guidance of Associate professor Dr. Michael Henry in the “Social Infrastructure Management Laboratory”. After my selection for a “Road Asset Management” scholarship program funded by JICA at SIT in September 2020, I could not physically join the university due to Covid-19 restrictions, but my professor facilitated me in my research and enabled me to join my laboratory online which greatly helped me as I was in my home country. After the covid-19 restrictions were relaxed, I arrived in Tokyo in September 2021 and after my arrival, the university student affairs section took good care of me in every aspect from documentation in city hall to providing me accommodation and assisting me with the procedure for inviting my family as well.



Azam Amir
(Regional Environment System Course, Graduate School of Engineering and Science, Shibaura Institute of Technology)

My experience in Japan has been phenomenal as I am working under the supervision of a very experienced and knowledgeable professor, Dr. Michael Henry, who is well-known for having diversified experience in the field of Civil engineering. Michael sensei is currently supervising 11 international students and is providing an exceptionally good research environment to all the students due to his experience. He takes a keen personal interest in guiding his students in the research subjects and is also concerned about the well-being of the students while the laboratory is well-equipped for conducting research in our relevant fields.

Japan in general and Tokyo in the particular offer a multitude of opportunities and is a truly multicultural capital as it offers an opportunity to meet and greet people from all over the world. The city offers many scientific and cultural attractions, which I and my family have experienced for the first time in our lives. Japanese society even though much different from the society where I come from has an openness that accommodates people from diverse cultures, and one does not feel alien in a short period of time. Since I am living with my family and have recently enrolled my daughter in a local school and was amazed to see the school system which is much different from the system in Pakistan but due to the tender care of the teachers, my child has adjusted well to the new environment.



Michael Henry's Lab

Having a background in Civil Engineering, the things that greatly impressed me regarding Japan was how it has taken great strides in various fields since the second world war and has set very high standards for even western countries to match. The quality, design, and standard of urban infrastructure in Tokyo and other cities in Japan are amazing and breathtaking for any engineer. The urban transport system of Tokyo and the Shinkansen (the bullet train) are all projects which were launched after the second world war and are an example of the commitment with which the engineers execute the projects to the satisfaction of the masses and have endured the rigors for almost half a century. I was greatly impressed to see the mega structures built in Tokyo, a city that is prone to frequent seismic activities, but the Japanese engineers have developed good seismic codes which enabled them to build these mega structures which can withstand the probable seismic activities in the future as well and it strengthens my decision of doing Ph.D. in civil engineering in Japan. I am 100 percent confident that it will be the best experience of my life and I will effectively utilize this experience in the future.



Field visit under JICA Road Asset Management training in Saitama



Badminton Team of my international friends in Tokyo International Exchange Center, Tokyo

Japan has developed in almost all spheres of life but still, the Japanese society has maintained its unique culture which they are proud of. The society is extremely disciplined, with extremely high work ethics which puts it apart from other nations. Japan has much more to offer for tourists as well, the numerous parks, tree-lined Ginza Dori shopping mall, museums especially preserving the history of Japan, Japanese food, sports arenas, and several other attractions coupled with safety, security, and hospitality of the Japanese people put it apart from the other world capitals and is a wonderful experience. The Japanese society is like the symphony of Beethoven, or Mozart or like the music of Ravi Shankar, or like a morning breeze that can be felt but cannot be described in words.

【Reported by Azam Amir, Shibaura Institute of Technology】

Updates

- ◆ JSCE Feedback Web Form 「多門に多聞&多問」
<https://committees.jsce.or.jp/chair/node/59>
- ◆ 2022 JSCE Annual Meeting IAC Discussion Follow-up Seminar online
<https://committees.jsce.or.jp/kokusai/node/320>



- ◆ IAC “News Pick Up!!” on the JSCE Japanese website
https://committees.jsce.or.jp/kokusai/iac_dayori_2023
- ◆ Summary of featured articles in JSCE Magazine Vol. 108, No.3 March 2023
<http://www.jsce-int.org/pub/magazine>
- ◆ Journal of JSCE
<https://www.jstage.jst.go.jp/browse/journalofjsce>
- ◆ 5th JSCE Concrete Committee Webinar “Frontiers of Concrete Technology”
<https://www.jsce-int.org/node/814>
- ◆ Concrete Committee Newsletter No.67, (January 2023)
<https://www.jsce.or.jp/committee/concrete/e/newsletter/newsletter67/index.html>
- ◆ The 4th Asian Concrete Federation (ACF) Symposium on Emerging Technologies for Structural Longevity (ACF2022_ETSL): <https://acf2022.aconf.org/index.html>
- ◆ Breakwaters 2023
<https://www.ice.org.uk/events/conferences/breakwaters-2023/>
- ◆ CECAR10 : <http://www.cecar10.org/>
- ◆ IABSE Symposium Istanbul 2023
<https://iabse.org/Istanbul2023>
- ◆ ASCE 2023 CONVENTION, CHICAGO (October, 18-21)
<https://convention.asce.org/>
- ◆ KSCE 2023 CONVENTION (October, 18-20)
<https://eng.ksce.or.kr/activities/act01.asp?idx=60&page=1&sfield=>xt=&byy=&gbns=1&ctop=MN0335&htop=MN0323&ptop=MN0323&smm=&btype=&bgbn=R>

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