

TREE of International Exchange

Invitation to Teachers'
International Exchange



Introduction

The Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU) promotes regional cooperation and exchange activities in the fields of education and culture for the purpose of realising a peaceful and sustainable society where cultural diversity is duly respected. As one of our activities, we have carried out bilateral International Exchange Programmes for School Teachers between Japan and the Republic of Korea, the People's Republic of China, Thailand and India since 2001. In March 2022, we prepared this booklet 'TREE of International Exchange: Invitation to Teachers' International Exchange' in Japanese and English in order to share the achievements and voices from participants of the 20-year-long project with people in the front line. This year the programmes were carried out as a part of 'International Collaboration Programme for Education in the New Era' entrusted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan (MEXT) .

The 'TREE' in the title originates from Asia-Pacific Educators' Platform: TREE, a website for programme participants. Our International Exchange Programmes for School Teachers provide a place of Transformative learning, Respect for diversity, Exploration and Exchanges (TREE).

This booklet consists of an introduction to international exchange opportunities (Chapter 1), interviews of teachers (Chapter 2) and topics on international exchange for school teachers in FY2021 (Chapter 3). We hope that this booklet would motivate you, with or without the experience of the programme, after understanding about international exchange itself and the voices of the participant teachers.

Last but not least, many people have participated in the creation of this booklet. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you all.

Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU)
International Educational Exchange Department

TREE of International Exchange

Invitation to Teachers'
International Exchange

CONTENTS

- 3 Introduction
- 7 Chapter 1 :
Welcome to Teachers' International Exchange
- 8 Welcome to TREE of International Exchange
- 13 Create connections and expand exchanges
- 14 Opportunities where teachers in Asia
meet and learn from one another
- 15 - The Republic of Korea
- 16 - The People's Republic of China
- 17 - Thailand
- 18 - India
- 19 Chapter 2 :
Voice of participants
- 20 Whether on-site or online, teachers respect and learn
from one another
- 22 **Interview** Japan-Korea Exchange
*A global citizen is someone who knows their region well
Common ground found in exchange among teachers in
small-scale schools*
1 : Mr. TANI Atsuhiko
2 : Mr. KOH Young Nam
- 34 **Interview** Japan-China Exchange
Every experience is to give back to students
Ms. AKAMATSU Junko
- 41 《 A case example in China 》
*Japanese Sugoroku goes to China!
Class designing is changed in a 15-minute learning session!*
- 42 **Interview** Japan-Thailand Exchange
*Passion for international exchange
that realised unprecedented reunions*
1 : Ms. Wishita KESARAKSHA
2 : Mr. Narong SIRIMUANG, Ms. Teerada UDOMSUP,
Mr. Busaror POHDING, Ms. Rangsiya KHANTASEEMA
3 : Mr. Sin PROMMAN

54	Interview Japan-India Exchange <i>Exchange began with a step forward</i> <i>Learn about and respect one another more</i> Mr. Siddhartha CHAKRABARTI Ms. MATSUI Ichiko
64	Interviewer' s postscript
65	Chapter 3 : 2021- 2022 Topics of Teachers' International Exchange
66	2021-2022 Topics of International Exchange Programme for Teachers
68	Events related to UNESCO and ESD in 2021 and International Exchange Programme for School Teachers
70	Online Exchange Today
73	Utilisation to in-service teacher training
74	Scenes from 2021- 2022 Programme
78	The Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU)
79	Conclusion

Welcome to Teachers' International Exchange

Welcome to /

TREE of International Exchange

International exchange opportunities through education are open to adults as well as children.

Why not interact across borders with other teachers who have gotten common interests and issues, or look for friends and chances to start a new initiative? The ACCU's International Exchange Programmes for School Teachers provide learning opportunities for teachers, children and schools to improve, where teachers assume a leading role. ACCU also encourages them to disseminate and give their experiences back to their educational practices after the participation of programmes.



In the International Exchange Programmes for School Teachers, you work on various activities, including before and after the programme. Participants are exposed to new opinions and perspectives through a variety of activities ranging from preparation to sharing of experiences after the programme. You can deepen your inner and outer learning by finding common interests and discovering non-verbalized issues while connecting with others.

- 《 Period 》 - About one week for an on-site programme
 - One time only, a few times a month or other format for an online programme

- 《 Video 》 Introduction of International Exchange Programmes for School Teachers (with English subtitles)
<https://youtu.be/YDjdyLxJcNU>



Experience



On-site programmes provide opportunities to visit a foreign country to pay a direct visit to local schools, educational institutions, or cultural facilities. The receiving side experiences welcoming foreign teachers in their own region and school to spend some time together.

Since COVID-19 broke out, we have implemented online exchange programmes. The programmes provide experience, including direct dialogue and exchange through the screen, a video, and group work with the aid of an application.

Preparation



Through lectures, programme participants learn the education circumstances, educational policy of the central government, and efforts in classrooms of the country you interact with.

You prepare for the exchange by learning not only about the country, but also about international exchange, international understanding, and the relation between global issues and education.

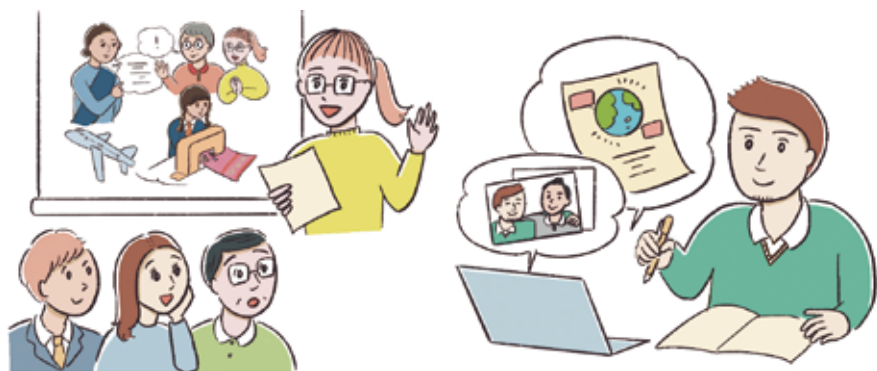
Interaction



Teachers who visit a foreign country are expected to learn their experience and opinions, absorb them and ask questions, as well as to share those of themselves. Proactive participation in activities such as exchange classes, Q&A sessions, and exchange meetings can deepen their learning mutually.

Whether online or on-site, we value interaction resulting from learning from one another.

Sharing information with others



This programme includes sharing of your learning, experience, and opinions as its important process.

In the programme, there is an opportunity to share your learning through a presentation in a debriefing session and the submission of a report. It is expected that you expand your learning after the programme by talking about your experience to people around you and by publishing articles.

Your activity report and opinion on the programme will improve future programmes. Participants can also share information with each other by using a website called TREE (P.13).

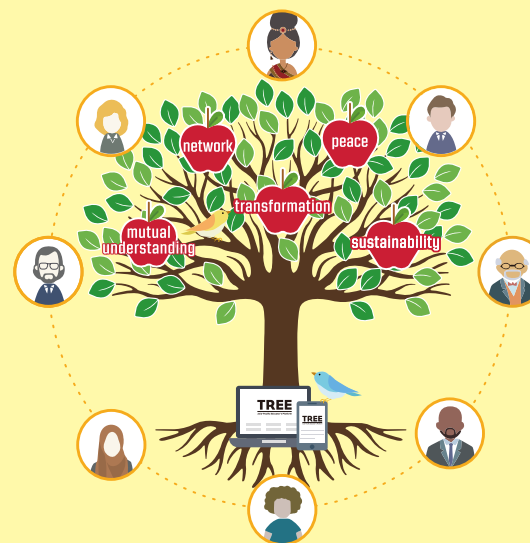
Receiving foreign teachers



Receiving foreign teachers at your school is a whole school experience. It provides opportunities such as having a class by the foreign teachers, deep dialogue through an exchange meeting. Taking this as an opportunity, diverse development is expected, including exchanges between classrooms or schools, and participation of teachers in dispatch programmes.

Create connections and expand exchanges

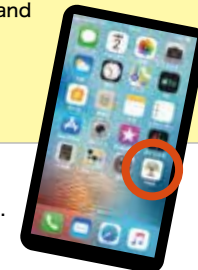
Meet other teachers across the regions on Asia-Pacific Educators' Platform: TREE, a social media service for programme participants!



What is TREE?

TREE is a membership-based social media service for Japanese and overseas teachers who have participated in or cooperated on International Exchange Programmes for School Teachers to facilitate exchanges among them and has been fully operated in Japanese and English since 2020.

TREE stands for
Transformative learning,
Respect for diversity,
Exploration and
Exchanges.



Join TREE

<- Scan the QR code to register your membership (on computer or smartphone).



- ① Application for membership registration
- ② Identification by administrator (within three business days)
- ③ Receipt of e-mail announcing registration completion

© If you add the page to your smartphone home screen, you can easily have access by tapping once like an app.

What you can do on TREE :

- Provision of materials and videos from the secretariat to participants of International Exchange Programmes for School Teachers
- Information exchange among programme participants
- Finding interaction and project participants
- Sharing your educational activities

After registration

- Set profile picture
- Search for friends and send friend requests
- Join a group of your interest and enter a group in the programme that you participate
- Read a post by another user and leave a comment
- Make a post

Opportunities where teachers in Asia meet and learn from one another

The ACCU has implemented bilateral International Exchange Programmes for School Teachers since 2001, on consignment from UNESCO, United Nations University, and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan (MEXT).

We have had the longest exchange with the Republic of Korea. Soon the People's Republic of China joined, and the exchange was expanded to Thailand and India over the last six to seven years. Over these 20 years, many teachers have met through the programme and mutually deepened their learning. Here, from the standpoint of the ACCU, we introduce the history of exchanges with each country.



JAPAN

Host Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan (MEXT)

Planning, implementation and operation
Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU)

Various regions, schools, and generations



A total of 1,171 school teachers have participated in dispatch programmes (as of October 2021, including online programmes).

A total of 139 school teachers have participated in exchange meetings with foreign teachers (as of October 2021, including online programmes).

A total of 913 Boards of Education, schools and institutions have received visits from foreign teachers (as of October 2021, including online programmes).

Programme timeline

- 2001 : Start of exchange programme with Korea
- 2002 : Start of exchange programme with China
- 2010 : 10th anniversary of the programme
- 2015 : Start of exchange programme with Thailand
- 2016 : Start of exchange programme with India
- 2020 : 20th anniversary of the programme, start of Asia-Pacific Educators' Platform: TREE



KOREA

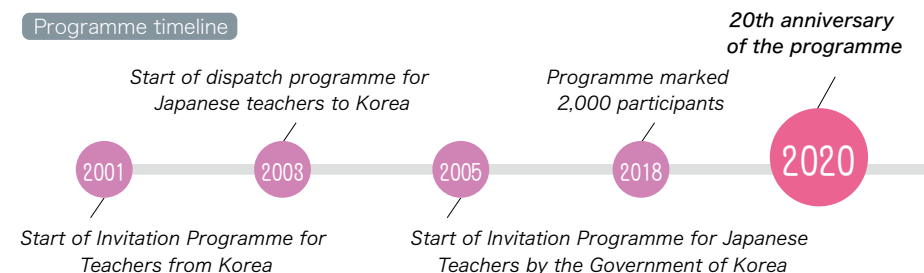
Interview of participants → P.22

Partner organisations Korean National Commission for UNESCO (KNCU), Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea (MOE)

Between 2001 and October 2021, as many as 2,238 school teachers participated (including online programmes).



Programme timeline





CHINA

Interview of participants → P.34

Partner organisations Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (MOE)

Between 2003 and October 2021, as many as 1,732 school teachers participated (including online programmes).



Programme timeline



THAILAND

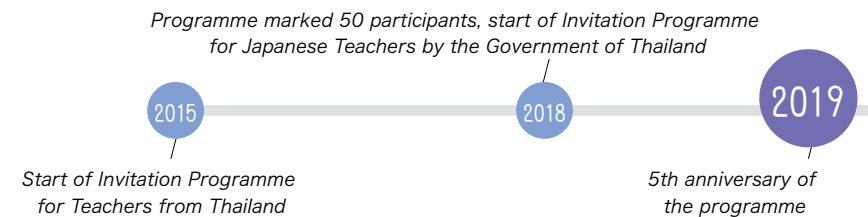
Interview of participants → P.42

Partner organisations Ministry of Education of the Kingdom of Thailand (MOE)

90 school teachers participated between 2015 and October 2021 (including online programmes).



Programme timeline





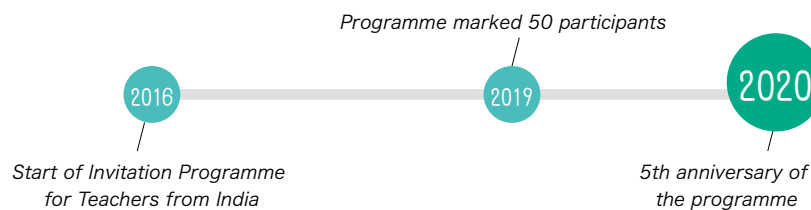
Partner organisations

Ministry of Education (MoE) of the Government of India,
Centre for Environment Education of India (CEE)

71 school teachers participated between 2016 and October 2021 (including online programmes).



Programme timeline



Voice of participants

“Voice” of Participants

Whether on-site or online, teachers respect and learn from one another

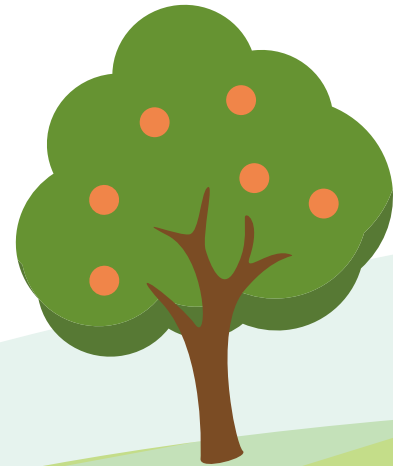
Between 2001 and 2021, over 5,000 teachers participated in the International Exchange Programmes for School Teachers. This seems a large figure. What is each teacher like?

In Chapter 2, through interviews of teachers who have participated in the exchange programmes between Japan and Korea, China, Thailand and India, we will observe the exchange programmes from the viewpoint of participants.

In the interviews, their names are noted in accordance with how they usually address each other.

They may be on a last-name basis or a first-name basis, and we respect the names used in each case.

Japan-Korea Exchange
P. 22



Japan-China Exchange
P. 34



Japan-Thailand Exchange
P. 42



Japan-India Exchange
P. 54



Japan-Korea Exchange



A global citizen is someone who knows their region well

Common ground found in exchange among teachers in small-scale schools

Teachers who gave an interview



Mr. TANI Atsuhiko

Teacher from Wajiki Primary School in Naka-cho, Tokushima

Participated in the outreach programme (online), a sub programme of the Invitation Programme for Teachers from the Republic of Korea in 2020



Mr. KOH Young Nam

Teacher from Kirin High School

Participated in the outreach programme (online), a sub programme of the Invitation Programme for Teachers from the Republic of Korea in 2020

Background of interview

As mentioned on page 14-15, the exchange between Japan and Korea has the longest history in the International Exchange Programmes for School Teachers. In 2020, the ACCU carried out the first outreach programme between Japan and Korea. This was implemented to expand the programme to small-scale schools in islands and mountainous areas, which were less convenient for exchange owing to geographical reasons.

As this programme was a new approach for exchange between Japan and Korea, and allowed teachers to learn a lot from one another, we have decided to conduct an interview with one teacher respectively from Japan and Korea, who participated in that programme. In this interview, these two teachers also delivered common messages almost as if they had made an arrangement earlier.

1 : Mr. TANI Atsuhiko

ACCU : You participated in our International Exchange Programmes for School Teachers for the first time. What was your experience like having an international exchange in a small group online?

Mr. TANI Atsuhiko (Tani) : I had never had a chance to talk with overseas teachers, and it was my very first international exchange. As it was online, I participated in the programme with excitement about how it would be. I took part in it, wondering if it was all right for a less-experienced teacher like me to join in. Once I participated, I found it really enlightening as I could take enough time to listen to Korean teachers with the aid of an interpreter. Although it was an online programme, it was satisfying because we had time to listen to each teacher in turns.

ACCU : Especially among the Koreans, there were several experienced teachers. What struck you most when you interacted with Korean teachers?

Tani : I usually have little chance to interact with people who take unique approaches, to express my thoughts, or to listen to others. So, I got the impression that the participants were all determined and did not hesitate to do what they wanted to do. The programme itself was informative, and further, I was encouraged by their attitude as a teacher and their toughness.

ACCU : During the programme, I heard that you provided children with learning focused on regional issues. How have you provided your educational practice since participation in the programme?

Tani : We have a local speciality called Awa Bancha, which is fermented tea made by a traditional method, and this fiscal year (FY2021) we are picking the tea leaves and fermenting them with children as our initiative. We interact with local farmers and conduct research and interviews to learn how the tea is accepted by local people.

I have worked for the school for three years, and now I feel like I can finally try what I would like to do. At first, I waited and saw how things could go because I had little experience, but this year, I have asked my supervisor and school for favours to let

me carry out activities I wish to do. Now I think more and more teachers work together and people approach us with interest.

ACCU : Children can also enjoy themselves with a wider range of activities, can't they?

Tani : Indeed. They have fun. Children I used to be in charge of say to me, 'There was no such activity last year' enviously, and all I can reply is 'Sorry about that'. I also take pleasure as we have more activities like this now.

ACCU : From what you just told us, I sense that your activities have become significantly different for the last year.

Tani : You are right. Last year's exchange supported our activities enormously. Before that, I sometimes became pessimistic while taking on different challenges, but now I have been stimulated and encouraged by what other teachers talked about, which has made me take another step forward to do my best.

ACCU : How do you plan, organise and implement your activities?

Tani : Every day I consider, 'Can we do this?' or 'Can we do that?' I love doing so, and I always visualise what kind of things we can do. It has almost become my hobby to imagine how interesting it would be if we invited such and such a person when I watch the news. What matters is whether I have the courage to take a step forward to put that into practice. As that makes me quite busy, it depends on whether I can take a step when wrestling with an impact on other matters and a sense that my work might be harder. I had unhurriedly considered making the tea for a long time. Although I draw up the outline of a plan at the beginning of a school year, the activity may be expanded during its course, and children can certainly change their opinions. I have fun proceeding with activities while making adjustments.

ACCU : While expanding your activities in that way, the connection with the regions and opportunities for children to offer a presentation have been increasing, haven't they?



Tani : You are right. For example, tea farmers who have worked together say, 'We will do this again next year'. Children also tell me that they would like to give what they have experienced back to the region and to promote the tea to people who are not familiar with it, so we are proactively planning what we can do during the COVID-19 pandemic.

ACCU : Let's go back to international exchange. Did the exchange become a reason to make you carry out your educational activities more thoroughly?

Tani : I had had little international perspective. As I had conducted my activities mostly within rather narrow limits, having acquired an international perspective means a lot to me all in all. I always thought about cultivating children who will have an active role in society, and now I have developed a wish to cultivate children who will be remarkably active in the international community, which I believe is made use of to create a lesson plan.

ACCU : When we talk with different teachers, we sometimes hear that a bar is set too high for international exchange programmes to participate in. Do you also feel that way?

Tani : Yes. Since I had expected that skilled and experienced teachers would participate in such a programme as representatives of Japan, I had set a high bar by myself, wondering if a teacher like me would be allowed to take part in the programme.

ACCU : What conditions do you think facilitate participation?

Tani : Well. It was quite easy for me to take part in the online programme. Since the programme has made me seriously want to visit Korea, I believe that an online programme is suitable as the first step for participation. If you can observe discussions without participating, it will be interesting and facilitate participation, in my opinion.

ACCU : If you have a chance to observe, you might be convinced that you can also participate in the programme, certainly. It may be adequate to start small, where a participant takes an acquaintance, hoping that the person will also take part in the programme.

In the outreach programme, we hoped that participants would share their concerns and issues while having dialogue. It might be a little easier for them to talk if there are small-scale multiple exchanges. A certain session was actually held with the theme of 'Counselling room to share concerns'. How did you like it?

Tani : At first, I doubted if I should talk, but when I listened to concerns and challenges from Korean teachers, I felt that they were the same as me. I was glad,



2020 - 2021 Outreach Programme

empathised with them, and felt relief to know other participants also face similar issues. I sensed that a lot of people felt the same way as I did, which made me talk. It was really pleasant.

ACCU : Several days after your interview, we will also conduct an interview with KOH Young Nam from Korea. Do you have any questions to ask him?

Tani : Mr. Koh is a high school teacher, and I have got the impression that college entrance exams in Korea are highly competitive. When I listened to him, I wondered if he had more challenges than in primary and middle schools to provide unique practices under such circumstances. As Mr. Koh always talked about his practice with a smile, I got the impression that he fully enjoyed doing his job. I would like him to look back and tell us how he spent his days when he was a young teacher.

ACCU : We will definitely ask him that question.

Here is the last question for you. What kind of teacher would you like to become in the future, and what kind of children would you like to cultivate?

Tani : I don't want to make a grandiose claim, and I would like to keep doing what I am trying to do now. Moreover, since this exchange has taught me how important it is to express what you are burdened with, I would like to become someone who can build up a circle of friends to expand what I have learned through practice and daily activities. I hope to have a wider affect progressively on even one or two persons. I have always loved my town as my major feature and virtue, and I became a teacher because I wanted to cultivate children who will love the town. Although I used to think that I loved my town only, I have found out that when I visit different places, I can also be attracted to those places surprisingly. As a matter of fact, if you love your own town, you can be fond of the place where you are, whatever society, region or country you go to. This has come from my experience, and I have hoped to cultivate children who will love their town since I was a student.

(Interview conducted on 16 October, 2021)

2 : Mr. KOH Young Nam

ACCU : First, please tell us what you think of the programme and your impression you had then.

Mr. KOH Young Nam (Koh) : I would like to tell you two things. First of all, I was pleased to talk with teachers from small schools. Although I knew that Japan and Korea shared a lot of traits in common, the talk with other teachers reminded me that there were so many common traits. As the population in the region is decreasing, not to mention a decline in the number of children, we brought up the topic of how we should provide education. Sharing stories that teachers provide education uncompromisingly even under such circumstances warmed my heart. Second of all, it is important to provide education with the local community involved, as well as school education. A Japanese teacher said that education should be continually provided, instead of providing one thing at a time. Keywords such as 'environment' and 'language' (note by ACCU: in a school in Hachijo Island, children learn the Hachijo Language within Hachijo Studies) are picked up, with which continuous education is provided, but such a concept has not yet taken root in Korea, so I have learned a lot. Additionally, I have come to think that three keywords of 'sharing, empathy and communication' should vitalise the exchange between Japan and Korea.

ACCU : 'Sharing, empathy and communication' can be big keywords indeed. In the programme, it was impressive that teachers from schools with many points in common talked to each other.

Actually, a fortnight ago, we conducted an interview with Mr. Tani, who participated in the programme from Japan, and he had a question for you. What kind of teacher were you when you were young?

Koh : I became a teacher when I was 36 years old. I did postgraduate studies until my early thirties. So, when I began as a teacher, I reckoned that I had a slightly different perspective from other teachers. Here is what I keep saying: 'When a person has a personality, the action the person takes becomes his or her quality. The quality is, in other words, confidence. Confidence creates empathy. The created empathy becomes culture'. However, it would be impossible for young people to

think this way. I believe that passion and sincerity alone would make a young teacher successful initially, if you allow me the liberty of offering some advice. I have the impression that Mr. Tani is a passionate teacher who works diligently and earnestly. The question is how you sustain your passion. As this is not what you can do in a day, all you can do is to take a little time to put your passion in a sustainable form while engaging in teaching.

ACCU : I will tell Mr. Tani what you just shared with us. You mentioned that it is difficult to sustain. Speaking of sustainability, what are your challenges in educational activities on a daily basis?

Koh : I have been engaged in such educational activities for about ten years. Especially for the first five years, I worked without distraction, and in the sixth year I took only few days-off. When I was in such circumstances, I found out that there are some conditions to ensure sustainability. At first, I thought that I could work hard alone, but I have learned that my hard work alone is not enough to achieve anything. Since I realised this, I have formed the opinion that it is important to work together with others slowly in small steps even if there is something missing. Lately I work on activities with an adjusted speed. It is not easy to work with others instead of working alone.

Another challenge is being spontaneous and active. Now we are not in the days when we can force others to do anything in every aspect. As mentioned in an OECD document, 'agency' means taking an independent action, where true independence is exercised. It is very difficult to apply this to schools, and I always have a hard time deciding how to draw this out well.



ACCU : It will be brilliant if we have an opportunity to discuss such a topic. You said that taking independent action is the most difficult thing to do and gives you a hard time. Can you tell me specific activities you carry out at school these days?

Koh : We promote the IB educational programmes (note by ACCU: international educational programmes provided by the International Baccalaureate Organization) now. In Korea, Jeju Island promotes the IB education in an advanced manner. We set out on a tour to visit a primary school, a middle school and a high school that pursue the IB education to learn more. As a programme implemented at school, I just participated in a Plogging event (note by ACCU: a combination of 'PlockaUpp' and 'Jogging' to represent an activity started in Sweden) right before this interview. We pick up litter while walking around the school. I always consider what we can do in our daily life. Although we recently made efforts for two months in a school term to reduce leftovers of school lunch, we were not able to reduce them at all. The reason it did not work was that our action did not lead to practice. They did it in front of teachers but not without teachers. I understand that this is not good. Students must act voluntarily without teachers. Other than these, using examples from Japan, we



make efforts, including making a green wall with morning glories and growing flowers to help the environment.

ACCU : I see. Japanese high school students also address issues at school and in the community, and take action after they themselves come up with a solution. There seems to be a lot in common between Japan and Korea as we expected. Among your various activities, what kind of activity is international exchange for you?

Koh : As international exchange, I have taken students to Japan seven or eight times. Besides this, I have also taken them to Russia, the United States and Southeast Asia. When I ask myself what those who have received global citizenship education are like, I gather that they are equipped with a universal intellect, and a person who only thinks about a certain region or themselves cannot be called a global citizen. For students, international exchange is an important opportunity to look ahead to the future with a broad view.

ACCU : It is indeed a significant opportunity. How about international exchange for teachers?

Koh : What made me start international exchange for students is the participation in 10-day training in Japan for a programme implemented by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan (MEXT). So, I find international exchange for teachers important without doubt. Currently, education is shifting toward being more future-minded. Japan is likely to already have established such a practice, and Korea also aims for future-oriented education. Since the views and values of teachers affect children directly in future-oriented education, international exchange for teachers is extremely important in my opinion. Before I participated in the training in Japan, I was a banal English teacher. I only gave lessons every day, but since I went to Japan, I have conducted various activities. I especially carry out activities related to peace between Japan and Korea, the environment, global citizenship education, and sustainable future. I visited Japan in the summer of 2015, and five months later, we went there with 24 students and four teachers. The training in Japan gave me courage to take action, so I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation.

ACCU : I am glad to hear that your visit to Japan has motivated you. We ask this question to other teachers as well, but what kind of teacher would you like to become in the future, and what kind of students would you like to cultivate?

Koh : As I became a teacher at the age of 36, there is an institutional constraint to aim for a managerial or specialist position. I would like to devotedly spend precious time with children in the future. And to study further, I am thinking about going back to graduate school by taking leave next year. I would like to get an education to become an expert in community education. In my region, the population of children as well as residents is decreasing. I am inclined to study to be a community education expert, stepping out of my role merely as an English teacher.

ACCU : I respect your attitude to keep learning.

For something completely different, I hear that you have been transferred from the school you worked for at the time of the programme, and your experience of a variety of activities in your former school is made use of at your new school.

Koh : I have continued to carry out the activities I had in the former school also at my new school. As those activities had not been conducted in Kirin High School, where I work now, they watch me doing something new. I also engage in another activity, in which local residents come to the school to conduct activities. I have carried this out since May, and it is fun.

ACCU : Thank you very much. I sense that you work on community education devotedly. Finally, please can you share with us what you think the beauty of community education is, and what you have in mind to promote global citizenship education in your region?

Koh : Although, when I was a high school student, we only had to study at school, now it is required to have skills of empathy, communication and cooperation in addition to knowledge. You can learn these not only at school but also in your community. In global citizenship education, we use the term 'glocal'. It is a combination of 'global' and 'local'. Global citizenship education should be provided 99.9 per cent in your residence or your hometown. Without knowing the place of

your birth, no global citizenship education can be successful. I am convinced that you should start global citizenship education from learning about one's own circumstances.

In a book called *The Alchemist* written by Paulo Coelho, the story goes that the main character starts on a journey to seek a true life, and the answer lies... (note by ACCU: the ending of the story is concealed) This book taught me that the value in life stays close to you. In global citizenship education, our living and life stay close to us, not far from us. In Korea, I believe that peace and environment are of importance in providing global citizenship education, and that is how I pursue such education. However, I sometimes feel that I do not practise it well enough and that there is still something missing, and that is why I would like to learn more at graduate school.

(Interview conducted on 27 October, 2021)



2020 - 2021 Outreach Programme

Japan-China Exchange

Japan



The People's
Republic of China

Every experience is to give back to students

Teacher who gave an interview

Ms. AKAMATSU Junko

Headmistress of Seiun High School in Hyogo

Participated in the Invitation Programme for Japanese Teachers by the Government of China (dispatched to China), and participated in exchange meeting with Thai teachers in FY 2019

Participated in online exchange between Japanese and Chinese teachers in FY 2020



Background of interview

Currently, in October 2021, the International Exchange Programmes for School Teachers are provided online on account of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Right before the COVID-19 broke out, Ms. Akamatsu participated in a programme for visiting China and an exchange meeting with Thai teachers in succession in 2019, and she also took part in an online exchange programme in 2020.

She shared with us a wide variety of her stories such as an unexpected reason to visit Asian countries, creating lesson plans for social studies and her way of working as a supervisor.

ACCU : Can you first tell us what made you participate in the dispatch programme to China in 2019?

Ms. AKAMATSU Junko (Akamatsu) : In FY2019, I was the deputy headmistress at Kawanishi Meiho High School in Hyogo. As Kawanishi Meiho High School provided education with the aim of becoming a member school of the UNESCO Associated Schools Network based on the SDGs and ESD as the school's principles of education, at the suggestion of the headmaster at the time, they were proactively engaged in exchange with foreign schools and international exchange among students. In 2018, the school sent a young teacher to Korea for the ACCU's programme. The destination the following year (2019) was China. To tell you the truth, the school wished to have a young teacher go instead of me, but it is extremely difficult for a school to have a teacher leave school for a fortnight to go abroad. This would, of course, affect classes. Even if classes could be covered, it would have been difficult because it would have been during an examination period, when the students' grades for a term would not be processed without marking exams of the subject of which the teacher is in charge. So, when we considered who would go, I volunteered to participate.

ACCU : In the programme in Korea in 2018, I met the teacher from Kawanishi Meiho High School.

Akamatsu : Although, under ordinary circumstances, it is the best for such a young teacher to participate in a programme, it is really complicated, and I remember that the programme in 2018 was also almost in an examination period. So, for us teachers, it is ideal if a programme is in the middle of our holidays. The reason I volunteered even when it was in a tricky period is that I am a social studies teacher. I have taught social studies for a long time, but I went to an Asian country for the first time when I visited Thailand for exchange for managerial staff of Hyogo two years before I went to China. To be honest, I had an inner conflict when I went to Thailand. When I talk about wars in my social studies classes, I tell my students that Japan caused considerable trouble for Asian countries. I am aware that the older generation that has actually experienced a war has a sense of discrimination against Asia, but I myself have received human rights education, which disapproves of that. Nonetheless, I suppose that most of my generation exist with fear and mental conflict, wondering how Asian people view the Japanese.

It means a lot to me to go and see China for myself in the context of where I will teach again after I retire (in the reappointment system). While engaging in social

studies education, I also need to interpose the instructional materials and lesson plans of younger teachers, suggesting 'You have got that incorrect' or 'It is wrong to teach as if nothing had happened'. In that sense, I reckoned that it would be valuable to learn about current China and the feelings of the Chinese, and that is why I took part in the programme.

ACCU : I see. Did the fact that you had visited Thailand before lead to your participation in the programme in China?

Akamatsu : Yes, that's right. I received a really big welcome in Thailand as well as in China. They showed us the details of their education at the time, and although if we talk more about detailed points, we might often get involved in an argument, I felt that through the encounter with Thai people we could interact with Asian people in a future-oriented manner. And then I became more and more curious to know about China, which led to my taking part in the programme.

ACCU : We are delighted that you participated in the programme. When we visited China, the school we were going to visit the next day suddenly asked us to choose two Japanese teachers to speak about Japan, when you and the other teacher took the job. Although it was such short notice, you took it positively and spoke about Japan in a no-nonsense manner, for which we are truly grateful. And what is more, you also offered a presentation as a member of the visit group for the debrief session in the Chinese Embassy after we came back to Japan. It was an intriguing presentation.

Akamatsu : We as social studies teachers constantly look for a story to tell to students. It is something students react to, by saying, 'Really?' or 'No way'. Who knows when I will have another chance to go to the Chinese Embassy? Talking about what it looked like can also be a great story for a class. I was eager to join the debrief session, and offering a presentation there was a great opportunity for me.

ACCU : Each experience is given back to your lessons, isn't it?

Akamatsu : Indeed. Everything can be a learning material. I am also going to talk about today's interview to my students, beginning by asking them if they have heard



2019 Dispatch Programme to China

about the ACCU. When they learn that their teacher has been to China or that she is involved with UNESCO, they will feel closer to the teacher. Although I have never been to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan, I am going to tell them that I visited the Chinese Embassy and the Ministry of Education of China to ask and answer questions. Everything will be given back to Japanese students.

ACCU : We believe that many people around you are inspired by your attitude to make everything a topic of your lesson to give back to your students. We are glad that a variety of teachers join our programmes. Was it the policy of the headmaster at the time to have a young teacher participate in the programme in the first place?

Akamatsu : Yes, that's right. It was not exactly a policy, but the headmaster primarily intended to have a young teacher participate in the programme and maintain the experience for a long time for the purpose of making the school itself sustainable and providing ESD in a sustainable manner. However, the environment did not permit that, and in 2019, the headmaster was transferred. Since the other

deputy headmaster was also transferred as well as the headmaster, I was in a position to pass down the approach of the former headmaster. On that account, it was a good idea that I would go, and so I went to China in June. As a matter of fact, in December of that year, I went to Korea as well. It was for a programme for exchange between Japanese and Korean headmasters implemented by another organisation. At first, there was a gathering where Koreans came to Japan (Tokyo) to interact, which I joined instead of the headmaster who was unavailable. There, I talked a lot, and then I was also invited to a programme to visit Korea together with the headmaster because I assume that they thought I was amusing. I learned a lot from making a connection in such a way. After I went to China and Korea, I made permanent a Korean language course which had been held at school on a short-term basis. Then, many participants joined the course, which has since been broadened.

ACCU : We heard that your school was planning to accept Chinese high school students after you visited China. Was it realised before COVID-19 broke out?

Akamatsu : In November 2019, Chinese students came to our school for a tree-planting exchange between Japan and China. We interacted and had a tree-planting ceremony for a day, and all the clubs gave a big welcome to them and made various efforts. I reckon that my visit to China has led to the success of the acceptance of the exchange. This would have been successful without me for sure, but I accepted them by welcoming them with open arms as a deputy headmistress.

ACCU : Your experience was made use of to arrange your welcome.

Akamatsu : For preparation and backup, yes. I was able to support other teachers, saying 'Even if you have got trouble, it will be all right'.

ACCU : We see it means a lot to have such an experience.

Akamatsu : Yes, that's right. Fortunately, that allowed me to accept Chinese students with a sense of reassurance. In that school, there was a teacher who had worked in China and spoke Chinese. I proceeded with the plan in consultation with that teacher. This was also one of the factors for the acceptance of the students went well.

As the tree-planting exchange between Japan and China was already planned, it was considered that someone young should participate in the ACCU's programme as a preliminary step to become a bridge, I assume. It is significant that the headmaster at the time organised the event with a solid plan. I am convinced that it was vital and crucial that the dispatch of a teacher was included in the plan. As a preliminary step, it is essential to take part in such a programme, if not going to the partner country, to have more teachers who know about the country, in order to run your event smoothly.

Teachers always conduct a preliminary inspection before a school trip, with which you can keep the same stance. I can offer advice, 'why don't you go yourself before the students come into contact?'

ACCU : You work for a correspondence course school now. You told us once how difficult it is to promote international exchange there. In what specific point do you find difficulty?

Akamatsu : Basically, students do not come to school every day in a correspondence course. Students come to school up to 20 days a year even if they attend all the annual face-to-face lessons and examinations. If they effectively clear the number of face-to-face lessons required to earn credits, they do not need to come to school any more. For that reason, the same student does not necessarily come to school at the same hour on the same day of week. As each student chooses when they come to school, they can attend school whenever they want. Now, in terms of international exchange, students can rarely participate in a group. As participation is conducted individually, all students cannot engage in international exchange like my former (full-time) school. What I can do in such circumstances is to talk with younger teachers. In diverse occasions, I told them to look outward as much as possible and to go and see for yourself as I had opportunities to have experience abroad like this.



Exchange Meeting with Thai Teachers (FY2019)

ACCU : You say that it is difficult to include students on a schoolwide level for international exchange, but if the exchange is limited to one between teachers and foreign counterparts, is there any possibility to a certain degree?

Akamatsu : Yes, there is. Some young teachers are interested in international exchange. When I speak about the school management policy at the beginning of a year as the headmistress, I first talk about the world, the SDGs and ESD to prevent their interest from being diluted. I communicate a message without fail that the world is now like this, and it is important to keep ESD in mind in education. I also would like to steadily introduce your programmes to teachers. It is easier for teachers working for correspondence schools to participate because students go to school much less often there. I would encourage them more if we were not under the coronavirus pandemic.

ACCU : We will have online exchange meetings for teachers, and we would like to keep you informed. It would be lovely if you could make them known to the teachers in your school.

Lastly, can you please give a message to encourage more people to take part in this programme from the standpoint of a managerial position?

Akamatsu : Seeing is believing, I must say. It is necessary to believe in what you see and hear, for media messages are often one-way and one-sided. Civil exchange will ultimately lead to the protection of peace in a broad sense. Unless you have faith that each individual is not evil, it is impossible to maintain interaction, and it is difficult to remain a peaceful country. That is why it is important for more civilians and educators to become friends to discuss how they cultivate children, and I hope that especially young people will advance exchanges to a greater extent.

(Interview conducted on 27 October 2021)



Japanese *Sugoroku* goes to China! Class designing is changed in a 15-minute learning session!



Now we will introduce a case example where the learning during the programme has developed into lessons overseas.

In the online Exchange Programme for School Teachers with China in 2020, Ms. YAN Xi, vice principal of Shanghai Xinzhuang High School, who took part in the Invitation Programme for Teachers from China in 2019, offered a presentation on schools in the post-corona era. Providing

topics from the aspects of 'school life: new lifestyle' , 'education/classes: new events' and 'future education: new vision' , she talked about interesting content in terms of the second aspect, 'education/classes: new events' .

When she visited Japan in 2019, on the way to Nagareyama Otakanomori High School in Chiba, a programme broadcasted by NHK WORLD-JAPAN Radio, which covered the Home Economics class by Ms. NAKADA Ikuko from the school (at that time) was played on the bus. It was a 15-minute programme called 'Japanese life through key words' , which looked at current Japanese society with the aid of key words learned from Home Economics in Japan, and the theme was 'Life Planning' . In Ms. Nakada' s Home Economics class as a course unit related to life designing, she uses *Sugoroku* (a Japanese version of backgammon) to put the focus on having students exercise their imagination on their life after they graduate from high school by understanding school subjects multilaterally and developing the ability to face and solve different challenges during their life.

Ms. Yan, inspired by this programme, carried out research to integrate subjects and lifelong study at school after returning home. She took what to learn and what lies ahead into consideration in order to enable students to learn knowledge which they can make the most use of in the future, and to improve their ability of life planning with the accumulated skills gained in the process of acquiring knowledge. For example, she made an effort to encourage students' willingness to learn subjects through a series of activities by, for instance, combining biology and the living environment, or biology and occupations, as well as by exploring duties of occupations, and necessary skills and academic backgrounds in detail.

Although such a ripple effect of learning cannot be evaluated in terms of numbers, we provide this as an important factor of the Programme!

Japan-Thailand Exchange



Passion for international exchange that realised unprecedented reunions

Thai teachers who visited Japan in FY 2018



Ms. Wishita KESARAKSHA
The Northern School for the Blind
Occupational Therapist



Ms. Rangsiya KHANTASEEMA
Banpaeklang School / Teacher



Mr. Narong SIRIMUANG
Somdej pra piya maharach
rommaneeyaket School / Director

School that received Japanese
teachers in FY 2019



Ms. Teerada UDOMSUP
BanNakhanuan School / Teacher



Mr. Busaror POHDING
Banchokeyae School / Teacher



Mr. Sin PROMMAN
Chumphon Panyanukul School
Teacher

Background of interview

With the keyword of 'reunion', we conducted interviews with six teachers who participated in the Invitation Programme for Teachers from Thailand in 2018. These teachers gathered in Kanchanaburi Province from different areas in response to a proposal from one of the interviewees Mr. Narong Sirimuang, on the occasion when Japanese teachers visited Thailand in 2019. There was no such precedence where a single teacher's proposal made many teachers gather in the countryside in an official programme. We asked these teachers from different regions and different types of schools at different ages about the learning in the programme, current educational activities and the friendships developed within the visiting group. Here are the interviews conducted on three occasions.

1 : Ms. Wishita KESARAKSHA

ACCU : You visited Tokyo and Miyagi in 2018. What have you learned from the programme, and what do you make use of from them?

Ms. Wishita KESARAKSHA (Wishita) : My experience in the programme helps a lot. This is because Thailand is now suffering from flooding again. In the north of Thailand where I give lessons, earthquakes and floods occur, and my experience of visiting Miyagi is definitely helpful for such natural disasters. For example, I have learned how to deal with natural disasters and how to give one another help as a system, and I also acquired a broad knowledge of disaster prevention. I wrote an article about them to submit to a journal issued by my school. It is a journal for schools for special needs education, which is sent to counterparts in Thailand. I believe that international exchange provides experience to update teaching skills on a constant basis. Technology changes at all time, and I am confident that my school is ready to incorporate new technology into education, but when I visited a school in Japan, I noticed that they used new instructional materials. Although some of them were what we use in my school, I made new discoveries as well. It was productive in that sense.

ACCU : You came from a school for special needs education. How did you like this programme, in which teachers came from various kinds of schools?



Wishita : As teachers from a variety of schools participate, and you can share experience and opinions, such a programme can expand your horizons enormously. When solving a problem, for instance, you can realise that there are diverse situations. We sometimes come across a problem that we cannot come up with a solution for, and I have found a brilliant example for such a situation. I expect that we

can also make suggestions as teachers at a school for special needs education to provide useful information for teachers at regular schools.

ACCU : We hear that you are connected by a LINE group.

Wishita : This LINE group may be a little special. Before I took part in this programme, I mostly had connections within schools for special needs education, but this group includes teachers from diverse schools, which allows us to have a broader conversation.

ACCU : In 2019, you came to the school of Mr. Narong (participant of said programme) in Kanchanaburi. What was the experience like for you?

Wishita : I was pleased to see them again. It was also wonderful to have an opportunity to set out on a tour in Kanchanaburi. Kanchanaburi is a historical place for both Thailand and Japan. I went to see the bridge on the River Kwai and the cave for railway construction. We also exchanged opinions with Japanese teachers on the students support system at schools in Kanchanaburi.

ACCU : You just talked about teaching skills. How do you work on the improvement of your teaching skills in Thailand on a daily basis?

Wishita : I keep receiving training. Especially for the last few years, there have



Invitation Programme for Teachers from Thailand (FY2018)

been major changes in educational curriculums in Thailand. Because of the coronavirus crisis, we have had less on-site lessons and more online lessons, which teachers must deal with. In Thailand, we continually receive training to cover global movement. Also, I share what I have learned in the Japanese programme regarding disaster control with other teachers and children under this coronavirus crisis.

ACCU : You have convinced me that you have had a lot of positive effects on your fellow teachers. We would like to create a better programme for teachers. Can you please give us some advice?

Wishita : This programme was excellent because teachers who were motivated to learn, wished to broaden their perspectives and to enhance their understanding, participated in it.

Personally, I like history, so I suppose that it will be more impressive if the programme has historical factors. The programme that I took part in was quite impressive. We went to Miyagi, and the mixture of the fact I learned exactly where the tsunami had occurred and the feeling I felt there has created a memorable experience. However, since I am interested in history, if a programme shows what Japan has got (such as history) as well as new knowledge, I believe that the impression of the programme will last longer, which will make us feel like going back again.

ACCU : That is absolutely enlightening. Thank you very much. Lastly, what

kind of teacher would you like to become, and what kind of future would you like to look towards? Please share your dream with us.

Wishita : Let me see. I would like to be a good example for younger teachers, for sure. For example, I would like to be proactively involved in exchanging opinions, and if I observe education overseas, I would like to continue sharing and communicating it. Hopefully, that will motivate younger teachers and encourage them to develop the obtained knowledge steadily.

(Interview conducted on 11 October 2021)

2 : Mr. Narong SIRIMUANG, Ms. Teerada UDOMSUP,
Mr. Busaror POHDING and Ms. Rangsiya KHANTASEEMA

ACCU : In our programme in 2018, you came to Japan to visit schools in Tokyo and Miyagi, and to interact with Japanese teachers in the exchange meeting. Will you please tell me by sharing what you remember of the programme and how you have made use of your experience since returning to Thailand?

Mr. Narong SIRIMUANG (Narong) : I was highly stimulated by the visit to a



private school from the standpoint of a managerial position. What struck me was that the quality of education is high, and there is a strong tendency towards the policy of self-development. I saw that they nurture an environment-friendly attitude and global citizenship to live in the 21st century. I make use of what I have seen and learned in the form of focusing on English education, computers, sports and art in the management of my school. When I visited Miyagi, I was impressed by the reconstruction through public cooperation and the prevalence of emergency drills and evacuation behaviour. After I came home, I gathered teachers and students to perform an emergency drill at my school. As Thailand also has fires and floods, I was greatly influenced from this perspective. The various activities in this programme really moved me, and I honestly think that I myself have considerably changed since I found inspiration as a teacher. I would like to become more serious about school management and to take measures including the human development of students as well as teachers, the improvement in facilities and the introduction of technology.

Mr. Busaror POHDING (Busaror) : I am not in a managerial position like Mr. Narong, and I give lessons, so I first told my students what I have seen. On the first day I went to school after I returned to Thailand, I showed my students slides that I made from videos and pictures I had taken in Japan. That wowed the children who watched them, just like my own reaction. What I have instilled in children since I returned home is to maintain cleanliness. As I found the streets in Japan to be really clean, I intently tell children to clean up and to pick up litter even now. Since the programme finished, I have kept in touch with Mr. Tomohiro (Japanese participant of the exchange meeting), and we often put our heads together to consider teaching methods. The COVID-19 pandemic has hindered the realisation of our plans. Nevertheless, our interaction has continued, and we are thinking about utilising Zoom for the children we teach to exchange opinions before too long. Anyway, I was moved by the Japanese project that I took part in, and the feeling



Dispatch Programme to Thailand (FY2019)

remains inside of me all the time.

Ms. Teerada UDOMSUP (Teerada) : It was a great experience for me to go and see Japan. What struck me most was the approach by a school for special needs education. I was surprised to see that students had practical training in a company or a factory while still at school. In Thailand, they have no opportunity to have such practical training in a workplace while they are still at school. What struck me secondly was disaster prevention measures. It was impressive that they take disaster prevention measures in consideration of nature.

Moreover, a school, which I believe was a middle school, donates the proceeds of vending machines to UNICEF. As I found this a good social contribution, I would like to organise some activity where students can be engaged in social contributions at my school as well.

Ms. Rangsiya KHANTASEEMA (Rangsiya) : I make use of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Problem Based Learning (PBL) for educational activities. In my province, the deforestation is an issue. When we talked with these



people, they told us that they had no choice but to cut trees to sell because they had no money or work. I have formed the opinion that we should provide these people with vocational support so that they can make a living without cutting trees. What I can do as a teacher may be a mere trifle, but I have decided to foster children's love of forests first. I felt that children could develop a feeling that they should not cut forest trees while conducting tree-planting activities and taking care of trees by themselves. Furthermore, other than tree-planting activities, we provide training for children to acquire specific skills. We have started to teach skills for making a living without destroying farmland, such as making tea, coffee and bread. This project was named the Paeklang model after the name of the school, which received an award from Nan Province. These activities could be realised because I participated in the project in Japan to learn about the SDGs and PBL, which turned my attention to respecting the regional environment.

ACCU : It was reassuringly informative because you detailed your current activities. We have another question. Did you develop on your own the process where you found the regional issue of deforestation, conducted an interview with villagers, and carried out tree-planting activities and educational activities to teach specific skills? Or did you start from the beginning together with children?

Rangsiya : At first, before starting the activities, I brought up the regional issues for children. And then, I asked them what they would want to do. In other words, I discussed and took action with the children as well as other teachers, parents and the entire school.

ACCU : Now I would like to ask Mr. Narong this, but your school accepted a visit of Japanese teachers in 2019, didn't it?

Narong : Yes, it did.

ACCU : You had then Thai teachers living in different areas gather to meet Japanese teachers together. I would like to ask you how you came up with the idea and put it into action.

Narong : The reason I came up with the idea is that I was impressed by the quality of teachers when I visited Japan. They were professional teachers who focused on students, and I was moved by the level where they could give lessons anywhere in the world. So, I earnestly wanted Japanese and Thai teachers to interact, and I also wanted the teachers from other schools who participated in the programme in 2018 to join as well as teachers from my school. I sent an invitation to the supervisors at each school, so that teachers were allowed to come as an official duty. We had a good talk officially and unofficially. We shared knowledge between Thailand and Japan to understand one another very well. Teachers from schools for the visually impaired and schools for special needs education also came at that time, which absolutely motivated everyone. For another chance in the future, it would be wonderful if you could provide such an occasion of visitation in Thailand and provide an opportunity to exchange opinions as well. I am convinced that it would be of help not only for the country but also for world development.

ACCU : Thank you very much. Did you mean that it motivated everyone who gathered there, including teachers working in your school?

Narong : Yes, every one of them. The teachers from my school were especially excited. Because they had to speak English with Japanese teachers at that time, the teachers' motivation for learning English increased later. My school even employed a Japanese teacher to give a lesson. And what is more, we are going to send a student to Japan through AFS (noted by ACCU: an organisation providing overseas study programmes mainly for high school students). The encounter with Japanese people motivated everyone, and this includes both teachers and students.



ACCU : You have had an enormous influence. This programme would 'Transform teachers, children and schools' as its slogan states, and we have got the impression that you embody this exactly.

In this programme, we had



Invitation Programme for Teachers from Thailand (FY2018)

young teachers as well as experienced teachers, like Mr. Narong. What was your experience with working together in a group of different generations?

Rangsiya : I was the youngest in my group. I was excited when I was selected to be a participant, but I became extremely worried when I saw who the fellow members were and found out I was the youngest. I have taught only for a few years, that is why. However, once I met them to spend some time together in Japan, I realised that age does not matter when learning.

Teerada : Can I add something? In fact, I dare say the participation of different generations made this programme perfect. Since there were both veteran and young teachers as well as the in-between generation, we had a warm family atmosphere. It was better than a disproportionate age group.

(Interview conducted on 12 October 2021, in the morning in Thai time)

3 : Mr. Sin PROMMAN

ACCU : Can you tell us what made you take part in this exchange programme?

Mr. Sin PROMMAN (Sin) : I saw a notice from the Ministry of Education of Thailand and learned about this project. The region where I work (Chumphon Province) suffered damage from a typhoon 30 years ago. It is located close to the

sea in the south. I work in a new school there, which accepts children with intellectual disabilities. A Japanese instructor once came to give guidance about a Japanese handloom for saori weaving, which the school introduced. At that time, I got interested in vocational training in Japan. I looked into another programme, but it was for managerial staff, so I could not apply. As this programme focused on natural disasters and special needs education, I expected that I could fit the profile required by Japan. The contents interested me, and so I applied to have interaction with Japan.



ACCU : Can you tell us how you liked the actual participation in the programme?

Sin : As a teacher from a school for special needs education, it was memorable that I exchanged opinions with my counterparts in Onagawa, Miyagi Prefecture. We shared one another's thoughts on student guidance, vocational training for physically disabled students, and the daily lives of students. As time went on, I came to think that there was more room for the development of Thai students. At the school we visited, it was interesting to see them provide education that develops the interests and characteristics of each student. They provide, for instance, vocational training on confectionery making and service-sector jobs. What impressed me most was practical training on nursing-care for the elderly. I remember that they worked with the aid of iPads. I would like to improve schools in Thailand even if only slightly, using examples from their safety measures for students at school.

ACCU : You also came to Kanchanaburi in 2019. You received an invitation from Mr. Narong. What were your first thoughts when you were invited?

Sin : I was thrilled when I received the invitation. When I went to Kanchanaburi to welcome Japanese teachers, it was a happy experience. This is because when we went to Japan people gave us a warm welcome. So, I was very proud of myself to

welcome them back then. Unfortunately, my school was not selected to accept Japanese teachers in 2019, but if there's an opportunity in the future, we would like to accept them at a school in the southern part of Thailand.

ACCU : How do you use your experience in the programme in engaging in your educational activities after your participation?

Sin : The experience in Japan also helped me improve myself. I have offered suggestions to my supervisors concerning a future educational policy and vision. I believe that just reporting my experience is insufficient, and the experience should be applied in a usable form.

ACCU : What kind of educational policy is it? We would appreciate it if you could specify details.

Sin : It is to enhance vocational training curriculums. Parents' desires are reflected in the policy. I considered how students can put what they have learned in the curriculum to good use for their occupation. If the family of a student is farmers, the student acquires the skills required for the family business. In addition, I would like to make the curriculums facilitate for the students to be independent and obtain more opportunities by education. I aim for a policy where education creates opportunities. After I went and saw Japan, I have designed a curriculum by applying my experience in Japan. At the school I visited, they offer vocational and practical training on service-sector jobs. As students are not all the same, I worked towards practical content in accordance with a sustainable goal for each student.



Invitation Programme for Teachers from Thailand (FY2018)

(Interview conducted on 12 October 2021, in the afternoon in Thai time)

Japan-India Exchange



Exchange began with a step forward Learn about and respect one another more

Teachers who gave an interview



Mr. Siddhartha CHAKRABARTI

Head of Department of Science, Nodal Teacher from Lee Collins High School

Participated in Invitation Programme for Teachers from India (online) in FY 2020



Ms. MATSUI Ichiko

Teacher from Tsunan Secondary School in Niigata

Participated in exchange meeting with teachers from India in FY 2020

Background of interview

We talked with Mr. Siddhartha who teaches Physics and Mathematics in West Bengal in India, and Ms. Matsui, who teaches English in Niigata, Japan. These two teachers have engaged in online class exchanges since the summer of 2021, when Ms. Matsui was looking for a partner to realise exchange between students with disaster risk reduction as a theme and Mr. Siddhartha responded. We understand that more than 200 students participated in five exchanges by the middle of October 2021, when we conducted the interview.

As the exchange began after COVID-19 broke out, neither the participating teachers nor students have seen their counterparts directly. We wonder what kind of ideas and efforts are hidden behind the success of the exchanges the two teachers lead, and what kind of vision they have for their future activities.

ACCU : Will you first enlighten us by sharing what your motivation or background was to participate in the programme?

Mr. Siddhartha CHAKRABARTI (Siddhartha) : I learned about this programme from the information from the CEE (noted by ACCU: Centre for Environment Education, which operates the programme in India), and I was selected to be a participant from West Bengal State. Although I could not physically go to Japan owing to the coronavirus pandemic, it was an absolutely lovely opportunity for me. In light of international exchange, the programme has indeed opened the doors of learning. It was the first time in my life that I have had such an experience.

And what is more, this programme has broadened my horizons further. I have considered since my participation whether my experience through this exchange among teachers can be recreated at the student level.

Ms. MATSUI Ichiko (Matsui) : As an English teacher, I keep looking for overseas partners for exchange. I try to catch every opportunity for students to interact and communicate using English. One day, I learned about this programme (exchange meeting with Indian teachers) when some students took part in one of the ACCU's programmes. I had an Indian acquaintance, but it was difficult to realise exchanges among students. I took part in the programme, hoping that this might lead to exchanges among students.

ACCU : Mr. Siddhartha, you told us once that you had been interested in Japan through history and sports before the programme. While listening to you, I was wondering if that also motivated your participation.

Siddhartha : The exchange with Japanese students was the very first experience in my life. A cross-border project was a first for me as well, and when I look back at it, I am left with a lot to think about, such as the opportunity to introduce Indian culture and my own opinion to Japanese students, and much common ground despite differences between us. It was also good to see the reaction of the students. What makes me pleased most as an educator is to leave something in students' minds. I was delighted to experience that through seeing their reaction.

ACCU : This is a question for Ms. Matsui. When starting the exchange among

students, you offered us suggestions, including the theme of disaster risk reduction and specific activities. Please give us the background to how you decided on the theme.

Matsui : I already gave project-based lessons for a third of my annual class hours. I usually decided on themes, but last fiscal year, as the students set out on a disaster education tour to visit the Tohoku district (noted by ACCU: the district was severely damaged by the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011), they wanted to deepen their research activity theme. There was a group that researched disaster risk reduction, and they made a proposal to conduct an activity using a four-frame comic strip. Considering how we could do this in English classes was the beginning. I am not an expert of disaster risk reduction, although I also participated in the disaster education, so I took part in an online lecture session of specialists with my students, and the specialists who I made a connection with looked through my teaching plan and gave me advice, which allowed the plan to take shape. As I really wanted to do this, I made use of TREE to look for a partner who I could carry out the activity with (noted by ACCU: Ms. Matsui posted a request for participation on the membership-based site for programme participants), and then I could meet Mr. Siddhartha.



Siddhartha : The current theme, disaster risk reduction is a pressing issue all over the world. Although some natural disasters in India differ from those which often occur in Japan, the attitudes where students in both countries work on global issues together are the same, which has enabled this programme to be realised. Students on both sides made a lot of effort, and for Indian students, it was an opportunity to be exposed to Japan. I reckon that we conducted this activity as pioneers in India. The factors that contributed to the success are that everyone seriously committed themselves to pursuing this exchange project, there was strong determination to carry it out successfully, and there was the will to overcome diverse difficulties and challenges.

ACCU : **We understand that, even though quite a few people want to make exchanges, they hesitate to take the first step, or they think they are too busy. What kind of support did you get from your school? Or did your own passion facilitate the exchange? Did you also find difficulty?**

Matsui : I have both support from the school and my own passion. Besides my own enthusiasm, the timing was right, when the coronavirus pandemic resulted in the promotion of educational methods using ICT throughout Japan, so the promotion of online education enhanced the environment, and the school also encouraged the utilisation of such environment, which I believe became a driving force.

ACCU : **How about you, Mr. Siddhartha?**

Siddhartha : When I first participated in the Exchange Programme for Teachers, I had no knowledge about Japan, and the Japanese teaches also had little understanding of the educational system in India. I now have certain knowledge, but at that time, my knowledge about Japan was limited, and yet I was eager to create such an international exchange programme especially for my students. It was especially for my students. Even if my students were in India, or in another place such as Japan, I would remain an educator as well as a teacher, so I thought that I should pursue such a programme and provide an opportunity, given that, after all, students will take a lead role in building a nation in the future. Through this programme, I have witnessed Indian and Japanese students find a

common goal and topic and make efforts in their own regions. I was surprised to see that there were similar issues in Japan as well, and I believe that each micro activity in both regions can make one another's perspectives and the scope of activities wider when both of us interact hand in hand. I am confident that the programme will ultimately make it possible to lead us to global goals and activities as well as regional ones. Through the programme, we share ideas, and solutions for and opinions about issues we face every day. The biggest discovery was that so many common issues are found on a daily basis. Although there is of course a wealth of academic research out there, I found that there was also a need for such an approach in a form different from them.

There were quite a lot of challenges and difficulties in carrying out the programme. All things considered, we have overcome these based on the deliberation on to what extent we can have an inclusive approach and the intention to work better for the students, society and the community. Especially in West Bengal, where I work, public and private schools have completely different infrastructure. The situation may be different in other states, but there is a huge difference in our region. In the (public) school which I work for, students cannot afford a smartphone, and quite a few parents have lost their jobs owing to this pandemic. Although there are some online classes in the school, they are limited. Even under such circumstances, we asked graduates and people who had a device to let us use their smartphones and

computers in order to promote this programme. We carried this out against such a backdrop, which allowed us to continue, even though we also had difficulty in infrastructure such as the Internet.



ACCU : From what you have told us so far, we understand that both of you play a central role in proceeding with the class, involving not only the schools but also the communities. We are convinced that while each of you has different difficulties in your own

circumstances, you keep up the monthly exchange, and your passion reaches us across the sea as well as the students without doubt.

Siddhartha : Thank you indeed.

ACCU : It has been two months since you started the exchange. What kind of reaction have you received from your students and colleague teachers?

Siddhartha : What I would like to tell you first and foremost is that a lot of teachers and students know about this exchange programme. This is not only in West Bengal, but also in other regions. For example, we have some connection in southern, western and northern India, and the teachers we know all over India are aware that there is such a programme. They show quite a positive reaction and send me inquiries and feedback, which is overwhelming. They also give us their impressions of this new idea of an online exchange programme. If we can create such a good chain reaction, I hope we can also achieve the same in regions other than West Bengal.

My students, fellow teachers and parents also acknowledge that this project is exciting. They are keen to know when and how we will have our next discussion, on which topic, and what kind of outcome we have had.

Matsui : As for the reaction of Japanese students, I hear that as the third-form middle school students did not even have any ALT (assistant language teacher) for the last two years owing to the spread of COVID-19, when their exchanges with foreigners were limited, they were wildly excited to interact with foreign students for the first time. Apparently, they would really like to continue. Concerning the students in the form which I take charge of, I am convinced that their experience of communication has led to their confidence as expected. Seeing students' efforts to make communication while they intently look at the screen, and their pleased look after a session makes me want to continue without doubt. Teachers send me a great deal of inquiries about how we implement the programme in a class. Many schools may be engaged in extracurricular activities and school events other than classes. In carrying that out in a class, however, most teachers are concerned with syllabus problems or the balance with textbooks, and so they often ask me how they should cope.

ACCU : I also have seen how the exchange goes online. I am aware that such experience provides valuable time for students, who are fuelled for more exchange. In the ACCU, we often hear from teachers about the issues of the balance with curriculums and textbooks, which Ms. Matsui mentioned. If you have any suggestions, please share them with us.

Matsui : In my classes, I switched to AI-based instructional materials three years ago. Grammatical explanation and quizzes that were given in a class are now given by using AI-based instructional materials, and we spend all the time saved for such a communication activity. I introduce a good tool to students, and in class, I provide feedback where they do not understand in this new system, and instead they enjoy communicating among students or with me (teacher) in a class. If someone has such trouble in other subjects, I suggest starting to look for computers, ICT or AI that can take over their roles to use as their substitute, which will change the use of time significantly.

ACCU : By the way, you have already engaged in exchanges for a few months now. Can you tell me what you respect and find to be impressive about each other?

Siddhartha : The good things about Ms. Matsui are that she certainly provides sincere and firm support, and she devotes herself to this programme. That is what I find impressive about her. In this international exchange programme, Ms. Matsui is very friendly, and she has helped me in different situations through the programme. When I have technical problems, since I am not too good at computers, she always provides support on such occasions, which demonstrates her magnetic personality.

Matsui : Firstly, it was amazing how he gathered students from different schools in a wide range of regions despite the circumstances of lockdown. I know that he coordinates up until the very last minute while being involved in the exchange. I see that he approaches students right up to the last moment, and that is what I find wonderful about him more than anything. I think that he makes unimaginable efforts. Secondly, quite a wide age group of teachers participate in the exchange every time. The fact that both young and elderly teachers attend makes me keenly feel the depth of education in India. I have taken this opportunity to learn something at a

level different from ours, such as history and human relationships. I am astonished that I have got so much to learn.

Siddhartha : Thank you indeed. I feel flattered. I would like to continue and to make efforts to continue this exchange. Regardless of whether Indian or Japanese students, I am willing to have a significantly positive effect on them as a teacher, and so taking any exchange as a good opportunity, I would like to maintain my commitment as long as possible to continue such exchange activities. I am also inclined to expand the range of exchanges. I am thinking of enabling other schools all over the region to participate as well as schools throughout India. People who have learned about this programme give me various reactions and suggestions. On account of the pandemic, most schools were closed, which hindered them from participating, but this problem is to be overcome with certainty, so I would like to expand the programme.

ACCU : Mr. Siddhartha already said that he would like to expand the exchange further. Can you also give us your future vision of the ongoing exchange, please?

Matsui : Other schools have already offered proposals to work together. Since it is difficult to match up the class hours online, we can use an online asynchronous video exchange tool called Flipgrid, which I use with Mr. Siddhartha, to get to know one



another first. I hope to develop this into online exchanges to continue exchanges without any strain. As I assume that exchanges will not last long if you need to make a special change to a class, or to make some transformation to make it possible, I intend to carry it out without overdoing things as much as possible.

The more exchanges we have, the more we would like to learn, which deepens the topics of interest. For example, students and I are thinking of exploring environmental issues and gender issues deeper, and moreover, as a language teacher, I am keen to learn literature and human thought more from Indian people. Since Japanese literature is also beautiful, it would be fantastic to exchange the beauty of literature mutually.

Siddhartha : I agree. Many of the students and I would like to learn Japanese more. We can also introduce and teach Bengali and Hindi the other way round, and I would like to suggest such an exchange.

ACCU : **You already have lots of new ideas. We look forward to your future activities. Now, we would like to hear a final message from each of you.**

Matsui : Although I wanted to deepen exchanges in Asia, I was only acquainted with some teachers, and was not able to advance exchanges among students because I always have to mind the time difference when I engage in international exchange. As ICT is being put into place in Japan now, such exchanges can be feasible as long as there are dedicated teachers like Mr. Siddhartha, even if some regions are under lockdown. Hopefully, for that reason, you will increase opportunities for teachers to get to know one another through approaches like the ACCU's. The themes which I have always wanted to work on is the SDG 17 'Partnership for the goals' (noted by ACCU: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development), and I would like to realise online activities for children to solve regional issues in partnership.

Siddhartha : This exchange among students was realised by Ms. Matsui taking a step forward. I am grateful for such spirit, and I hope that not only will you continue but also expand the activity, as well as seeking other means. Covering diverse topics in the world would facilitate comprehensive activities. In providing every teacher and

student with such an opportunity, and taking approaches, I expect that it is indeed strictly required to be sustainable.

One of the purposes of this programmes is to take on a challenge. Besides, as we all live in Asia, I would like nothing better than to take more approaches to respect and know one another through learning one another's culture, and further introducing culture from Asia, let's say to Europe, and then to the world.

I believe that a teacher must nurture children through respectable efforts, and sincere and close support and cooperative relationship, to cultivate human resources suitable for the foundations for the future.

(Interview conducted on 15 October 2021)



Interviewer's postscript

In Chapter 2, we talked with 11 teachers who participated in an in-person or online Exchange Programme for Teachers between 2018 and 2020.

As a result of the pandemic, our international exchange programmes have been switched to online. For the past year, when the ways people interact with one another were limited, we have appreciated the importance of caring for others and having a good dialogue. Against such a backdrop, we have decided to directly deliver messages from teachers who conduct diverse activities in a form of interviews.

From the interviews about exchanges between Japan and China, and between Japan and Thailand, when interviewees talked about their experience of in-person exchanges, we received their enthusiasm, where they try to give back to children what they have seen for themselves in a form suited for their classrooms, in each context. Furthermore, from the interviews about exchanges between Japan and Korea, and between Japan and India, when we talked with teachers who took part in online exchanges, we saw the strength to offer respect and support mutually even when they could not directly see one another, and also the possibility of overseas collaboration through learning deeply about their own region while not being allowed to go out there.

Reading the four interviews leaves us with a feeling that borders between countries are disappearing by the second. A former participant of the programme once said, 'There is no distinction between countries, speaking of the viewpoint of teachers engaging with children'. Clues as to respecting and understanding one another while we have received different education in different countries and time might be found in the words of the 11 teachers.

Through the interviews, the 11 teachers told us personal stories and thoughts, which cannot fit into a report or a survey. We would like to once again express our gratitude to the teachers who allowed us to share their precious stories in this way.

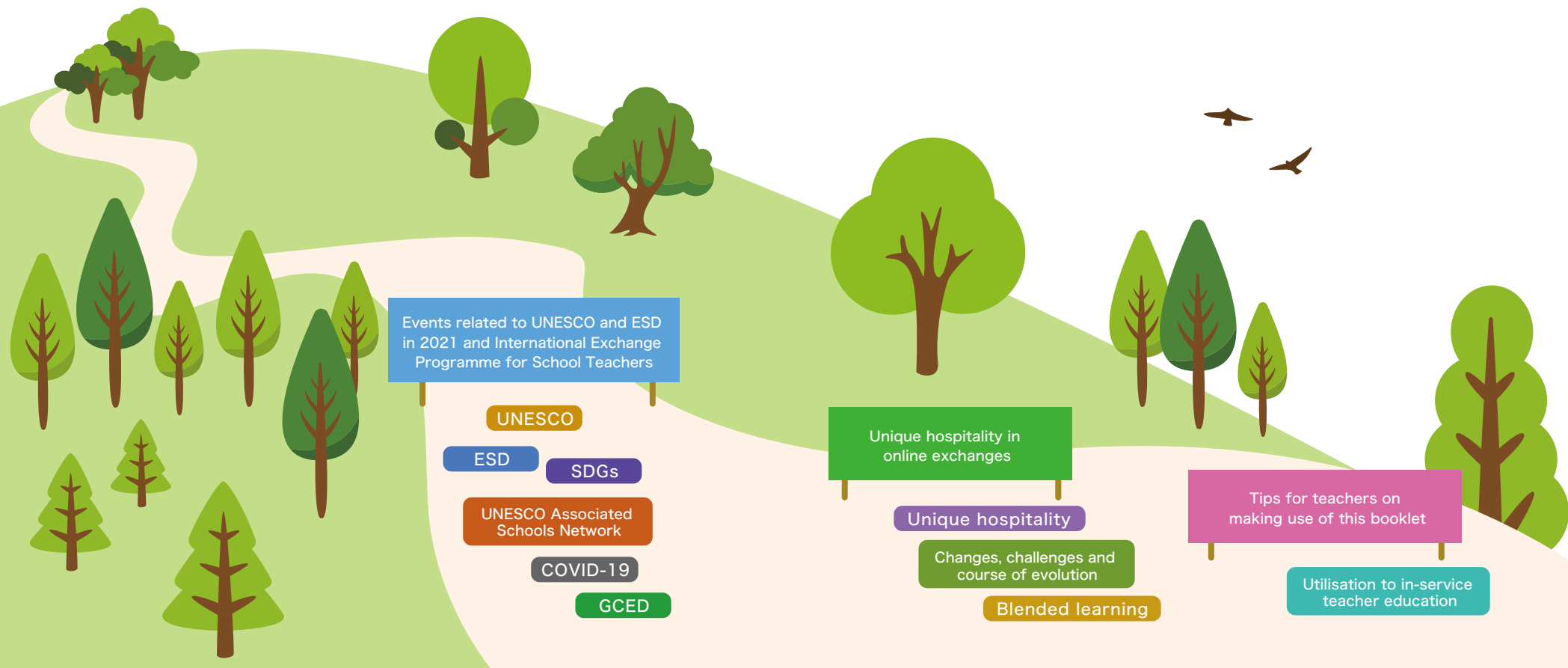
2021-2022 Topics of Teachers' International Exchange

2021-2022 Topics of International Exchange Programme for Teachers

It is now 2022. It has been two years since COVID-19 broke out. We have become used to online exchange programmes, and we have witnessed some programmes incorporating new ideas that were not seen last year.

Taking a look at the global situation, there have been various events deeply involved with international exchange for school teachers such

as UNESCO held the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in Berlin, Germany in May, and Japan celebrated its 70th anniversary of association to UNESCO. In Chapter 3, we will introduce diverse topics ranging from global situations to exchange programmes and individual cases, as '2021-2022 Topics'.



UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development

In 2021, the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development was held in Berlin, Germany, where the Berlin Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) was adopted as its outcome document.

The Declaration focuses on the climate crisis, mass loss of biodiversity, pollution, pandemic, extreme poverty and inequalities, violent conflicts, and other environmental, social and economic crises, and considers that the urgency of these challenges are exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, in order to face these challenges, 16 commitments are made with respect to ESD, which is required to nurture agents of change. These commitments include the incorporation of ESD in education systems at all levels; impacts of cooperation between Ministries of Education and other government agencies, and all other relevant stakeholder groups; and enhancement of networking at a global level.

Japan's 70th anniversary of association to UNESCO, and its new implementation plan for the ESD for SDGs

Japan marked its 70th anniversary of becoming a member state of UNESCO in 2021. Here, we will introduce some matters deeply linked to the programme. To begin with, Japan has the world's largest number of member schools (1,120 as of November 2019) of the UNESCO Associated Schools Network, which is positioned as the promotion base for ESD in the country. Moreover, a nationwide approach has started, where the course of study, revised in 2017 and 2018, sets the goal of fostering 'creators of a sustainable society'.

In May 2021, the Implementation Plan for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in Japan (second ESD domestic implementation plan) was established, which incorporates measures to involve diverse stakeholders in the same way as the above-mentioned Berlin Declaration.

The programme aims to enable each participant to become an agent of change and a creator of a sustainable society to realise a sustainable peaceful future together.

Keywords of the 2021-2022 exchange programme



It is a 'peaceful, sustainable society, where cultural diversity is duly respected' that the ACCU aims for through the International Exchange Programme for School Teachers. We plan exchange programmes that reflect the opinions of teachers from various countries, based on the major common challenges contained in UNESCO's Declaration and the national government's policies to achieve this goal. The participants' experiences and answers to questionnaires lead to the next programme.

The above tags are some of the words cited as this year's key words. In the 2021-2022 exchange programmes, the second year of online sessions, we undertook diverse activities. This booklet provides an introduction to the Programme through topics and photos, but if you would like to obtain more details, such as a report, please do not hesitate to contact the ACCU.

Online international exchange in its second year Changes, challenges and course of evolution

In 2020, which was the first year of online exchanges due to the pandemic, the focus was placed on keeping exchanges going as much as anything. The infection status, and the forms of provision of education such as online and on-site sessions differ substantially from country to country, and even within a country depending on the region. In order to prevent further spread of infection, the exchange programmes were implemented with small-scale content. While positive change was brought about, such as an increase in new participants and diversity in categories and regions as the flexibility of place and time was enhanced, some challenges existed where it was harder to feel the effect of an exchange compared to on-site programmes.

In 2021, we started to take on the challenge of pursuing more participatory programmes and visible accomplishments. We implemented programmes that could raise the level of involvement of participants such as the development of collaborative classes and joint presentations, and added some factors, including online cultural experiences, where the content of the programme has been significantly changed even though the online exchange for school teachers looks like the same programme.

Even if we can visit each other's countries again, the exchange programmes would not be the same as they used to be before the pandemic. The programmes will provide opportunities for more open exchange and dialogue than ever before, without leaving out those who can participate only in online sessions.



Unique hospitality in online exchanges

It is common to receive a certificate of completion when you participate in a programme, and in the Invitation Programme for Japanese Teachers by the Government of Thailand in September 2021, an attendance certificate was given to the avatar of each participant on the screen. After all the participants received their certificate of completion, a group photo of the avatars was also taken. We have witnessed a new form of hospitality to entertain participants by using avatars, instead of face-to-face meetings.



In the online dialogue programme for Japanese and Korean school teachers, T-shirts in the colour that represents the team were delivered by international mail, and everybody wore their T-shirt when joining a group meeting. One of the issues in online programmes is feeling of experience, and some approaches have been made in a variety of ways to provide a memory of participation in the programme and the team camaraderie.



Blended learning implemented in international exchange programmes

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many people may have heard the term 'blended learning' more often than before. It originally referred to education combining online and offline learning in a wide sense, which includes the combination of in-person lectures and watching videos.

In the International Exchange Programme for School Teachers, Japanese and Korean teachers formed a group to engage in blended learning in the form of collaborative classes within the online dialogue programme for Japanese and Korean school teachers in 2021. Although the issues of online exchange programmes include the fact that the achievements are less visible for both participants and the programme host, the blended collaborative classes themselves have become achievements for teachers in this programme. Japanese and Korean schools were linked via Zoom, where students learned the common theme through dialogue in a small group and a quiz using an app. It was a blended learning experience where students were connected through communication with realism, such as instantly uploading a news topic popular at the time of the exchange on the online platform and showing a historical building crafted from paper in front of the camera.



Utilisation to in-service teacher training

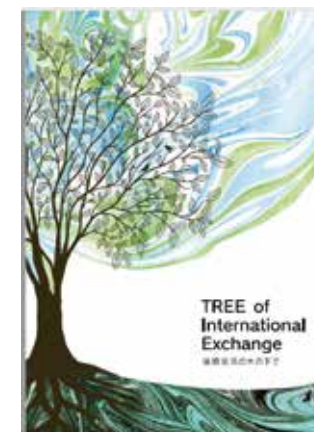
A booklet, TREE of International Exchange, was issued in February 2021 to introduce various experiences and utilisation examples of mostly Japanese teachers among the participants in the International Exchange Programme for School Teachers. Ms. MATSUOKA Yumiko (who worked at Saitama Prefectural Urawa Nishi High School at the time), one of those who helped with the booklet, has made use of it as instructional material for in-service teacher training in the prefecture.

She chose the booklet as her instructional material because it matches the content of the training to 'share the educational practice of the lecturer', and she wished to introduce the ACCU's International Exchange Programme for School Teachers, in which she participated, to the teachers who would receive the training.

Although the training was provided online on account of the COVID-19 pandemic, the ACCU hopes that the local teachers, to whom Ms. Matsuoka introduced the programme, will take part in a future programme.

If you would like to utilise the booklet in your workplace as Ms. Matsuoka has done, we will send a copy subject to availability if you cover shipping expenses. Please do not hesitate to contact the ACCU.

*The booklet issued in February 2021 is only available in Japanese.



Scenes

from 2021- 2022
Programme

Japan-Korea Exchange



Japan-China Exchange



Japan-Thailand Exchange



Japan-India Exchange

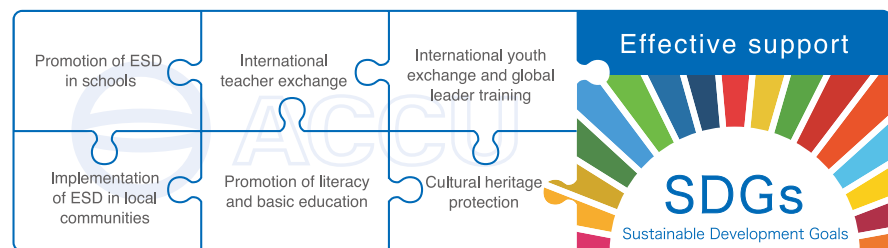


The Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU)

■ What is the ACCU?

The ACCU contributes toward the realisation of a peaceful and sustainable society where diverse culture is respected in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

From our two offices in Tokyo and Nara, we promote programmes in the fields of educational cooperation, international educational exchange, and education for protection of cultural heritage as a member state of UNESCO in the Asia-Pacific region. In April 2021, we marked our 50th anniversary.



■ ACCU and International Exchange Programmes for School Teachers

The ACCU has planned, implemented and operated International Exchange Programmes for School Teachers for about 20 years, since FY2000, on consignment from international organisations and government agencies. In FY2021, under the 'International Collaboration Programme for Education in New Era FY2021' entrusted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan (MEXT), we carried out exchange programmes for teachers between Japan and South Korea, China, Thailand and India.



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Subscription of e-mail newsletters (monthly delivery): Contact the publicity official of the ACCU (kouhou@accu.or.jp) to let us know that you would like to subscribe our e-mail newsletters.

Conclusion

Thank you for reading this booklet. The ACCU meets and reunites with a great number of people through our international exchange programmes targeted at teachers. As the organiser of the programmes, we have learned a great deal and felt a lot of empathy. It is an agenda for us, the planner and organiser of the programmes, to find out how to create changing learning opportunities and to recognise changes in teachers and how to share those with other teachers. During the interviews, the transformation of teachers, which neither survey analysis nor figures can discern, has been highlighted through carefully putting together the feelings of the teachers included in all of their remarks. Individual interviews were connected like a jigsaw puzzle as if a beautiful picture had been supposed to be created from the beginning.

Young teachers told us that although they had had few opportunities to say what was on their mind or to listen to others' ideas, the exchange has given them mental preparation and courage as a teacher. As if responding to what the young teachers mentioned, teachers with a long teaching career said in other interviews that age did not matter when learning and that there were both old and young teachers as well as the in-between generation, so it was easy to talk about anything. We have reconfirmed the significance of continuing these programmes after hearing what they had to say.

Another teacher said that although he had worked hard alone, he has learned that it is essential to involve other teachers in order to lead to sustainable learning, which we believe indicates the necessity of autonomous and sustained capacities of teachers, including sympathy, communication, and cooperation, as well as individual knowledge and experience.

Other remarks include that from a teacher wishing to continue to provide learning that makes children love the town they live in, believing if you love your own town, you can be fond of the place where you are, whichever region or country you go to. This is a distinctive comment from the teacher who practises thinking globally, acting locally.

The core value of the ACCU's international educational exchange programmes is the creation of learning opportunities for teachers across national and regional boundaries. We continue to create diverse opportunities while listening to the opinions of teachers. In a modern society with frequent unpredictable events, we need to become connected to one another and put our heads together to create the future. Diversity gives us the energy to live. Open the door to international exchange and a lot of friends will be there for you. Finally, we would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to the teachers who shared their abundant experiences generously.

SHINDO Yumi, Director, International Educational Exchange Department,
Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO

TREE of International Exchange

- Invitation to Teachers' International Exchange -

1st March 2022

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