

Steiner Teacher Education in Japan

Contribution by Mariko Nakamura to the ITEF meeting Asia-Pacific on November 15

Japan began a “collaborative teacher training system” for Steiner teachers in 2018. Prior to this, Japan had several small teacher training courses, but none provided sufficient learning opportunities. The amount of available coursework was limited. This was because the instructors were either current working teachers or researchers, and all courses were part-time. How can we solve this problem without placing an excessive burden on current teachers? I considered that if multiple teacher training courses collaborated, we could compensate for each other's shortcomings. Students would be able to study at not just one teacher training institution, but also at others. They would carry a file documenting their learning as they move between various teacher training courses. This would also enable them to experience diverse perspectives and methodologies.

To establish this system, teachers from across the country gathered and engaged in earnest discussions. This brought about another benefit: through working together, mutual trust deepened. Previously, each had little knowledge of other teacher training course, and it could not be said that complete trust existed.

Now we can learn from each other. Each training course possesses its own distinct characteristics; in my teacher training course, there are many assignments focused on the creation of actual lessons. Among young teachers, I see a tendency towards a desire to be taught rather than to think for themselves. This may be due to the availability of more resources than before, the environment in which they grew up etc. However, lessons only become truly vibrant when teachers think for themselves. Moreover, people tire less when they take creative initiative themselves.

They progress through steps such as creating stories to introduce of letters and developing rhythmic sessions, ultimately planning the entire epoch and presenting the full main lesson. Individual sessions are arranged to support each person as they advance. It is hoped that creating their own lessons will also lead to a desire to try them out in the actual classroom and a motivation to be a teacher. Although teacher shortages persist, the number of graduates from teacher training courses entering the profession is increasing. I hope that expanding forums for discussion, such as ITEF, will foster diverse ideas to overcome these challenges.