

The Associated Schools Project Network in the Republic of Korea

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The UNESCO Associated Schools Project (ASPnet) launched in 1953 is a school network to strengthen the commitment of children and young people to promote international understanding and peace. Participants are at all levels: nursery, primary, secondary, technical, and vocational schools; and teacher-training institutions.¹

In 1961 only four South Korean secondary schools were members. As of 31 December 2001, the number had grown to 74 (including 20 primary schools, 13 middle schools, 32 high schools, and 4 universities of education). The initial purpose of ASPnet Korea was to introduce different cultures and to provide new sources of knowledge and information in the field of education to Korean society. Today, ASPnet Korea's goals include conducting a study on global issues, including human rights as well as Korean culture and tradition. ASPnet Korea's 40-year experience has not always been positive, with several ups and downs under various circumstances. But I would like to focus on ASPnet's national activities in the past three years, and discuss a case related to human rights education.

ASPnet Korea is considered a project in education for international understanding. Since it joined ASPnet, the Korean National Commission for UNESCO (KNCU) has coordinated the project. When the government pushed the policy of *segaehwa* (globalization) in 1994, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MOE) became deeply interested in education for international understanding and designated KNCU as the Center of Education for International Understanding in 1995. ASPnet Korea, therefore,

implements KNCU's programs with financial support from MOE.

ASPnet Activities in South Korea

Human rights education is one of the UNESCO-recommended four main ASPnet themes:

- world concerns and the role of the United Nations system in dealing with them;
- human rights, democracy, and tolerance;
- intercultural learning; and
- environmental concerns.

Covering a wide range of interrelated sub-themes, these themes should be made relevant to the students' environment, concerns, and aspirations.² ASPnet is not just a human rights education project but is also an interdisciplinary one. The school may choose a subtheme, take an interdisciplinary approach to it, and extend the approach to other themes.

Structure

Korean National Commission for UNESCO

KNCU has always been the key organization responsible for coordinating ASPnet. KNCU provides various documents on

ASPnet, financially supports school pilot projects, holds camps and workshops for ASPnet students and teachers, and serves as a liaison office and clearinghouse for ASPnet. In 2000 KNCU transferred a number of programs in education for international understanding to the newly established Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU). The Education Unit and the Culture Unit of KNCU were integrated into the Education and Culture Team, which coordinates ASPnet Korea's activities, but KNCU and APCEIU jointly implement education for international understanding programs for teachers or students.

Various human rights and human rights education projects are implemented by KNCU's sciences team, which is composed of the natural sciences and social and human sciences sections. The social and human sciences section collaborated with the Korea Institute of Curriculum and Evaluation (KICE) to organize the first Human Rights Education Workshop for Teachers on 27–29 July 2000 in Seoul. Eighty-five teachers from primary and secondary schools all over the country participated and reaffirmed the significance of human rights education and discussed measures to conduct and reinforce human rights education.³

Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding

In August 2000 Korea UNESCO agreed to the establishment of APCEIU. The chief country delegate, the then minister of education, proposed the establishment of APCEIU at the 29th session of the UNESCO General Conference. A feasibility study and preparatory meetings hosted by KNCU followed. A resolution to establish APCEIU in Korea (30C/Resolution 17) was adopted at the 30th UNESCO General Conference. The Inaugural Ceremony and Commemorative International Symposium for the Opening of the APCEIU were held in Seoul and Ichon (25–

29 August 2000).⁴ APCEIU is expected to help promote education for international understanding (including human rights education) in the Asia-Pacific region.

Teachers' Council of Education for International Understanding

The Teachers' Council of Education for International Understanding (Council) was established in 1996 to help realize UNESCO's vision. The Council is composed of teachers who are former or incumbent ASPnet teachers at primary and secondary schools. After its general assembly in 2001, the Council opened its doors to teachers who participated, or are keenly interested, in its education for international understanding programs. The Council steering committee has been very active and productive. The committee, sometimes in collaboration with professors supported by KNCU or APCEIU, developed teaching and learning materials. The committee is also the core group of seven branches of the main Council since 1999.

Major Activities of ASPnet and Education for International Understanding Programs (1999–2001)

KNCU gives the annual ASPnet Model Student Prize to the most active and reliable students in the UNESCO clubs. About 30 primary- and secondary-school students have received the award so far. They were recommended by the principals of their schools. The conferment ceremony is generally held during the graduation ceremony.

KNCU organized the annual Teachers' Training Course on Education for International Understanding for 7 to 10 days in August, from 1996 to 2000, at the Youth Centre in Ichon City, site of APCEIU's main facilities. Some 40 to 60 primary- and secondary-schoolteachers, recommended by 16 municipal or provincial boards of education, take

part in this training course. The course is composed of lectures, workshops, and study tours to foster understanding on peace, the world system, international organizations, multiculturalism, environmental problems, and human rights. Since 2001 this program has been organized by APCEIU. KNCU and APCEIU have encouraged teachers interested in education for international understanding, including new ASPnet teachers, to participate in this program.

With financial support from MOE, KNCU manages two types of “learning through experience” programs for education for international understanding.

For the first type, KNCU funds ASPnet teachers’ creative ideas for educational programs and gives the teachers the chance to decide on and realize their own programs. Sixteen ASPnet schools have received around US\$25,000 for the past three years.

KNCU directly organizes and manages the second type of program, which consists of two subprograms. The first encourages teachers, students, parents, and museum personnel to see how museums can be used for “learning through experience.” The subprogram was implemented at selected museums on 24–26 February and 1–2 July 2000. The second subprogram consisted of lectures and workshops on human rights, peace, environment, and the Cross-Cultural Awareness Programme (CCAP).⁵ The subprogram had sessions on 9–10 December and 16–17 December 2000, and about 80 students, mainly from schools participating in ASPnet and CCAP, joined it.⁶

KNCU has also implemented various regional and international projects. In 1999 four ASPnet secondary schools participated in the experimental use of *World Heritage in Young Hands*, an education resources kit for teachers, published by UNESCO ASPnet. UNESCO asked its member states to see how the kit would work in the classroom. After testing it, each ASPnet teacher submitted an evaluation report to UNESCO.

MOE and KNCU financially supported a Vietnamese initiative through the UNESCO Funds-in-Trust system. The Vietnam National Commission for UNESCO and the National Institute for Educational Science of Vietnam, with UNESCO Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, organized the National Seminar on Education for a Culture of Peace for UNESCO Associated Schools, in Hanoi, on 1–3 December 1999. KNCU sent its representative and an ASPnet teacher as resource persons.

An international youth forum of South Korea and Mongolia was another cooperative project under the UNESCO Funds-in-Trust system. Five Mongolian students participated in the Arirang Camp, on 9–14 August 1999 in South Korea, which is one of several KNCU youth programs. Five Korean participants also joined 2000 Blue-Sky Youth Camp in Mongolia (25 September–4 October, 2000)

In 2001 two exchange programs related to ASPnet Korea were implemented. The first was the participation of Korean teachers in the newly launched Asia/Pacific Cultural Center for UNESCO (ACCU) International Exchange Programme, which aims to promote international cooperation and mutual understanding. The program was held on 5–24 February 2001 in Japan under the UNESCO Japan Funds-in-Trust system. KNCU, as an executive organization and a co-organizer of ACCU, selected preliminary candidates with MOE. The final 50 were an official from MOE, 2 KNCU staff members, and 47 teachers from primary or secondary schools, including ASPnet schools. The candidates studied the Japanese educational system and shared and exchanged teaching experiences with Japanese teachers and officials.

The second exchange program was the participation in the ASPnet Exchange Programme in the Asia and the Pacific Region, which aims to enhance ASPnet activities and education for international understanding in member states. The program was held in China, Mongolia,

and South Korea in September and October 2001. The program included two bilateral exchange programs. On 10–16 September, eight Korean teachers involved in ASPnet and CCAP, an official from MOE, and a KNCU staff member visited Beijing and Xian in China. They studied the educational system and visited some schools, educational institutions, and some UNESCO World Heritage sites. The visit was hosted by the Beijing Academy of Educational Sciences (BAES). Another group of eight students from the four ASPnet-member universities of education, an official from MOE and a KNCU staff member also visited Mongolia on 9–16 September 2001. The Mongolian National Commission for UNESCO managed the program.

In exchange, eight Chinese teachers and two BAES staff members visited South Korea on 7–13 October, while seven students and two Mongolian National Commission for UNESCO staff members visited South Korea on 23–30 September. Both groups visited ASP schools, educational institutes, and UNESCO World Heritage sites. The groups also participated in CCAP classes in some schools as cultural exchange volunteers and held workshops on educational issues in the region or on improving education for mutual understanding, especially through ASPnet.

As a liaison office in South Korea for UNESCO, KNCU has acted as a communication center, disseminating materials throughout South Korea.

Program Implementation Experience⁷

On 15–16 July 2000 the Understanding Vietnamese Culture and Vietnam War program was held in the then UNESCO Youth Centre in Ichon. Students from Kuwi Middle School participated, with two Vietnamese and Korean university students as translators.

Moon Ju-young (ASPnet teacher of the school) was in charge of the school's ASPnet program. She taught general social studies for

third-year students in 2000. She guided the students in discussing social issues under human rights and democracy, in addition to textbook reading. She took up issues about the 13 April general election, the Nogeun-ri massacre, democratization movements, the problem of foreign migrant laborers, prostitution in South Korea, as well as massacres during the Vietnam War. She felt that many of her students had contradictory ways of thinking. When they thought that South Korea was the victim, they became sensitive and agitated, but accepted too easily the inevitability of massacres when South Korea was the assailant. She thought the students needed a chance to learn the meanings and relations between assailants and victims.

After being selected as a participant in the 2000 Programmes of Learning through Experience, Moon was appointed project director of the Vietnam program. She did most of the preparation and administration. She made a video documentary-drama about the Vietnam War and collected information on various viewpoints on the war from books, magazines, and newspapers, which are difficult to collect in South Korea. KNCU introduced to her Vietnamese studying in South Korea, and Korean volunteer interpreters. She found that the cultural exchange volunteers were crucial to the program as most of the students were meeting and communicating with Vietnamese for the first time.

On the way to the UNESCO Youth Centre, students learned a Vietnamese song from the volunteers. The first class was on Vietnamese culture. One teacher briefly introduced Vietnam. One volunteer gave each student a Vietnamese name, demonstrated folk songs and dances, taught the students some easy expressions in Vietnamese, and held a question-and-answer session.

The excellent documentary-drama video explained who the assailants and victims were during the Vietnam War, but some students slept through it, probably tired from moun-

tain climbing in the morning. The students were divided into six groups to make a Vietnamese noodle dish with the Vietnamese and Korean volunteers, which the students greatly enjoyed. They also enjoyed the campfire after dinner.

On the second day, the students prepared and staged four plays about the Korean and Vietnamese wars, presenting different views about them. Some of the plays were excellent but some were not historically accurate because the students relied too much on their own memory to construct the story. The students discussed the situation of assailants and victims.

Moon made the following comments on the program:

The role of the teachers

Teachers are the alpha and the omega in successfully implementing this kind of program. They draft the program; persuade the principal, students, and parents to accept the program; make a proposal; coordinate assistants; guide students; evaluate the learning effect of the program; and submit a final report and financial statement.

Interest and readiness

Younger students display the most interest and active involvement in “learning through experience” programs simply because they could enjoy themselves outside the classroom. They were most impressed by the cooking session because they were very curious about the food, and the process was dynamic.

Importance of an interdisciplinary approach

We need to encourage more interdisciplinary approaches to promote human rights education. As students came to know the Vietnamese volunteers, some overcame their prejudice against Vietnamese culture and history.

The program raised the students’ consciousness about the human rights of foreign laborers from Southeast Asia.

Importance of history education

History education is crucial to promoting human rights consciousness. We have to teach not only the concept of human rights but also a balanced viewpoint of history along with the history of human rights. In a sense, the history of human rights is the struggle of the under privileged against the privileged. Most history education still depends on the viewpoint of those in power or of the ultranationalists. Most histories of war are based on the viewpoint of the winners or of powerful countries.

Development of materials

It is vital to develop, share, and disseminate teaching and learning materials, and programs on human rights education at the national, regional, and international levels. A few governmental and nongovernmental organizations such as Sarangbang Group for Human Rights, Amnesty International Korean Section, and KNCU are steadily promoting human rights education in South Korea. Educational materials and the public education system in general do not sufficiently support human rights education. Educational authorities at various levels should provide more institutional support to human rights education in all schools.

Notes

1. *Practical Manual: Key Words for Participating in the UNESCO Associated Schools Project* (Paris: UNESCO, 1996).
2. *Ibid.* p. 23.
3. Korean National Commission for UNESCO, *Plan for 2001 and Report of 2000: Summary* (Seoul: Korean National Commission for UNESCO, 2001), p. 42.
4. *Tasks of Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding—Main Program and Direction*

of Development (Seoul: Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding, 2001), pp. 4–7.

5. CCAP strives to bolster this learning process by intertwining local and global communities through a voluntary network of people of various nationalities in South Korea. People interested in cultural exchange partake in an enlarged educational community and join hands to narrow the gap between cultures. CCAP invites foreign residents to share their cultures with Korean youths and prepare cultural exchange activities with

Korean volunteer interpreters and schoolteachers, supported by foreign national embassies, cultural centers, and Korea UNESCO Cultural Exchange Services (KUCES). <http://kuces.unesco.or.kr/whatsccap>.

6. Plan for 2001 and Report of 2000: Summary, Korean National Commission for UNESCO, pp. 37–8. 2001.

7. This section is based on the ASPnet report by Moon Ju-young.