Mr. Takasa

Date of interview: 3 September

00:00

I'm speaking to Mr. Takasa?

06:04

you mean online meeting is quite unique for you.

06:07

No, not the online meeting but it's the first time I'm interacting with teachers from Japan. I mean, anyone from Japan? Yes. And different cultural differences are you I'm getting to know about

06:43

Yes. So, I would like to just inform that the interview will be recorded for the data analysis and confidentiality of the participants will be maintained

07:11

Yes, I agree with you. Thank you.

07:13

Thank you. Also, Tamaki I just based on the last experience, I just need to mention that although I will be doing question wise, but there may be some clarifications that I might need in between because Japan is a very new and very different context for me so there may be some questions in between

07:54

Let's begin then.

07:59

did schools in your location closed down during the pandemic for how long was the school closure? And what is the status now?

08:53

during that last February to June, our school our school was closed at the present. We have some restrictions but we have our own side face to face classes. How is the decision about partial online classes have been made.

09:48

right here in this school closure. There was no online learnings but At present we have summer holiday. So, we partially test online learning right now. Okay. Okay.

10:07

Did you mention during the school closure there was no online?

10:11

No. Yes, exactly.

10:15

So that means from February 2020 June 2020, there was no online learning.

10:44

yes your understanding is right. That's because our preparation not enough to do online learning during the school closure. That's why

10:58

and then July onwards, what was happening from July onwards?

11:38

So after school reopen up in July last year, we try to reopen learning at school. We have some restriction. For example, we have three grade children but not all of them together come to school. It's not good because because we have fewer knowledge about COVID-19 then that's why we let the only first or second grader to come to school together and the third grader stay home or stay dormitory.

12:40

So um ,so for five months, children went from February to June five months children were just on their own no school. No online class at all.

13:27

we posted paper based homework or assignment to students house during the five months. Okay, every week we send it and they send it back. And then again next week, we will sell it we sent it and children send it back. Okay.

13:48

So, um, how was this decision made? Or that the is the schools one that the schools will be closed? Second that paper based worksheets will be given? Who made this decision and what was the process of this decision making.

14:05

15:00

After the school closure, our Hokkaido the government authority decided to close all the schools here. And the second question paper best their homework and assignments. We educators of my school discussed together to how to ensure learning for children. There is only one way to do so that's that paper based assignments.

15:30

For the first question, I couldn't hear clearly Whom did you mentione, who makes the all the decisions?

15:37

The governor and the authority of Hokkaido area, okay, okay. All right. Okay.

15:51

So that means what will be done in the school, the paper based work sheets will be given that was the decision taken by all teachers together and school closure decision was taken by the governor of the area.

16:26

Yes. Your understanding is right. Okay. Is he working with the public school or a privates

16:55

So, he works for public school, which is Hokkaido running public special needs school for high school level for the high school students with disability. what new digital technologies were introduced in your school system during the pandemic?

17:32

we are still at the level of kind of test because the internet accessibility or WiFi is a different from House home the home of students. That's why we have some restriction about the introduction of digital learning. But even before the COVID-19 students have one tablet, all of them have each one has one tablet, but they use the tablet only in school. So during this summer holiday we are testing that led the children to bring their tablet back home. Okay, and yes, they are seeking what they can do with the digital right now.

19:29

That was also mentioned in the last interview that accessibility of devices and accessibility to internet connection. There is a lot of disparity in that at present.

20:04

Was your school already using any of these digital technologies before the pandemic

20:58

before the pandemic, the children and the teachers used the PC at schools but they only Google and then find out something try to find something that's all. So because we didn't have enough preparation. So now we are trying to use it for broader wider purposes right now.

21:56

 What teaching learning material readily available in the digital form? So from the description, I understand that February to June these paper based worksheets were being sent. So whenever these paper based worksheets developed,

22:58

during the five months of a school for children stay back home, but we teachers go to school and discuss what to prepare for each children depending on the level of their achievement.

23:15

Okay, for each child ?

23:43

because our students are has a disability so they are different from individual to individual very much. That's why we have to prepare the the paper based documents for each of them according to the level of each achievement level.

24:00

Okay. So, in general with the other schools and other teachers, did they also adopt a similar approach or more Something is happening in the other schools.

25:01

In my area the community most of the schools only had their paper based documents to student during the school closure but there are some are some are few private and the public schools for implemented online learning during the time

25:30

What were your roles and responsibilities in preparing to teach during the pandemic

26:59

The first one is to develop the paper based assignment for each of the student. As I said before, the second one is a preparation for the reopening of schools because we have to prepare some disinfection and securing the safety at schools. And also we tried to make school equipments it's not affected by COVID-19 because our students are very sensitive, as you know. So yeah, that's the two major responsibility of my okay.

27:41

So as I'm understanding there was no no sudden shift made to digital learning, or online learning platforms at a general level in the public schools. Some private schools adopted

28:38

Yes, your understanding is right. But I would like to mention if there is a next time of school closure, we try to prepare for it. So that's why during this holidays we are testing the digitalization and introduction of online learning.

28:57

And this initiative of digitalization of the content is is taken by the government or is it an initiative of particular schools?

30:23

so as a whole digitalization is initiated by the government and the Hokkaido authority. So because we have a national and professional budget for digitalization as to my own school, the utilisation is a bit disadvantage because it's difficult to find out good online learning for children with intellectual disability. Okay, thank you.

31:02

 What were the major challenges faced by the school administrators and teachers in transitioning to the new mode of teaching?

33:30

So the the major challenges the number one is way teachers not get used to using the new platform. The second one is there the platform itself is not well organized to use

35:05

and a which platform are being referred to?

35:54

I was talking about how to use iPad as I told you the age children student had a one iPad, but the way teachers share the pieces together. So that's why we teachers do not get used to using iPod itself. So the I mean, the the challenge is the using the device.

36:23

Okay. And the children had had the iPad, they were their personal devices not provided by the schools.

37:16

our school use the national budget to purchase iPad for all the students. The budget is called for the financial aid for special needs education.

37:29

Okay, okay. So, but that means this would not have happened with other children who do not have special needs.

38:15

so my school the students are all the students with disability in my community. The schools has started to purchase the PCs or iPads for all the students right now. So there are some schools which already purchased them but it depends on the schools which are the subsidized from the National protection government's budget. Okay. Okay.

38:55

What was your experience of teaching at the time time of pandemic please share both positive and negative experiences

39:03

as to the positive aspect, I had a plant a time to prepare for teaching. So we have plenty of time for the better learning for children. But on the other hand, the negative one, learning for, children with a disability that's very difficult to learn from only a picture and the letters. So they need to some experience to learn something. There's the learning for the children with intellectual disability. So it's very difficult for us to find out good learning for my children.

41:24

As you mentioned July 2020 onwards, partially the students started to come into school. So when partially the students were coming to school, wre they're not able to organize the hands on experiencial learning.

42:29

So after reopening school our score so we try to ensure there is some good learning opportunities for children even though it's not complete or perfect one we try to seek out something better for them.

42:57

Did you own or have access to device for conducting your work? If not how did you manage to teach

43:52

so at school, Each h teacher have one PC. So everybody has his or her own PC at schools at home. Actually, I don't have any but most of the teachers have PCs at home I guess. .

44:15

Did you have any challenges in accessing the internet for your work? What were these challenges? How did you deal with these challenges?

45:18

So at first, at the beginning of a pandemic there, we did not expect, we have to implement use online learning or use internet at a time. That's why the internet access is very slow. Or everybody wants to access it. Yeah, the speed will go down. And sometimes it's very difficult to even to access it.

45:50

What are the additional resources you acquired in order to work efficiently?

46:48

Yes, to some extent I'm afraid to require something I need. But it's based on the our budget budget limits.

47:03

And so, what your is saying is that there was a limitation to the budget that you had available from the school for being able to purchase

47:31

yes, you are right.

47:34

And I'm just going back to what you mentioned in the beginning that these paper worksheets were to be printed and posted to children's home, who was bearing the cost of this.

47:48

That's a good question. So schools bear the costs for printinh but the postal costs, we have no budget advance. That's why the parents have to pay for the postal fees.

48:56

And I know from other South Asian countries that teachers had to also spend on stationary on accessing internet so buying a monthly internet plan. All of these were the expenditures teachers had to bear. So did something like this happened in Japan?

49:45

as long as we use those ones including the stationery or internet accessing fee. Everything was covered by the school budget

50:00

what are the digital skills you learned to tea for teaching during the pandemic? How did you acquire these skills? Did you have access to resources and support in developing these skills?

51:00

So during the pandemic, our school had our own training seminar with peers. There are some peers who are very knowledgeable about digital skills, including an application or how to make access with students. So they're showing how to do them and always share the experience together and learn.

51:41

Once again, I would need to ask, Is this a common it's a general phenomenon that teachers found support amongst their peers or is it specific to your school?

52:28

Think almost all the schools has a knowledgeable teachers, but just in case a very small sized school, there might be no teachers of that skill.

52:45

Do you have access to curricular material to meet the demands of teaching in the digital / remote mode? Did you create new material or use the same material? How did you manage to engage students in learning?

53:26

i am sorry we have a step up to the level of the question. So we are not making same curriculum for the digital learning disturb mode.

53:59

 But I am understanding that the material that was sent to students home that is something teachers had to rapidly develop on their own. It was not digital. It was paper worksheets, yet they were being developed by the teachers

55:10

So it's different from teacher to teacher, but there are some teachers who pick up some questions from the textbook or materials. But there are any other teachers who created their own question. According to the level of their student achievement. Are there the majority of the teachers mix the two methods?

55:36

Yeah, sure. That makes sense. Thank you. Just one clarification I need so right now, there is full attendance of students in the schools. That means all children are now coming to school.

56:05

yes, all these children come to school right now.

56:09

And during the time of February to June when teachers were required to be at school, was there any overtime or any extra travel allowance given to teachers?

57:30

 So actually, the teachers weren't not required to come to school every day during the school closure. Because we had a system that we stay home and work such as preparing the teaching materials. So and also as to the work longer our working hours. Teacher did not work longer. Okay, okay.

58:04

 How do you feel about your work during the pandemic? Is it different compared to the pre pandemic period? Do you feel you are doing the same amount of work or most

59:37

So while I was most concerned is how to ensure security of children during the pandemic. And as to the work Lord, there was no difference before or during after COVID-19 actually, we could not work as much the long as possible because of the COVID-19.

1:00:12

What are your main concerns with regard to your work?

1:01:11

I have many concerns the number one this ensuring a security of schools for our students. And also our teaching model and the learning material for students must change. So I'm not so sure if I can follow up then.

1:01:34

And what kind of change are you mentioning about the learning of your students?

1:02:14

I mean in COVID-19 cause the change of learning model but I include the future too. So because the transition of the learning model has shown not very quickly. So, we will follow up there, we will to keep gradual transition.

1:02:45

 what were there any advantages to being a union member during this time? Please elaborate?

1:03:17

So it was good. Because we knew the updated and newest information of change of systems including always stay home and the work so that's why I was good to be a member

1:03:51

or any other kind of support in terms of professional legal and well being support.

1:04:42

during the pandemic, workers stay home and work which is very comfortable to keep safety for educators for us. So that's why I'm very happy with the jtu

1:05:01

And the JTU you made made appeal to the government for allowing teachers to work from home.

1:05:56

So that system is quite new. That's why I guess JTU had achieved the new system by consulting with the government. But I feel that not only JTU, but also its affiliated member unions in our community tried to out their best to achieve very advantage for the members.

1:06:27

Did you feel stress during these times? How did you deal with it only do approach for support.

1:07:28

Actually, I feel a little stress or uneasy, but to solve this issue, we have to avoid spread of COVID-19 so which is the same way to avoid spread COVID-19 against our students? So we peers teachers discuss together and support each other to do that.

1:08:02

What are the what were the difficulties you faced in finding support?

1:09:06

So our school had the students 90% of them live in dormitory. But our teachers at the school have a different system medical status or responsibilites of the dormitory. So there is a difference between the two system. That's why sometimes we cannot support each other between educators at schools and staff at the dormitory. That's the big difficult. Okay,

1:09:41

I'm sorry, but I don't understand the in what context you're the dormitories

1:10:05

So here's the school has students with a disability. That's why they live in a dormitory next to the school buildings during the school times, okay? Yes, it's a residential school. Yes, yes. Okay. But teachers have their own status and responsibility and legal restrictions. But on the other hand, the staff of the dormitory residential are different from one. Okay, systematically they cannot support each other because of that legal differences.

1:11:06

 How have your students adapted to changes to remote or online learning?

1:11:47

So students actually students do not like the iPad school distribute very much because the iPads have some restricitions for the security reasons. So they cannot use the iPad as they like. That's why they don't like it very much. but parents have some gap between the positive parents or negative one. Positive parents think it's good to have something, something to study for their children. But if they're negative parents do not have a good internet access. That's why they don't feel it. They don't like it.

1:13:29

Yeah, so you have already covered the response to question number 20 which includes parents and community members response. Question number 21 what challenges have they faced? How have they dealt with these?

1:14:01

That's a very difficult question because the challenges they face are most of the cases is a very financial So sensitive one. That's why we educators for parents and students cannot deal with it easily. But as long as the parents and students have a mobile phone, they try to access your information somehow. Okay.

1:15:26

please describe the changes in your work due to the pandemic.

1:16:31

my workload has increased because of the pandemic in clothing the disinfection. So that way teachers ensure their safety and security for the lives of the learning of students. And also at the residence dormitory. We teachers and staff distribute their meal to each of them. So it takes more time than before.

1:17:08

Question number 23 in what ways have the terms and conditions of your employment change due to due to the pandemic? What support Have you received from your school?

1:18:27

our working time has changed because our way teachers have to help dormitory presidential staff to distribute their meals to students, for example, well, we have to distribute breakfast, we have to go to schools and the dormitory earlier than usual. And also we have to distribute dinner, we have to go later. But the period of time the working time is has not changed. Okay.

1:19:08

I need a little clarification about what was happening to school teachers who were not teaching in residential schools or schools without the dormitories and was there any change in their working conditions and in their work?

1:20:30

So other schools without dormitory and also they have verbal teaching that teachers can work from home. So that would be kind of an advantage for them. But also still the elementary other junior high school teachers they have to take in this disinfect measures as I've mentioned.

1:21:02

Okay. Sure. Um, with respect to your teaching, what are the things that are working for you? What are the things that are not working for you? So, for example, previously, he mentioned that he is but now, in some context, he mentioned that he is now better able to plan for the classes because he's working from home. And there is time for planning. So there may be some things that are helping the teachers while they're teaching in an online mode, and then maybe some things which are challenges which are creating herders in teaching. So from the perspective of classroom teaching, what are these challenges and what are these strengths of online teaching?

1:22:26

Thank you, but that Taiwan ohana shojo Moshe guitarra Korea say Canada my master it Oh, the Tegra psikyo data game. Yeah, pandemic Ida toda Cancun or de Ganga, ma Giovanni torretta toyana On se she got that. Oh, my massive then Masada kosha going into the Ecuador that Oman is their importance in the online jail you're the thoughts on the gmbdw Ganga Karnataka so you go myoko night with Omar tokoto nanika Kanaka no cake and Cara my dead are the mask.

1:23:19

that's a good thing, or a very beneficial for me to spend plenty of time to prepare for the materials and the teaching. And also asked for me to ensure safety for our peers as well as children. Because my school has 136 students and also more than 100 teachers, staff . So but nobody has been infected not infected yet. So everything we've done is good. Not to not nobody was infected. So I think there is nothing which are not working for myself.

1:25:42

Sure. During the pandemic, what are the challenges you've been able to resolve and how

1:26:35

So there's a little bit difficult question. So we try to the best and right, we are able to reopen schools, which is good, very big achievement for us, is a good answer to the question?

1:27:12

Maybe I'll just give a few examples from the South Asian context and other countries. So for example, some teachers face the challenge of balancing the dome domestic work and the office work because they're working from home. So there is no clear cut boundary as to when you will be doing office work and when you will be doing domestic work. Some teachers had children to be managed at home. So managing the children with your office work was a challenge. Some children some teachers face the issue of reaching out to their students. So in a class of 30 only 20 students were coming for online classes and the rest were out of reach. So those are the kind of challenges we are trying to understand from the teachers perspective.

1:28:03

I don't think I have any particular challenge. And because reaching o the children we have no problems because we are constantly in contact with the children during the time. So during the school closure, we stayed. We had to stay home. But it means we have plenty of time to use effectively.

1:30:03

do you think the current mode of remote or online teaching learning will continue in future? What do you think will happen to digital learning technologies when schools reopen?

1:30:55

so I think the transition will continue in future to we cannot stop it idea to say we cannot stop it .

1:31:12

there's a question I have from the previous previous section is about if you received any training during the pandemic to deal with the online mode

1:32:09

Yes After we did the training at my schools but which was very broader one how to use application and all my devices and so on. But in fact there are a few teachers who is a very good at using

1:32:27

Okay, yeah, I think he mentioned that earlier as well. What are your main concerns with regard to your work in future?

1:33:39

so what I'm most concerned is the digitalization wikk change the model of education itself especially about my children with disability they're learning as a different from the majority one so they are learning is based on the experienced and real behavior and trial and so on. So if the change affect them they're badly very concerned with it.

1:34:19

In what ways will this pandemic bring changes to teachers everyday work?

1:35:03

actually, our workload including increased including the disinfection measures. But right now, we are getting to the quiet, very normal, close to normal right now.

1:35:21

Were there any salary cuts at all for the teachers during the pandemic, if not in your school but other other schools or other localities in Japan?

1:36:11

I don't think the pandemic caused the salary cut, or rather our teachers workload has includes increase. That's why authorities hire newly the temporary staff for us.

1:36:30

Given the context where you work, what support do you need for your work in future?

1:36:34

So if the digitalization goes on when is the very professional personnel to prepare for setting up and equipment of PCs and so on who help us

1:37:29

what kind of support do your students need to adopt to better learning in future

1:38:13

for future it is necessary to combine the two module of learning for students the one the first one is they are experienced and are real touching one. So the another is digital learning. Because we understand that it's very effective for students to learn from the the digitalization tools such as pictures and some video movies, and so on. So we have to think about the combined modules. So that's why it's necessary to support for the for the both modules.

1:39:26

Just have two more clarifications I need and I think we are at towards the end of the interview then. So since after July 2020 until now, there has been a combination of students coming to school as well as online learning. So for the online learning, but any particular online learning platforms in terms of Google classrooms or Moodle, have they been introduced to students

1:40:38

students download it to google classroom but we don't use it yet.

1:41:05

Is there anything else that you would like to tell us about teachers experiences of teaching during the COVID scenario?

1:42:29

So, during the pandemic, I felt that ensuring the safety and the security is the most important. I know the education is the children, right and the very important but we need to have our health at the first hand. So if there are health is harm, harm, and threatened by COVID-19 that we educators should not let children come to schools. So so we have to think about those human rights issues at first. That's my feeling.

1:43:11

Yeah, that's that's very important. Very well said.

1:43:18

Yeah. So I understand that there is a gradual move towards digitalization and introducing laptops and iPads to to schools. Are there any major concerns do you have with regard to moving towards the digitalization?

1:44:42

As to the digitalization, I just wonder way teacher, how we manage to use it and utilize it. And also we are concerned about I am sorry, I am concerned if students, my son happen some troublr like using SNS and the song rolling and so on. So, that's our main concern and also I am concerned if our job might change because of the digitalization

1:45:19

 in what ways you think the job will change

1:46:03

When I was mentioning about the change of jobs. I was thinking about the how to manage about the discipline education, which is very particular to Japan. So if children have some troubles over sns, we teachers have to find out what is happening in that world, that is which is a very new skill for us. So I just wonder how to gain those skills. And also we are afraid I am afraid about the the relationship among students and digital world networking word.

1:47:18

 So here's a question. Do you think Japanese teachers have a broader working area too broad or too broad in the sense disabling teaching, and so on?

1:47:37

Um, I think in my experiences, I realized that the context of Japan is yes, different from other countries that we have been been interviewing the issues of teachers in South Asia are very, very different. They are primarily struggling with infrastructure, accessing, being able to contact the students because many students actually went back to their hometowns. There's a lot of reverse migration happening. So we're right now dealing with those kinds of issues and of course, finances, digital divide, these are the common issues. But yeah, I think those are my observations.

1:49:05

aware that discipline is primary to the social life of Japanese people, so I don't think it comes as a surprise to us.

1:49:14

1:49:34

Thank you very much. This was a very, very insightful interview. And as I said earlier, we learned a lot about your context. And it has left us more curious about, about what is happening in in the school system in Japan. And special thanks to you Tamaki for taking out time and making this effort for enabling us to understand your context. Thank you very much.