

## International Korean Educators Conference Seoul 2017



Exploring Seoul - We had planning for the VLNP Korean Cultural Day in mind

The 15th International Conference of Korean Educators Abroad began with absolute grandeur. The theme of the conference was 'Human intellectual legacy - Beautiful Hangeul'. We were welcomed by the esteemed Prime Minister, who thanked us for our efforts and the important role we play for Korea globally. We learnt of a number of initiatives the government is focussing on to further grow Korean throughout the world. Following this we listened to traditional drumming, which I have to say was incredibly impressive. The keynote speaker, and President of Korean Educators Abroad, explained role of music in Korea, connecting this to language and a sense of being.

Approximately ninety participants from twenty nine countries attended the conference with the majority being teachers of Korean. Our group, the 22 official representatives, was made up of Programme facilitators, School Principals and Ministry representatives. The connections made and discussions had were invaluable.

One of my highlights was visiting a number of prominent Korean Universities and Language Institutes. Yonsei University has the largest Korean language school for foreigners in Korea. It was opened in 1959 and provides a wide range of Korean language and culture courses. It has 170 professors and approximately 2000 students attending each semester.

There are 8 different levels of Korean language learning, with class sizes of 13 maximum. All are total immersion with only Korean spoken. Students have a variety of choices; evening, full year, 3 week and 5 week programmes plus courses to prepare for entrance to university. The Institute also has a programme to help students get a job using their Korean. We were also lucky enough to see a snapshot of a K-Pop concert put on for students studying there.



Our visit, following this, to Ehwa University gave us the opportunity to see lessons in action.

We were lucky enough to be invited to the Ministry of Education Office to meet with Director - Mrs Kim Jung-Yeon and Senior Educational Supervisor - Mr Lee Jung-Won.

They credit a lot of the success in the increase in Korean to K-Pop music. Through our discussions we heard how the Korean government is actively encouraging Korean education abroad and programmes to develop global citizens, and of their efforts to expand support to countries outside Korea. Representatives from our group appreciated the opportunity to discuss Korean successes and challenges, appreciate the Korean government's support in their countries and ask for further support in areas of need and growth.

Visiting the Nongshim noodle production factory was a highlight. It was interesting to both hear about and view the production process. Nongshim is incredibly progressive with 6 factories in Korea and now factories in strategic locations throughout the world. Their business model and future focus was impressive. We all left with a rather large gift box, so their product profile lives on, even after we have left the company and Korea.



The day ended with a evening musical concert at the Changgyeonggung Palace. Cleverly the musicians took traditional instruments and used these to perform adapted traditional music and songs from musicals.

Our final day was packed with lectures from Professors and experts from Yonsei University, Ehwa Women's University and the TV Presenter and K-Pop teacher, Hyeok-mo Ahn. I enjoyed the opportunity to learn some Korean and am now motivated to learn more.



Our teachers learnt with and from one another, with days jam-packed with lectures and workshops focussed on teaching of Korean language and culture and improving teacher pedagogy.

Like it began, the conference had a splendid awards ceremony and closing evening held at the Seoul Garden Hotel. Korea's K-Pop was showcased with a performance by rapper San E, which proved to be a highlight for many.

Days were very long and the programme was intensive for both the educators and officials but, as a result, it was hugely rewarding for both. Thank you Rachel for your commitment to making this happen! I left Korea appreciating and better understanding the Korean culture, food, language, teaching of the language and hangul. I re-enter New Zealand committed to further developing our connections with Korea, and like-minded schools, and promoting the rich language and culture with our students. We look forward to continuing to develop our language teaching capabilities and to providing engaging learning opportunities for our VLNP students.

Nicki Fielder



