How Happy was the Hour?

At the end of each day throughout the Congress, participants were able to relax and enjoy themselves at Happy Hour, where they could indulge themselves in free snacks and beverages provided by the Korea Institute for Advanced Study (KIAS), Lotte Foundation, Chunjiye Education, Sungji Publication, and Cho Sung Jo, the Chair of the International Programme Committee (IPC). They were able to meet and greet one another during different performances held each day, such as orchestra performances.

Faces of ICME-12

Poster Presentations

More than 450 posters were exhibited throughout the Grand Hall on the first floor. Posters covering a wide range of topics in mathematics education research or practices were put on display, with colleagues and educators of mathematics visiting each, to learn and discuss with the various presenters. Some were even in Korean, Chinese, and Japanese!

Regina Mooler, of the University of Erfurt, took a short breather from touring the presentations. “I think the poster presentations are wonderful, and I am just astonished by the variety of questions presented in each,” she said. “It is like a market of ideas in here, but there are just so many that I need a rest in between!”

Behind the Scenes…

Have you noticed the surplus of young students all around the Congress, standing out in their bright green shirts? Or have you, by chance, stepped into the secretariat office to see staff members and officials locked on and busy at work? With the ICME-12 coming to an end, take a sneak peek behind the scenes of the staff and event organizers, who shared some fun and intriguing episodes throughout the week.

Lee Myeong Joe at the Mathematical Carnival Registration Desk recalled on a couple amusing incidents he had. “Somebody had left their wallet at the carnival and had already checked it out, so I had to personally send it all the way back to the hotel by home delivery service!” he said. “There was also one time when I had to go to the airport to retrieve six boxes of USBs, meant for one of the carnival booths, because they had been blocked at the Customs office; it was a hassle.”

The work done in the “Authorized Personnel Only” section in Hall E7 has not always gone quite as smoothly as well. Lew Hee Chan, a co-chair of the Local Organizing Committee, recalled how hectic it sometimes was to look for providers for speakers of various presentations throughout the week. The people who had promised to take the position often cancelled at the last minute, so he would have to frantically run up and down the hallways to find suitable people up for the task!

Several workers at the carnival booths reflected on various notable occurrences themselves! Staff members of the “Making Math T-shirt” booth, Park So Young and Lee Soo Min, exclaimed, “there was this one Canadian who asked for the biggest t-shirt available to paint on however desired; the person was quite creative, imagining up original designs for the shirt.” So Young also added that a lot of foreigners wanted to design their own t-shirt with just their names in Korean, that she had to create the Korean names for them herself on the spot. “It was a bit of a burden, but it was fun,” she said. Soo Min further went on, pointing to her green shirt, “a Brazilian man signed the side of my shirt out of gratitude for our work here, that I was quite moved!”

How was I able to personalize the t-shirt? For the shirt.” Soo Y oung also added that a lot of foreigners wanted to design their own t-shirt with just their names in Korean, that she had to create the Korean names for them herself on the spot. “It was a bit of a burden, but it was fun,” she said. Soo Min further went on, pointing to her green shirt, “a Brazilian man signed the side of my shirt out of gratitude for our work here, that I was quite moved!”
Equity has been the keyword for Finnish educational policy and there has been little difficulty in integrating the needs of all students into the curriculum. Gifted education is an area that has received less attention, with the grouping of students based on teacher recommendations and negotiation with parents.

In upper secondary school, there are two mathematics syllabi, general and advanced. A minority of schools use differentiated grouping in mathematics for grades 8 and 9. A large minority of schools are allocated for mathematics in the 8th grade (out of 30 units per week). A significantly large minority of schools use differentiated grouping in mathematics for grades 8 and 9. In upper secondary school, there are two mathematics syllabi, general and advanced. The grouping is based on teacher recommendations, but negotiated with parents.

Learning mostly takes place in heterogeneous classes, and students with learning difficulties are integrated into normal classes. In general, 5 to 7 units per week are allocated for mathematics in classes. One significant minority of schools use differentiated grouping in mathematics for grades 8 and 9. In upper secondary school, there are two mathematics syllabi, general and advanced. The grouping is based on teacher recommendations, but negotiated with parents.

Gifted education

Equity has been the keyword for Finnish educational policy and there has been little interest for providing special programs for the gifted. There are some schools or classes that provide extended programs in mathematics or science. Roughly approximating, one out of ten schools has them. However, their mathematics curriculum is not very different from average schools. They may provide, for example, one or two additional hours per week for these subjects.

Curriculum Revision

In Finland, there is a national core curriculum. Local municipalities and schools must make more specific curriculum documents. These local specifications may emphasize, for example, characteristics of the local nature, history and society or respond to local societal needs. The present core curriculum for comprehensive education was established in 2004 and the process of revising it is ongoing at the moment.

Differentiated class

Learning mostly takes place in heterogeneous classes, and students with learning difficulties are integrated into normal classes. In general, 3 to 5 units per week are allocated for mathematics in the 8th grade (out of 30 units per week). A significantly large minority of schools use differentiated grouping in mathematics for grades 8 and 9. In upper secondary school, there are two mathematics syllabi, general and advanced. The grouping is based on teacher recommendations, but negotiated with parents.

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Evaluation

Characteristic for Finnish education is that there are no ‘high stakes’ tests until the matriculation examination. Student competences are evaluated by their teachers and contrasted to the criteria of the curriculum. Teacher evaluation is typically based on student performance in class and teacher-made tests. However, it is rather common practice for mathematics teachers in their schools to have shared tests across the classes of the same grade, thus making the assessment more easily comparable. During the first years of elementary school, the evaluation report includes verbal descriptions of student competencies and the teacher also meets the parents in person to discuss student advancement.

Further information: www.icme13.org