

Editorial **Conducting International Collaborative Research in Uncertain Times:  
Publishing the Third Issue of Environmental Education in Asia**

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### **I. Context and focus**

It gives us immense pleasure to announce the publication of the third issue of “Environmental Education in Asia” (EEA) of the *Japanese Journal of Environmental Education* (JJEE). EEA has its roots in an international workshop held at the annual conference of the then Japanese Society of Environmental Education (later renamed the Japanese Society for Environmental Education [JSFEE] in 2015) in Tokyo in the summer of 2014. The workshop brought together researchers from Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and the United States and discussed the prospect of publishing an English-language online issue of the journal (Takano et al. 2015). The JSFEE General Assembly approved the project in 2015, and the work on the first issue of EEA began in the fall of that year. JSFEE has a long history of collaborating with researchers and practitioners from all over the world. We are confident in stating that JSFEE is probably one of the most active societies in the country in terms of international collaboration in the field of environment and sustainability. Since 2009, the society has signed an exchange agreement (Memorandum of Understanding: MOU) with Korean Society for Environmental Education (KSOEE), Chinese Society for Environmental Education (CSEE), North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE), and Australian Association for Environmental Education (AAEE).

We were able to publish the inaugural issue of EEA (JJEE-EEA 2017) in 2017 thanks to the support of countless individuals and partner associations. The issue included twelve papers and an editorial on environmental education (EE) in Asia. These papers and editorials covered the following core themes: 1) EE in formal education, 2) EE in non-formal education, 3) research trends in EE, and 4) insights into EE in Asia from outside of Asia.

One of EEA’s goals was to provide a social and intellectual home for EE scholars and practitioners from Asia and around the world, which cannot be accomplished by publishing a single journal issue. Building on the publication of JJEE-EEA 2017, the JSFEE Board of Directors decided to publish the second issue of EEA (JJEE-EEA 2019). In the second issue, we announced the launch of an international environmental education collaborative research project, inviting research proposals from members of JSFEE and four partner associations. Ten research projects and two editorials were published in JJEE-EEA 2019 from the 12 proposals that were received and considered for publication.

### **II. Structure of the “JJEE-EEA 2021”**

Two issues of EEA featured a total of 27 papers (including editorials) that presented novel and diverse perspectives as well as insights into EE research in Asia. When we published JJEE-EEA

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2019, we rephrased the goal of this series of issues, thus: “to provide a platform for researchers who are not only doing research in his or her country, but are willing to engage in international interactions and contribute to mutual and global understanding (Sakurai & Furihata 2019).” This was driven by the desire to broaden our objectives, articulate our interests for global collaboration, and invite EE researchers and practitioners to collaborate across national and cultural boundaries. We decided to continue our endeavor in the third issue (JJEE-EEA 2021) to take the next step in promoting and expanding EE research throughout Asia, building and strengthening a network of researchers with diverse backgrounds but shared goals, and fostering a robust understanding of EE across countries.

There are two points worth noting vis-à-vis the publication of the third issue of EEA. To begin, we would like to remind the readers that the whole submission and publication process for this issue took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. While the spread of COVID-19 had a profound impact on the lifestyles of individuals, communities, and businesses worldwide, it also impacted the international collaborative research conducted by the authors of this issue. We conducted a survey in April 2020 and found that the majority of the projects faced delays in the progress of their research as a result of COVID-19. The investigators requested an extension in the publication schedule to allow them additional time to conduct research, analyze data, and write their papers. Consequently, we decided to postpone the publication of this third issue of EEA from June 2021 to November 2021. We are grateful to the authors of five papers published in this issue, who worked tirelessly during the pandemic to complete and submit the papers.

Second, while the number of papers published in this issue decreased from ten in the previous issue (JJEE-EEA 2019) to five in the current issue (JJEE-EEA 2021), we believe the diversity of the papers, both in terms of substance and nationalities represented, remained constant or increased. While the preceding issue featured various international collaborative research studies, the majority of the lead authors were Japanese members of JSFEE. Several principal investigators from various countries applied in response to our 2019 calls for collaborative international research. As a result, we are grateful that the majority of papers published have lead authors from countries other than Japan.

We believe that this issue (JJEE-EEA 2021) takes a significant step towards our goal of providing a platform for researchers to collaborate internationally beyond the confines of a particular country, and we are confident that future editors and contributors will build on the assets presented by the three series of EEA.

### **Acknowledgments**

We would like to express our gratitude to everyone who contributed significantly to the publication of this special issue, particularly the JSFEE Board of Directors and the Director of International Committee Fumiko Noguchi and Vice Director Lim Sachi Ninomiya. We also appreciate all contributors for submitting thought-provoking papers and thoughtfully responding to our request to limit their papers within the word count, and to the reviewers who provided valuable comments on each paper. Finally, we thank all members of the international editorial team (Table 1).

**Table 1. List of Editors, Editorial and Guest Editorial Committee for JJEE-EEA2021****Chief Editors:**

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