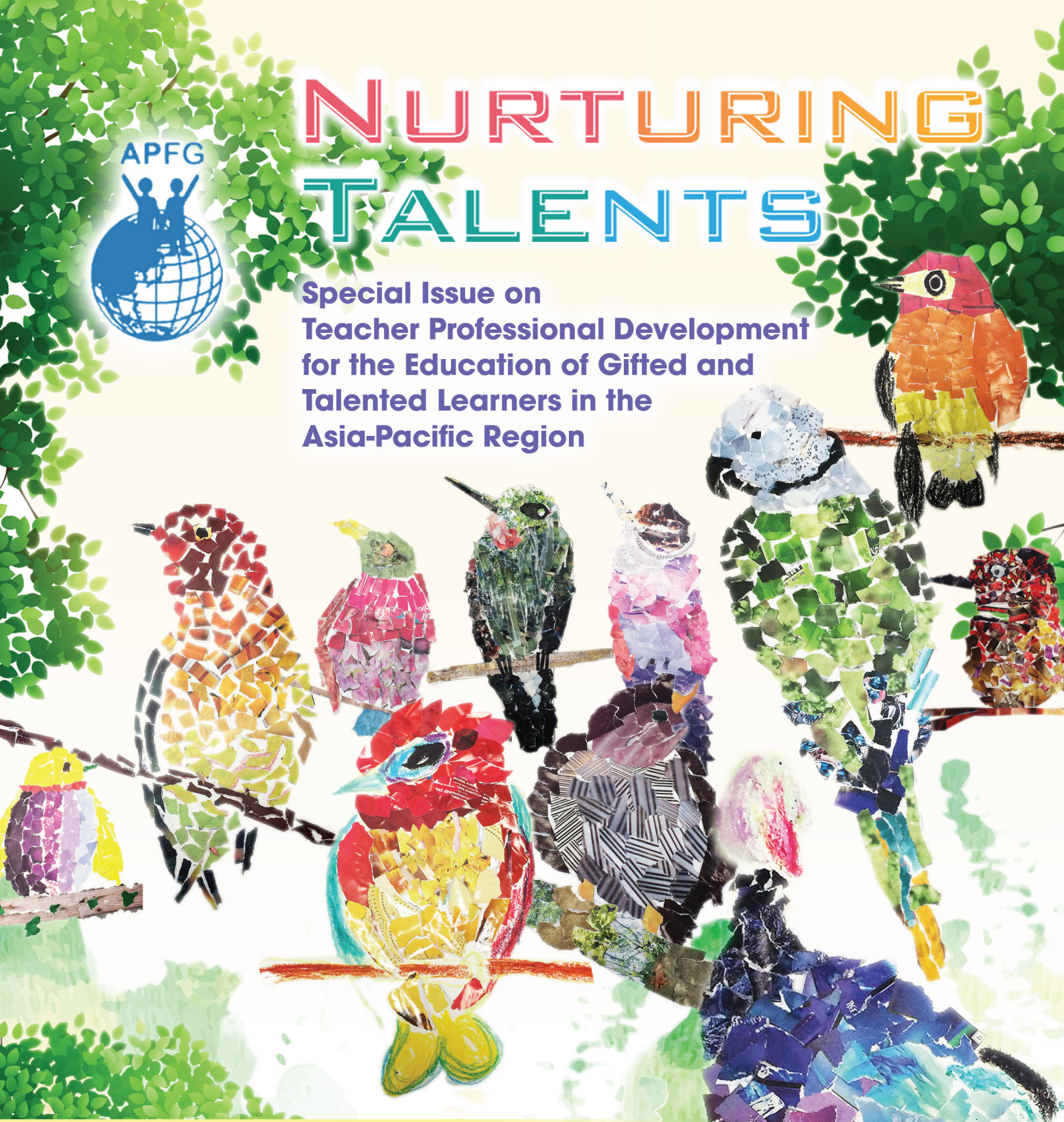
NURTURING TALENTS

Special Issue on Teacher Professional Development for the Education of Gifted and Talented Learners in the Asia-Pacific Region



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Editors:
Serene Chan, Suzannie Leung and Mantak Yuen

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Commencement of a Gifted and Talented Programme into the Malaysian Educational System

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The spread of the COVID-19 virus, beginning in November 2019, had taken its toll in various areas of life, particularly in education. All over the world the pandemic caused total 'lock downs' in most countries to curb the spread of the virus, thus shutting down schools and other educational institutions for long periods of time. Shutting down these facilities quickly changed the whole process of teaching and learning at all levels. Even though the World Health Organization (WHO) announcement in May 2023 that COVID-19 is no longer a public health emergency, the lock downs had totally changed the mode of educational delivery. Online learning or some hybrid version had replaced the conventional face-to-face teaching and interaction.

In Malaysia, while these changes did generally affect the smooth execution of Malaysian Educational Blueprint (MEB) 2013-2025, the impact on the domain of gifted and talented education was not so apparent. Despite the pandemic, the direction for national gifted and talented education outlined in MEB was progressing extremely well. Initially, the Ministry of Education (MoE) on 29 August 2019 – before COVID-19 pandemic struck – had approved the introduction of a gifted and talented programme in the national education framework, beginning in 2021 academic year.

In preparation to execute this plan, 45 teachers were selected from all over the country to undertake an extensive 560-hour course of training in the essential principles, strategies and aims of gifted and talented education. The training was conducted by a group of field experts and researchers from the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), beginning on 24 August 2020 until 27 November 2020. This teacher training package comprised of seven modules, specifically designed to equip them with the necessary knowledge namely: (1) conception of giftedness; (2) identification and talent development; (3) curriculum design for gifted and talented education; (4) differentiated teaching and learning pedagogy; (5) evaluation and measurement in gifted and talented education; (6) organizational management; and (7) psycho-socio-emotional issues and psychological support for gifted and talented students.

Commencement of a Gifted and Talented Programme into the Malaysian Educational System

Subsequently, the Ministry's continuous collaborative work with scholars from UKM had successfully created a guiding policy for a national gifted and talented education programme entitled "Buku Panduan Pelaksanaan Program Pendidikan Pintar Cerdas" (Handbook ISBN No.: 978-967-420-566-9). It is a comprehensive operating guideline for gifted and talented education programmes that was officially endorsed at ministry level in June 2021, and was immediately disseminated to state, district and school levels. The handbook prompted a pilot project with a full-scale gifted and talented programme at one particular school. The selected boarding school chosen to become the pilot school was Sekolah Menengah Sains Pendang (PENDETA), located in the state of Kedah, in the northern region of Peninsular Malaysia.

All the trained teachers, administrative, and support staff were transferred to PENDETA, and the infrastructure upgrading works were completed. On 5 December 2021, the programme was officially launched by the Senior Minister of Education, and the school's original name was changed to Akademi Sains Pendang. Upon commencement, the programme received the first cohort of 88 students.

All in all, going into the third year of operation, this MOE pilot programme has significantly enhanced the learning pathways for gifted and talented students in Malaysia. The initial journey of two laboratory schools – Kolej PERMATApintar ™ in UKM and Kolej PERMATA Insan in USIM – more than a decade ago was basically strengthened by this recognition at the national level. Hopefully, the success of Akademi Sains Pendang for gifted and talented education will spread the message to more MOE schools in the near future.

Akademi Sains Pendang is the first Malaysian boarding school under Ministry of Education (MOE) that operates with a comprehensive programme of gifted and talented education.

Training the Trainers: The Arts & Fostering Higher-Order Thinking

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Lynn Yau with professionals during training

Creativity, Critical thinking, Communication, Collaboration and Contribution form the 5C's to the pedagogical foundation of projects created by The Absolutely Fabulous Theatre Connection or AFTEC for short (www.aftec.hk). This article takes the Jockey Club Arts-based Cross-curriculum Creative Learning pilot project (2021-2024) as an example, to explore higher order thinking skills (HOTS), creative thinking and the arts (https://www.aftec.hk/arts-based-cross-curriculum-creative-learning-project/).

For the purposes of this contribution to the Newsletter, "creative thinking" is defined as an amalgamation of creativity and critical thinking. Why is creative thinking crucial? Globally, creative thinking is increasingly important in the workplace. In an article titled 'The future of employment: How susceptible are jobs to computerisation?', Frey and Osborne (2017) indicate that a trend in the US shows that lower skill level jobs are easily replaced, while those that require more synthesis, analysis, evaluation and human collaboration are less in danger. In a report The Future of Jobs (World Economic Forum, 2023), released last May, the skill listed as the most on the rise globally is creative thinking (73.2%), followed closely by analytical thinking, curiosity and lifelong learning, resilience, flexibility and agility. Also needed, though much lower on the list (26.4%), are reading, writing and mathematics. In 2022, creative thinking was ranked as a fourth in importance in the OECD's PISA test data for 15-year-olds. In other words, competencies and capabilities need to be emphasised over and above ingestion and regurgitation of knowledge in schools, vocational colleges and universities.

Training the Trainers: The Arts & Fostering Higher-Order Thinking

AFTEC covers a spectrum of education institutions from primary to tertiary. In local primary schools, where many of the children are of low socio-economic status and whose lives have restricted exposure beyond their homes and schools, poverty of the imagination is all too common. This is not the imagination to draw, dance or act on stage. Crucially, it is the imaginative mindset needed to think out of the box in school and in life beyond. Creative learning is one strong contender to equip future generations with higher-order thinking as an essential tool to navigate life.

Higher-order Thinking & Creative Habits of Mind

In descriptions of higher order thinking skills, the following words or phrases frequently appear:

- analysing, synthesising, evaluating, creating (Bloom's Taxonomy; Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Brookhart, 2010)
- problem-solving, reasoning, critical thinking, creating, creative thinking (Brookhart 2010)
- comparing, classifying, inductive and deductive reasoning, analysing errors and perspectives, constructing support, abstracting, experimenting, problem solving, inquiry, invention (Marzano's Taxonomy: Marzano & Kendall, 2007).

The JCABC project dovetails years of experience, needs and solutions into a generic creative learning framework that addresses these dimensions. Fundamental to the pedagogical framework is Lucas, Spencer and Claxton's research as evidenced in their Five Dimensional Model of Creative Habits of Mind (Lucas, 2016). Summarising the Lucas et al. model, it is enlightening to note the main and sub-habits link to higher order thinking (HOT).

The Arts, Creative Thinking & HOTs

The JCABC project is cross-curricular, and the arts is the vehicle in which creative learning and HOTs comfortably sit. Too often however, the arts' deeper and broader attributes are routinely unrecognised because they are associated only with performances and exhibitions. The arts are also relegated to after school activities and dispensable leisure pursuits. In fact, higher-order thinking and creativity occur regularly when one works with the arts, both performing and visual. Table 1 provides an overview of the natural alliance and alignment that exists across these components. The left-hand column lists the powers of the arts and their features, while the centre column represents Lucas' research in creative thinking. The right-hand column collects the higher thinking skills delineated earlier. The blue lines join the boxes as examples, though there are actually many possibilities of aligning the boxes.

In the JCABC project, we bring together teachers and creative practitioners (teaching artists and creative professionals) who co-design and co-create their lessons through the arts, supporting subjects chosen by participating primary schools. The two sets of professionals learn collaboratively and contribute knowledge specific to each sector to this Community of Practice.

Training the Trainers in Action

Training the Trainers: The Arts & Fostering Higher-Order Thinking

The Arts . . .	They fit well into Lucas' Habits of Mind & Sub-habits	And when you apply the creative thinking model, you are using these HOT skills
• Communicate meaning • Encourage reflections • Enhance interactivity • Establish connections • Excite the imagination • Express feelings • Give voice • Influence general environment • Make connections • Offer multiple perspectives understandings • Test ideas	Collaborative: Sharing the product; Giving and receiving feedback; Cooperating appropriately Disciplined: Developing techniques; Reflecting critically; Crafting and improving Imaginative: Playing with possibilities; Making connections; Using intuition Inquisitive: Wondering and questioning; Exploring and investigating; Challenging assumptions Persistent: Sticking with difficulty; Daring to be different; Tolerating uncertainty	• Abstracting • Analysing • Classifying • Comparing • Constructing support • Creating • Evaluating • Experimenting • Inductive & deductive reasoning • Inquiring • Problem-solving • Reasoning • Synthesising • Thinking creatively • Thinking critically • Working on perspective

Table 1: Relating HOTs to Creative Thinking and the Arts

Over seven intensive days at the end of each summer holidays, the professionals come together for experiential learning, cross-sector dialogues and explorations. Workshops are hands-on and interactive throughout as we review similarities and differences between traditional and creative classrooms. We pose many questions and engage participants in deep reflection, comparison and contrasting experiences while delineating diverse facets of creative classrooms. Inquiry-based learning is unusual for local teachers and CPs and at the end of each day, they are physically and cognitively tired, though generally invigorated.

For teachers, two challenges were at the forefront—asking open-ended questions and dealing with the abstract. These two constructs are the strengths of artists. Teachers and schools tend to be product-oriented while creative practitioners are inclined to be process-based. Higher-order thinking is more spontaneous for them. For teachers, they continue to practise. It would be disingenuous for me to say that the tripartite relationship is second nature to them. Their original training at tertiary level does not necessarily translate well. Yet, in this final year of the pilot, the industriousness of the professionals to break through and find a new mindset in teaching and learning have demonstrated very promising results and brighter futures for students in the creative classrooms.

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APCG Debut in Japan: 17th and 20th August 2024

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Writing on behalf of the organizing committee, I want to introduce you to the 18th Asia-Pacific Conference on Giftedness (APCG 2024), to be held for first time in Japan. The conference will take place in Takamatsu city in Kagawa prefecture, bordering the Seto Inland Sea. Takamatsu City is one of the hidden gems of Japan with plentiful local delicacies and traditional culture to enjoy. The conference will take place at an auspicious time as interest in gifted education is growing fast in Japan. Educators, parents, advocacy groups, and the education industry are seeking insights into nurturing the potential of our gifted and talented children.

In his welcome message, the organizing committee chair Professor Manabu Sumida from Ehime University lists five action points provided by the advisory board of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology. These action points are: 1) promoting awareness and professional development for understanding gifted and talented children, 2) diversifying learning opportunities, 3) promoting understanding of the characteristics of gifted and talented children, 4) aggregating and facilitating access to out-of-school institutions, and 5) cataloging case examples of best practice through empirical research. Local research activities with a focus on giftedness are still somewhat limited in Japan, but hopefully this conference becomes an inspiration for Japanese researchers to pursue deeper investigations and work together with colleagues from Asia-Pacific countries and beyond.

The five action points identified above are also present in the topics of interest to be addressed in conference papers and poster presentations. The call for abstracts for these is now on, and **we will accept submissions from you until 1st April**. Please see other important dates on the homepage: https://apcg-japan2024.org/important-dates/

Japanese cultural values, social organization and educational philosophies and practices may be slightly different from other countries. Weighing heavily on the side of nurture, here talent is often approached from a developmental perspective. Going back hundreds of years, the Japanese way of honing one's skills through a lifetime of dedicated practice offers new insights into gifted education. What kind of role should perseverance and commitment play in the educational challenges we present in our classrooms, and when travelling the paths we guide gifted students towards? Against this background, we set the theme of the conference as "Educational Environments for

APCG Debut in Japan: 17th and 20th August 2024

Transforming Gifted Minds, Lives and Communities", with the hope of highlighting the contextual and relational nature of giftedness and the influence the specific context and actors have in shaping educational experiences.

The conference will not only serve as a platform for experts but also engage junior high school students from Japan and abroad through the Youth Summit. This is also an excellent opportunity for Japanese practitioners to connect with international colleagues and exchange ideas and experiences on teaching the gifted and talented learners. For the summit the theme is "Connecting the World Glocally to Ensure a Sustainable and Equitable Future", emphasizing the Sustainable Development Goals and reminding us of the interconnected nature of our environments. The Seto Inland Sea and nearby Shodoshima Island provide a rich and invigorating environment for exploring and learning science. Let us hope that we are spared from rough seasonal weathers.

In addition to the keynotes and plenaries by established scholars from Japan and abroad—such as Dr. Rena F. Subotnik and Dr. Nobutaka Matsumura—there are also four workshops providing more hands-on learning opportunities on giftedness. I will be hosting a session on teacher competencies on gifted education, exploring ideas how to go about training teachers in gifted education. This is at the center of my current research and educational activities since it is an area that needs increased attention both locally and internationally. Amongst the workshops, there is also one (in Japanese) with a focus on enrichment achievable at home. We trust that Japanese educators will wish to participate in high numbers.

The timing of the conference is later than usual, between 17th and 20th of August when the heat is not as intense as in July, and a local holiday season has ended. It will still be fairly hot and humid however, so please prepare accordingly and remember to stay hydrated. Participants will find that cold drinks rarely taste as good as after a long day at a conference, when the sun sets and temperatures are pleasantly warm. We hope to see as many of you as possible embarking for the journey towards Takamatsu. *O-machi shite orimasu*.

For further information, please see the conference homepage: https://apcg-japan2024.org/

Kagawa University, Saiwaicho Campus, Takamatsu

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR THE 2024 ASIA PACIFIC FEDERATION ON GIFTEDNESS AWARDS

The Executive Committee of the Asia Pacific Federation on Giftedness is excited to announce a call for nominations for the Asia Pacific Federation on Giftedness Awards to be conferred bi-annually from 2024.

The purpose of the awards is to promote high quality research, teaching, and related activities in gifted education in the Asia Pacific region.

The awards will be conferred in the following four categories:

- **Outstanding research (student category):** Outstanding research that has been published in any outlet (e.g., a thesis, peer-reviewed journal article, book chapter, book) by a student (i.e., bachelor, masters or doctoral student) who has undertaken studies at a tertiary institution in the Asia Pacific region.
- **Outstanding research (researcher/academic category):** Outstanding research that has been published in any outlet (e.g., peer-re viewed journal article, book chapter, book) by a researcher or academic based in the Asia Pacific region.
- **Outstanding gifted education program:** An outstanding gifted education program developed by anyone based in the Asia Pacific region.
- **Outstanding impact in gifted education:** Outstanding impact in the field of gifted education by anyone based in the Asia Pacific region.

The Asia Pacific Federation on Giftedness awards committee will confer the awards on the basis of the following criteria:

- Research awards: Relevance to gifted education, significance of findings, innovation of ideas and/or method, and quality of writing
- Gifted program awards: Innovation of program, accessibility of program, and outcomes of the program
- Impact awards: Significance of activity, outcomes of activity, and reach of activity.

The Awards Committee will also have the discretion to use any other criteria that they deem fit in their determination of award recipients.

Awards may be conferred to individuals or groups of individuals. Awardees may be conferred awards in more than one category in any one year.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR THE 2024 ASIA PACIFIC FEDERATION ON GIFTEDNESS AWARDS

Please forward all nominations (including self-nominations) for the awards by 1 June 2024 to the Secretary of the Asia Pacific Federation on Giftedness
(QUEK_Chwee_Geok@moe.gov.sg) with the following attachments:

- An electronic copy of the research publication (for research awards)
- A detailed description of the gifted education program (for gifted program awards)
- A detailed description of one's impact in gifted education (for impact awards)
- Evidence of the eligibility of the nominee for the award being nominated for (i.e., evidence that the nominee has studied in the Asia Pacific region or is based in the Asia Pacific region)
- Evidence that the nominee is a member (or has applied to be a member) of the Asia Pacific Federation on Giftedness on the date of nomination
- A nomination letter that outlines the award being nominated for, and the reasons for nomination (that should also address the criteria for the conferral of awards)
- Any other relevant documentary or other evidence that would aid the Awards Committee in their deliberations

Each award winner (i.e., individual or group) will receive US$200, and will be invited to present their work at the bi-annual conference of the Asia Pacific Federation on Giftedness.

NOMINATION FORM
2024 ASIA PACIFIC FEDERATION ON GIFTEDNESS AWARDS

NOMINATOR

Name: _____

Affiliate Organization: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

NOMINEE

Name: _____

Affiliate Organization: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

CATEGORY OF AWARD: _____

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REASON FOR NOMINATION

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The Executive Committee 2022-2024

The Asia-Pacific Federation on Giftedness (APFG)
affiliated with The World Council for Gifted and Talented Children

The APFG consists of a President, a Vice-President, a Secretary, a Treasurer, the immediate past President and 2 more Delegates. The following Executive Committee Members were elected by the delegates on July 8, 2022 for a two-year term from 2022 to 2024:

President Professor Ching-Chih Kuo
National Taiwan Normal University, Taiwan

Immediate Past President Dr. Usanee Anuruthwong
Association for Developing Human Potentials and Giftedness, Thailand

Vice-President Professor Mantak Yuen
The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong China

Secretary Dr. Quek Chwee Geok
Ministry of Education, Singapore

Treasurer Professor Kyungbin Park
Gachon University, South Korea

Executive Committee Member Professor Jae Yup Jared Jung
The University of New South Wales, Australia

Executive Committee Member Professor Manabu Sumida
Ehime University, Japan

APFG Delegates 2022 to 2024

Country/Region	Delegates
Australia	Jae Yup Jared Jung Victoria Poulos Rebecca Napier Amanda Harper
Canada	Andree Therrien
Hong Kong China	Mantak Yuen Ricci Fong Serene Chan Joe Tsui
India	Paromita Roy
Indonesia	Fitriania Lubis
Japan	Manabu Sumida Erkki T Lassila
South Korea	Kyungbin Park Ryu Jiyoung Jaeho Lee Kim, Jiseon
Singapore	Quek Chwee Geok Letchmi Ponnusamy
Taiwan	Ching Chich Kuo Hsiao-Ping Yu Tsai Ming-Fu Chien-Hong Yu
Thailand	Usanee Anuruthwong Apichart Pholprasert Arunee Viriyachitra Vararom Pachimsawat
Turkey	Ugur Sak Ibrahim Tasdemin Sule Gucyeter

The above delegates were approved on July 8, 2022 for a two-year term from 2022 to 2024.

Meetings and Conferences in Brief

18th Asia-Pacific Conference on Giftedness (APCG)

17-20 August 2024, Takamatsu, Japan
https://www.facebook.com/apcg2024

19th ECHA Conference

28-31 August, 2024,Thessaloniki, Greece
https://echa2024.gr/

26th WCGTC® World Conference

29 July – 2 August, 2025, Braga, Portugal
https://world-gifted.org/Conferences/wcgtc25/

Membership

If you are already a member we thank you for your support.
If your membership has expired (or is soon to expire) please remember to renew.
If you are not yet a member, we invite you to become part of APFG.
Membership is open to individuals who support the purpose of the APFG. An individual seeking membership will be accepted as a member upon submission of the required application and fees.

To apply for membership, please send the completed application form to **Dr. Quek Chwee Geok** (Quek_Chwee_Geok@moe.gov.sg), our secretary who will update memberships, and **Professor Kyungbin Park** (kbpark@gachon.ac.kr), our treasurer who will prepare the receipts to be issued when payment is made.

Kindly pay the membership fee at the APFG Conference. If you are unable to attend, you may ask a friend attending the conference to pay your membership fee on your behalf.

By joining or renewing your APFG membership, you will enjoy benefits such as:
- A biannual newsletter
- Opportunities to expand your expertise and broaden your horizons
- Preferential member rates for our biennial APFG conference, featuring keynote speeches, parallel presentations, and workshops
- A voice within the organization

We deeply appreciate your continued support and look forward to seeing you at the APFG conference.

Contacting APFG

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ASIA-PACIFIC FEDERATION ON GIFTEDNESS

APFG MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

First Name _____ Last Name/Surname _____
Preferred correspondence Address _____
City _____ Postal Code _____
State / Country / Region _____
Tel. (work) _____ Fax (work) _____
Email _____

Organization:

Organization _____

Position	Position			
		☐ Professor	☐ Assoc. Professor	☐ Assist. Professor
☐ Lecturer	☐ Lecturer	☐ Researcher	☐ Principal	☐ Teacher
☐ Administer	☐ Administer	☐ Coordinator	☐ Consultant	☐ Counselor
☐ Student	☐ Student	☐ Assistant	☐ Others: _____	

Membership: ☐ New ☐ Renewal

☐ 2 year- individual （USD 40.00） **2024–2026**
☐ 4 year- individual （USD 80.00） **2024–2028**

Signature of Applicant	Date

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Received by	Date Received	Fees Received	Official Receipt No.
		US$	