

Bolivia is improving educational techniques of teachers, as a part of the nationwide education reform, to transform the current style of class centered on teachers and rote learning into the one centered on children. To support this endeavor, Japan has carried out *Proyecto de Mejoramiento de la Calidad de la Enseñanza Escolar\** (PROMECA) through JICA since 2003. In this project, teachers are given guidance in educational techniques to learn teaching styles that enable the children to think for themselves while promoting effective communication in the classroom. Currently, a total of 8,500 teachers at 475 elementary schools in Bolivia are taking part in the project.



Mr. Hori observing a maths class (Source: Mr. Hori)

Mr. Yasuhiro Hori has been dispatched from the Kyoto City Board of Education to the project as a long-term expert. After working as an elementary school teacher, Mr. Hori undertook research into education at a graduate school as well as at Kyoto City Educational Research Institute. He was teaching educational theory at a university up until he was posted to Bolivia. He got involved with Bolivia when preparing for PROMECA in 2002. After working as a JICA short-term expert, he was assigned to this project as a long-term expert in August 2005.

As an educational expert, Mr. Hori began training teachers inside and outside schools. He now cooperates on developing training materials and educational guidance plans. At the start of his assignment, Mr. Hori felt rather lost at how the Bolivian education situation differed from Japan. However, after a while, a turning point came that made him feel more confident about the education reform in Bolivia. It was when he happened to give guidance to a certain teacher during the training provided in the Cochabamba Prefecture in central Bolivia.

Mr. Vicente works as an elementary school teacher in the Cochabamba Prefecture, and was rather too confident of his own teaching technique. However, while preparing for a Spanish class open to the public, as part of PROMECA, he received much criticism from other participants about the teaching plan he drafted. Mr. Hori encouraged Mr. Vicente to keep trying, saying "When you're drafting the plan, why don't you try to think about the way children would act?"

On the day of the open class, large numbers of observers came from the municipal and department boards of education. Although Mr. Vicente was nervous, the children responded proactively as set out in the guidance plan, which enabled him to incorporate into the lesson. When the class was over, the children and observers broke into applause, and one of the children said, "We want to have lessons like this all the time." Overcome by this comment, Mr. Vicente said, "Mr. Hori, I've never been so excited about teaching. I'm so glad that I had the chance to do this lesson."

That moment truly convinced Mr. Hori that the project had not been wrong and that Bolivian education was really going to change. Since then, Mr. Vicente worked hard to improve his teaching. Moreover, the following year, with his colleagues' recommendations, he was assigned to a research director at the school. He also took part in a training in Japan, recommended by the department board of education. He now continues to strive for the best in his teaching every day.

Mr. Hori says, "Bolivian teachers are working really hard to improve their teaching. By sharing appropriate teaching methods with them, we can improve the quality of education and can bring out potentials of the children, who will carry on Bolivia's



Mr. Hori taking part in school research (Source: Mr. Hori)



future." Mr. Hori looks forward to such a future while continuing traveling around to one school after another all over Bolivia.

\* Project for the Quality Improvement of Primary School Education in the Republic of Bolivia