

Nar. : narration

Com. : commentator

Announcer : Today's issue is in Takatsuki City. Takatsuki City has for years, invited people to assist in English education from its sister city in Australia. However, it suddenly suspended the program. And, this is not all. These people have established very good relations with children. But, Takatsuki City banned them from attending Graduation Ceremonies for their students. What happened?

Nar : In an apartment in Takatsuki City. They came from one small city, Toowoomba, in Australia, 7,000 km far away from Japan.

Tim : This is how I have been learning Japanese verbs.

Nar : From 20 years ago, Takatsuki City has invited the "International Exchange Staff" and Assistant English Teachers to help with English Education in the elementary schools of Takatsuki. Tim came to Japan last year and has taught English in elementary schools five days a week.

Tim : These are from my kids. I was so moved and felt happy. I could feel that I could help the students English study.

Q : What do you feel about AETs?

Grade 3 children : Gentle. Gentle and good at English.

Q : What are you doing in the lesson?

Grade 3 children : Names of animals, games and so on.

Grade 6 children : Our teacher goes to 3 schools but remembers the names and faces of all the students.

Nar : They have a good reputation among children and parents. There were 8 AETs for the 2014 academic year. However....

Tim : Tonight, I will fly back to Australia.

Nar : Tim hoped to renew his contract to work next year but Takatsuki City decided to suspend the sister city program and not re-employ the AETs. It started because of accommodation issues...

In the agreement between Toowoomba and Takatsuki, it was stated that AETs should live in the apartments Takatsuki City designated. These are photos of the apartments Tim and other AETs lived before. Leaks, peeling wallpaper. The door could not be closed because it did not fit the frame.

The monthly rent was 60,000 yen a month. Because these apartments were 30 or 40 years old, they say that the apartments were filled with problems.

Tim : This is a video I took before moving out. You can see the ventilating fans move without electricity supply, but by wind. This happened many times. The wind came into the room and it was so cold.

Nar : AETs including Tim repeatedly requested many Takatsuki City to improve the problems. There were also many problems such as security, sanitation and earthquake safety. However, nothing was fixed, they claim.

Tim: I wasn't expecting a special apartment. Just an ordinary Japanese one. I was really surprised when I saw the apartment for the first time. Because I had been told that significant repairs would be done.

Nar : Because the rent was paid by the ALTs themselves, they dared to move to other apartments. Then, about half a year later, the email came to them suddenly telling them about the suspension of the program.

Tim : So, they broke the contract. It was so upsetting.

Nar : The labor union they belong has now filed a case at the Osaka Prefectural Labor Relations Commission asking for the continuation of AET program.

Mr David, who has supervised AETs for 11 years until now, cannot help being surprised at this sudden suspension.

David : "What is the meaning of our work until now?" I am really surprised. People coming from Toowoomba every year are really good people. They come here not for money. They really understand the sister city relationship and come to Japan. They really love children. The sister city program is a very good idea. It should be continued.

Nar : We, MBS, requested Takatsuki City to talk with us but they refused to answer in front of the camera. They said that it is because the case at the Labor Relations Commission. Then, they told us that the AETs leaving the apartments is not a direct reason for the suspension of the program. It is because the City is going to allocate native speakers with enough ability as the preparation for the time when English becomes a formal subject in the elementary school.

In such a situation, AETs received more disappointing news by email last month.

It said that they were banned from attending the graduation ceremony for students they had taught and had looked forward to attending.

David : Some people are saying that it is dangerous to allow AETs to attend the graduation ceremony. I get really angry about that.

Marianne : I really looked forward to attending it. I received many mails from children but I cannot reply. The graduation ceremony is a very good opportunity to give my thanks to the children.

Nar : Finally, only one school allowed an AET to attend. Ms Monique, who led the program of the school, attended the graduation ceremony.

Monique : I am so excited because I can attend the graduation ceremony for the children I have taught for one year.

Nar : About 2 hours later, Ms Monique alone came out. She told us that she was asked by the principal to leave the school immediately after the ceremony.

Monique : I wanted to talk with children but was told by the principal, "OK. Finished" I had not imagined this would happen.

Nar : AETs including Monique and Tim flew back to Australia this month.

A lawyer, an expert on labor issues, says,

(Lawyer Kouji Murata)

Lawyer : When refusing the renewal of the contract, the main issue would be the expectant right of renewal. If the case is brought to court, the problem is whether the expectation of the continuation of renewal existed or not. In this case, it is highly probable that the violation of the expectant right by no pre-notice is recognized. The problem is that there has been no system for a smooth discussion when a claim such as one from cultural difference or various complaints is raised.

Nar: 21 years of the history of the AET program have ended. The Osaka Prefectural Labor Relations Commission starts the formal process on the 27th of this month.

Announcer : I cannot understand.....

Com. : I'm filled with questions. I can understand that Takatsuki City wants to prepare the system for the time when English becomes the formal subject in the elementary school. However, why is the Board of Education so secretive? No need to be so. Why?

Announcer : I also don't know why. At first, Takatsuki City answered our questions, but then they later refused to even confirm facts. There might be some reason why they became so secretive...

Com. : It might not only be the labor issue. There might be various things they cannot speak about such as the budget or the system. There might be various things they have dealt with in an irresponsible manner.

Announcer : At first, Takatsuki City answered our questions. They said that;

The moving of AETs was not a direct reason for the suspension of the program,

The repairs were done as requested by AETs,

The purpose of the suspension is to review the program and

They will ask a private company to dispatch 23 native speakers.

This was decided in July last year.

It is true that the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology has a plan to make English a formal subject in higher grades in the elementary school and to allocate AETs in all public elementary schools towards the Tokyo Olympic Games in 2020.

But why?

Com. : Takatsuki City says that they will ask a private company to dispatch native speakers but no one can guarantee the level or quality of these people. If they seriously want to implement the plan, they have to fully promise about the quality. Currently, everything seems to be unsatisfactory.

Announcer : At present, there is no native teacher in any elementary school in Takatsuki.

Announcer 2 : It is sad that the program was cancelled hurting people coming from a foreign country.

Announcer : Why did they refuse to allow the AETs to attend graduation ceremonies?

Com. : It's too much

Announcer : What do you feel?