

Social Sciences and Humanities : Education and Social Environment Studies for Sustainability

Yumiko Takagi

Faculty of Education, Kagawa University

ytakagi@ed.kagawa-u.ac.jp

Wichian Sunitham

Faculty of Humanities, Chiang Mai University

wichian.sunitham@gmail.com

The importance of mutual understanding in culture between Thailand and Japan has improved greatly recently. In Thailand, there are a large number of Japanese companies and a great number of products are produced by Japanese companies in Thailand and exported all around the world. It is still fresh in our recollections that many factories of Japanese companies suffered from flooding and suffered serious damage last year; this also caused significant damage to the Japanese economy. Thailand now obviously ranks as one of the most important partners for Japan among Asian countries. Despite this, many of our students lack understanding of the culture and current situation in Thailand. We recognize that Japanese students have very poor knowledge of Thailand.

A better understanding of different countries' cultures is the key to maintaining good partnerships internationally. A number of Japanese companies have a large number of factories in or near Chiang Mai and many local people are working there. This is the reason why we choose Chiang Mai University as a partner for the exchange program. It is well recognized that the culture of our society is strongly influenced by the change of life style. The life styles of Thai people are also now changing due to rapid industrialization and globalization. This seems to influence even the culture of Thailand. This time, we choose "Social Environment Studies for Sustainability" as the main topic for our program and decided to investigate how industrial development causes changes in natural environment of Thailand and influence the culture of a local community from many viewpoints. In the symposium, we focused on this topic and discussed how to improve mutual cultural understanding between Thailand and Japan from various viewpoints. We believe that all participants will have obtained important hints to help them produce a future life more harmonized with nature and also how to improve mutual understanding between Thailand and Japan through the discussion.

Such discussions require a multifaceted approach. Sustainable communities offer healthy communities and help preserve natural and historic resources, jobs are created, urban sprawl is contained, neighbourhoods are secure, education is lifelong, transportation and health care are accessible, and all citizens have opportunities to improve the quality of their lives. The research on sustainable communities suggests that diligent planning is needed to create an environment that is conducive to the mental and physical well-being of people as well as the natural environment. These studies contend that health benefits exist when people come into contact with the natural environment. Our discussions also focused on aging as a local movement in a changing community, modern roads and development, and as citizenship as subject formation of highland ethnic minorities in northern Thailand. We also provided an agenda for Global and Regional Historical studies and Climate Variability. In order to meet the needs of our local societies, the aim is to create an environment with a focus on sustaining improvement through continuing education and research. We have to develop professional knowledge about various related and important disciplines. Based on such research results we must continue to train personnel capable of carrying out research into their areas of interest and also to have them contribute something back to the local community.

We hope that our students will have gained a wide range of interesting insights from the project and that they will have the ability to become key persons connecting Thailand and Japan even more successfully in the future.