

## Development of CMU-KU Intercultural program

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### Abstract

The student exchange program between Chiang Mai University and Kagawa University has been carried out successfully. All students participating succeeded in obtaining important cross-cultural understanding from the program.

Keywords : intercultural program, students, mutual relationship

Kagawa University has been making all possible efforts to expand academic exchange programs with overseas institutions recently. The intercultural exchange program between Chiang Mai University (CMU) and the Faculty of Education at Kagawa University (KU) has proved to be one successful example of such exchanges since its launch three years ago. As many students from the Faculty of Education aim at becoming teachers in the future, it is our wish that such teachers will play a key role in promoting further mutual understanding between Thailand and Japan. This was the impetus behind our decision to start the present project. CMU is now one of the most important partners for student and staff exchange for KU.

The most important feature of this programme is that all Japanese students taking part in it will experience of homestays and visit primary schools in different places in Thailand : students stay in both downtown Chiang Mai and also a small village located in a rural area outside of Chiang Mai. They also must teach a class to students at primary schools using a team-teaching style. Although it is easy for Japanese to visit tourist attractions for sightseeing in Thailand, getting experiences of Thai people's real lifestyle and visiting schools in the countryside is generally difficult. In particular, people living outside the tourist's usual haunts live following their traditional lifestyle. Such was

the case in the village we stayed in during this program. For most Japanese students, this will be the first time that they will have experienced such a lifestyle which is not to be found in modern Japan these days. Although it is often not a convenient stay in the modern sense, we believe that these experiences will have a lasting impression on all students and they might obtain a lot of important things for their futures through this homestay program in the Thai countryside.

In fact, all students who participated in the program have expressed a high degree of satisfaction with it and there is no doubt it stimulated interest in and knowledge of the cultures of Thailand and Japan. Furthermore, the program was also very useful to introduce some knowledge of, and interest in, the native languages of the students from both countries. This might prove an important step to improve mutual relationships between different nations. All students quickly learned some aspects of basic Thai language as Thai students also did for Japanese. When our students arrived in Thailand, they used either Japanese or English during discussions with Thai students and never tried to speak Thai. To our delight, after the program, all of them spoke a mixture of languages, Japanese, Thai, and English during their discussions, which shows some growth in second language interest and use.

Finally, we would like to express our sincere appreciation to all CMU staff, especially Professor Wichian Sunitham, for their warm hospitality during our stay in Thailand and for all the staff involved for their generous efforts that made it possible to complete the program successfully. In the future, we consider that a consortium style program might be applicable to our next programs.