

Development of a KU-Model for Pre-service Professional Experience in Agricultural and Environmental Education

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ABSTRACT

“Agricultural and Environmental Education” is a pre-service teacher education program offered by Kasetsart University at Kamphaeng Saen Campus. Three research projects were conducted consecutively during the years 2007-2009 with an aim to develop a model for pre-service professional experience in agricultural and environmental education. The three projects were: *Development of “University-School Collaborative Network in Agricultural and Environmental Education* (2007), *Model Development for Research-based Professional Internship for Five-Year Program in Agricultural and Environmental Education* (2008), and *Model Development of Home-to-School Learning Management* (2009). All projects were action research in collaboration with local schools and community.

The “KU model” was developed under the notion of experiential learning. Three major stages of professional development characterize the model. In the first stage (1st-3rd years), students are exposed to **exploratory professional experience** in learning management at KU demonstration school. Also a core component in this exploratory stage is the *supervised integrated farming experience* to be acquired from the university farm. Next, the 4th year students are guided through **intensive professional experience** under the contexts of university-based as well as school-based learning environment. After that, the 5th year students will then be ready for the final stage of professional development, the **professional internship**, requiring a whole year of actual practice in local school. During the internship, practices on teaching and research are intertwined under the *Supervision by mentoring* system, consisting of on-site supervisions, monthly conferences, research workshops, and classroom research conference. For *teaching practicum*, the student teachers engage in three dimensions of agriculture teacher’s role: learning design and management, school gardening management, and community outreach. For *research practicum*, the student teachers are guided on classroom and community context analysis, action research planning and implementation, data collection and analysis, reflections on practices, and report preparation and presentation. The internship was concluded with the learning-sharing of classroom research in the annual on-campus research conference whereby student teachers, cooperative teachers and university supervisors participating.

The model exemplifies a three-pillar collaboration of *university*, *local school*, and *local community* in providing meaningful experiences for pre-service teachers in the specialized area of agriculture and environment.