Prospects and Problems of Training of Massage in Asia

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International Symposium 2006 constitutes the series of symposiums organized by Tsukuba University of Technology. In which panelists have been invited from institutions affiliated with the Tsukuba University of Technology. The emphasis of the international exchange shifted to Asia from last year, and the International Symposium 2006 focused on visual impairment and organized as part of the WBU-AP seminar on massage, under the title: “Prospects and Problems of Training of Massage in Asia”.

The International Symposium 2006 had 4 panelists, i.e., Mr. Li Zhi Jun, Chairman of China Blind Massage Society, under the title "Strengthening the Education & Promoting the Career of Massage by Blind Persons"; Ms. Norimah Haji Ahmad from Malaysia, “Massage Education Development for Visually Impaired People in Asia Pacific Region”; Mr. Boun Mao from Cambodia, “Objective and Perspective of Massage Education and Training in the Asia Pacific Region”; and Mr. Ryosuke Fujii from Japan, “Issues and Prospects for Massage Education for the Visually Impaired in Asia”.

The situation of massage practiced by the blind and visually impaired in Asia may more clearly be grasped through the classification of countries into 3 groups; 1) countries like China, Korea and Japan where systems for massage practices, education and training are well established, with certain demands from communities, as a promising option for occupational independence of the blind and visually impaired; 2) countries like Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam where the system as a whole is yet to be established but massage is making steady progress as a key occupation; and 3) countries like Cambodia, Laos, Bangladesh and Mongolia where demands from communities or society at large, cultural background for blind massage practices and other basic elements are not yet well established and the foundation for basic massage culture needs to be built. The second group will need to set up their own system of education and training, design curricula and move forward to the full establishment of the system, whereas the third group needs to work on the relevant organizations and basic systems with reference made to examples of more developed countries. Support and assistance by the well established group will be important and beneficial for the occupational independence of the blind and visually impaired in the entire region.

After pointing out these issues, the panelists reiterated the need for the development of system for education and training, pursue full establishment of the system of massage practices, and promote cultural innovations to attain occupational independence of the blind and visually impaired in the Asia Region, while at the same time taking into account the social and cultural diversities and characteristics of the countries classified into the three groups. They also stressed the need for improvement and upgrading of skills, techniques and knowledge of those practicing massage. They further agreed that in order to attain these goals, the blind and visually impaired in the Region join together in promoting exchange of skills and knowledge, toward the full establishment of the entire system.

The Symposium outlined high expectations extended to the roles of Japan, especially to the initiative and leadership to be performed by the Tsukuba University of Technology, the institution of higher education for the visually impaired.