Responding to Change in a Changing World;  
The Role of Universities in Thailand

Philip H Nicholls, LLB, MEtvS, PhD (Adelaide)  
Senior Lecturer Graduate School of Business,  
Assumption University, Bangkok, Thailand.

Abstract- The focus of this paper is the role of universities in promoting effective environmental education, as holistic education in the 21st century, by emphasizing its inherently transdisciplinary nature. It is suggested that there is a need for universities in Thailand, as elsewhere, to educate for sustainable development and this may be best achieved by removing those barriers inherent to traditional education systems which tend to compartmentalize disciplines. This call is made at a time when Thailand is facing not only the issues of climate change but also those challenges posed by years of environmental neglect by industry. Environmental issues simultaneously encompass the multiple disciplines of science, engineering, health, urban planning, engineering, IT, medical science and economics. Yet in practice the funding and regulation of universities may reinforce traditional rigid departmental bounds and thus impede holistic education in pedagogical terms. One practical and achievable strategy is for universities to introduce incremental change rather than radical change to curricula and to recognize that in a changing world educational practices also have to change. Corporate social responsibility, engaging with the community, and the emerging concept of University Social Responsibility could also be called in aid.

The importance of a broad based interdisciplinary approach to researching and teaching environmentalism in Thailand, co-related to multiple academic disciplines, opens a range of feasible responses to the issues faced in the region. This paper proposes that environmentalism, as an aspect of corporate social responsibility, could, and I suggest, should be, a core subject that can be seamlessly interposed into undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

Keywords- community, Corporate Social Responsibility, curricula, environmentalism, teaching, Thailand, university, University Social Responsibility.

Remark: The full paper may be found in www.inrit2011.com or www.ijcim.th.org.