

Report for ASEA-Uninet on my guest lectureship at Srinakharinwirot University/International College for Sustainability Studies in June/July 2011

Introduction

From 26 June to 31 July 2011, I worked as guest lecturer in Bangkok at the International College for Sustainability Studies of Srinakharinwirot University. In these five weeks I taught 120 second year students of the B.A. programme "Sustainable Tourism" with a workload of 12 hours per week. My course was on "Introduction to Sustainability" and I was requested to do a mid-term and a final examination. My stay was supported by ASEA-Uninet and Srinakharinwirot University.

General impressions

As it was my first teaching experience in South-East Asia, I faced several differences between the Thai and the Austrian higher education system. During their primary and high school time, Thai students are educated in a way that they are used to ex-cathedra teaching and to deeply respect their teachers. On the other hand, they are hardly encouraged to ask questions or comment on or even criticize the input offered by their teachers. Thus, it was not easy to get feedback from my students or to make them starting a discussion. However, through group work, IT-based calculations of the students' ecological footprints, a field trip to UNESCO Bangkok and other teaching formats, I could overcome the students' aloofness to a certain degree.

I felt that the hierarchy at Srinakharinwirot University was stronger than in a European context. Indicators for this are the mandatory wearing of students' uniforms, the Thai greeting system (which is very complicated and sophisticated) or the ceremony "Students pay respect to their teachers", which all freshman students have to join during their first semester.

The knowledge of English language varied to a remarkable extent, the ability to speak and write in English of the majority of my students should be improved.

I had a very good relationship to my colleagues, felt myself really integrated into the institute and was invited by the Dean and some colleagues for some lunches and dinners. I was provided with an own small office, equipped with PC, internet connection and printer.

Concluding remarks

As I got a positive feedback from my students and my colleagues, the Dean invited me to come back to Srinakharinwirot University in summer 2012. Meanwhile, we agreed on end of August/September 2012 for my second guest lectureship. Again I was asked to do the course "Introduction to Sustainability" within the B.A. programme "Sustainable Tourism". Taking into account my experiences gathered this year, I am in a good position to adapt and optimize my teaching next year. Another result of my lectureship is the intention to sign a Memorandum of Understanding between Srinakharinwirot University's International College for Sustainability Studies and the Institute for Systems Science, Innovation and Sustainability Research of my university (University of Graz).

To illustrate this report, a few photographs are included and can be found on the next page.

Graz, 31 August 2011, Dr. Ralf Aschemann



Students during their mid-term examination



Some of my students



With faculty



Ceremony "Students pay respect to their teachers"



Campus buildings



Department's entrance

