

Reflecting upon my tenure in the College of Community and Human Services

Zane Ritchie

(Department of Community Development)

I began teaching in the College of Community and Human Services in April, 2012. There, I taught elective courses in community development and welfare, academic English and career English. I also acted as a supervisor for fourth-year students who chose to write their graduation thesiss in English. My intention was to improve students' communicative competence related to their majors of study, prepare them for life upon graduation, and hopefully broaden their horizons regarding the importance of English in both future academic situations and in the workplace.

I designed the welfare-based courses to complement students' majors in Japanese. In small classes, I employed a content-based instruction approach, whereby the focus was on the content of the course, rather than explicit language study itself. Through this, students were encouraged to learn, discuss and debate a wide range of topics including the ageing population problem, the state of healthcare and the issue of self-sustainability in food production in Japan, for example. They were also required to develop their own practical solutions to these problems, and where possible, fieldwork was also carried out to give them the chance to gather and analyze data to complement in class study. The students were the center of learning and were responsible for organizing their own learning outcomes, to question me as a facilitator, and to develop their own conclusions regarding the material presented in the classroom.

During my tenure, I had the opportunity to carry out research and projects in a number of areas, such as the state of foreign communities post-311 and post-earthquake reconstruction and development of the city of Christchurch in New

Zealand, my home country, which experienced its own disasters due to the devastating twin quakes of 2010 and 2011. I also carried out research in Kenya on slum education, developed a computer lab for a slum school, and gave presentations in Africa and Dubai on numerous topics. Thanks to the flexible work environment in the College of Community and Human Services, I have been able to incorporate much of my research into my own teaching, which I consider enthused and motivated my students over the five years of my tenure.

It is my sincere hope that I have encouraged students to challenge themselves and try accomplish their goals using some of the English skills they have gained from my classes. This is especially pertinent as Japan aims to become more internationalized, and the demand for competent English speakers who are able to express themselves in a professional manner both in the academic arena and in the workplace will only continue to increase.

Finally, to all the staff and faculty of the College of Community and Human Services, I have been deeply humbled by your kindness, support and hospitality over my 5-year tenure, and I am grateful to you all for having provided me with numerous opportunities to better myself as a teacher, a researcher and a human being. I wish my predecessor every success in furthering the internationalization initiatives of College, the wheels for which have been put into motion.