Science communication: An example of Japanese university education concerning interdisciplinary social problems of science and technology

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Science and technology have been developing rapidly in Asia, and accordingly, university-level education in these domains has also been growing. But while an education that fuels the development of science and technology is doubtless very important, so too is an education oriented toward better understanding and communicating science and technology's influence upon society.

An education that aims toward a better relationship between science, technology and society is often referred to as "science communication education." An example of the need for better science communication in society might be the requirement that a responsible scientist impart upon or educate citizens with technical knowledge as intelligibly and correctly as possible. A scientist needs to relay not only what is interesting or attractive about some element of science, but also convey how it might influence or even transform society. Another example might be a national civil servant in science and technology who would be able to design policies in ways reflective of and responsive to citizens' preferences.

Since 2005, the University of Tokyo of Japan has been offering a graduate-level science communication education program. Each student in the program has a specialty (science, engineering, medicine, pharmacy, agriculture, jurisprudence, public policy study, architecture, human sciences, etc.), with the science communication education program positioned as a supporting sub-specialty. The curriculum consists of three types of lessons which emphasize the following: (1) literacy to master knowledge and theory; (2) expressive ability, in the form of written material and presentations; and (3) research to be completed on a topic chosen by each student.

The science communication education program lasts approximately one-and-a-half years, and students who complete the program receive a certificate with the university's official recognition. Graduates of the program have gone on to playing an active part in various occupations, becoming scientists, journalists, and national civil servants.

In this study, I would like to introduce the above educational program, which I think would contribute to the theme of the Science Council of Asia.

References

1. *Encyclopedia of Science and Technology Communication*, 2010, Vol. 1-2 (ed. S. H. Priest), SAGE Publications Thousand Oaks, CA:.