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“Social engagement through a trans-disciplinary cooperation/approach”

(Sub-theme: “Social and Political Perspectives” – 25 May 2017)

Abstract

In this paper, I will present the ways in which my institute, the Luminary Research Institute, has utilized a transdisciplinary approach to transform a poor community and school in Taiwan. The methods used are mindful education, public art, and cultural innovation. The school is named Meihua Elementary School and is located in a poor community in northern Taiwan. The school was nearly abandoned by the government, because the number of students was less than 60 and each year the numbers were dropping. The administrators and teachers were conscious of this situation, but could not do anything to improve it. Moreover, the local economy and working opportunities in the community are not good. Consequently, many of the youths move out of the area. Only those who are too poor to move, stay.

Since August 2014, the Luminary Research Institute has cooperated with Barefoot Artist Lily Yeh, and Dr. Raymond Yeh from ATLAS, to initiate a project called Empower the Dreams of Remote Areas to teach an art class at Meihua Elementary School. We use the arts as a teaching device to build students' confidence, develop their potentials, and nurture their community identity. Also, we teach the students mindful meditation to help them concentrate their minds and improve their studies. Furthermore, we invite scholars and artists to teach people in the community to innovate products that can generate income to improve their lives financially.

About the speaker

Ven. Zizhuo Shi graduated from the Department of Education Policy, Organization and Leadership at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in May 2012. She has been trained in three different departments which are across three disciplines: East Asian Language and Cultures (humanities), Education Policy, Organization and Leadership (social sciences) and Community Informatics Program (related to computer science). She is the director of Luminary Research Institute, and is in charge of the project of using arts to develop students' potentials of Meihua Elementary School, as well as to transform a poor community into a place for education of arts,

natural environment and Taiwanese Early history. Also, she teaches Zen Buddhism and mindfulness education in Taiwan.

Ven. Zizhuo has published *A study on the Anthology Za Ahan Jing (T101): Centered on its Linguistic Features, translation Style, Authorship and School Affiliation* and co-translated several books including a series of books written by Ven. Buddhadasa, such as: *A Shortcut Through Vipassana Meditation*, *The Buddha's Doctrine of Anatta*, *Dhammic Socialism*, *Food for Thought : Some Teachings of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu*, *The Prison of Life* , *The Danger of "I,"* and *The First Ten Years of Suan Mokkh*.