

Graduate School Education in the San'in Kaigan Global Geopark: Current Status and Issues

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The Graduate School of Regional Resources Management, the University of Hyogo at Toyooka city, Hyogo prefecture, Japan is located in the San'in Kaigan Global Geopark area and was established in 2014. The aim of the school is to study the geological, ecological, and/or social/cultural notable resources that characterize the region. Wise use of these resources will lead to better management of the region. The aim of the school is similar to the philosophy of the geopark.

The graduate school comprises geo, eco, and socio groups. The main field of the geo-group is earth science such as geophysics, petrology, sedimentology, and geologic education. Six graduate students have been performing research in various fields of earth science, for example, a geologic survey has been undertaken to obtain a more precise scientific description of the geopark area. The results will improve geological explanation for residents and visitors in the form of information boards and guides at geosites. The research theme of another student is both geology and related matters, e.g., the study of the relationship between topographic features, including their geology, and agricultural products will lead to branding of local agricultural products. Furthermore, some of the scientific research by students of the graduate school will be contributed to regional development by improving teaching materials for school education, disaster prevention using geological consideration, and web analysis of the trends in and needs of visitors to the geopark. Each work is being conducted in association with local residents, geopark guides, and geopark institutions. From positive interactions, local residents, students, and staff of the graduate school can improve their ability to perform activities in the geopark. Graduate school staff have held public lectures on the geology of the region, made guide maps including geological explanation with local residents, and supported the San'in Kaigan Geopark Promotion Council academically. The educational effect of the graduate school is considered to be high, because the graduate school is located in the geopark. Some issues, however, certainly exist, and one of them is knowledge of geology. Some students had not been educated in earth science as undergraduates and, in some cases, not at even high school. Students must first understand geology and then learn about the value of georesources for regional management. Guides and residents involved with the geopark must know about geology; otherwise, they cannot explain the exact value of the regional resources to visitors. One solution to this issue is setting up educational programs and successive improvement with inspection of the programs. In this way, both the graduate school and the San'in Kaigan Geopark will improve.