

HSC017-P04

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## Use of Rural Space in the Educational Activities and Revitalization of Rural Community

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Saga University has launched the "Saga University Regional Construction Student-participation Program" with students from the university's Faculty of Agriculture conducting activities to preserve the terraced rice paddies in the Warabino district in the town formerly known as ?chi-cho (now Karatsu-shi). In addition to tilling the paddies, planting rice, removing weeds and harvesting, the students also work with the locals to participate in practical learning such as the processing and cooking of the crop, and repairing the stone walls and water channels in the terraced rice paddies.

This was brought about in 2003 when the Saga University Faculty of Agriculture concluded a "Regional Collaboration and Exchange Agreement" with the former town of ?chi-cho to assist in regional rejuvenation, and established an educational program centered on the restoration and preservation of terraced rice paddies. This program is aimed at revitalizing the Warabino district by providing a variety of field education as mentioned above and using the agricultural village as a place for learning. To date, a certain degree of results have already been produced, including the sale of value-added "terrace paddy rice", the cultivation of landscape crops such as flowers, the provision of a learning environment for elementary school students, and the implementation of a variety of projects related to urban-rural interchange through cooperation with NPOs. In 2008, the area was chosen as an "Important Cultural Landscape" by the national government. The key to the success in the Warabino district has not only been the university approaching the rural community, but also the rural community itself having a strong desire to maintain and actively taking action based on this. The Warabino district had originally received assistance from the Saga prefectural government to form an organization aimed at promoting the region, and having this regional infrastructure serve as a receptacle created an opportunity for participation by the university in its search for a place for practical learning, which has led to the current revitalization of the rural community. In this report, we review and examine the process and social background of how the regional resource of terraced rice paddies became linked to university field education, how this is related to rural residents, and how it has been used to revitalize the rural community.

**Keywords:** rural space, educational activities, revitalization of rural community, regional resource, Warabino district