

“The Wang Klaikangwon School, Hua Hin Model: Moving Ahead Together through Distance Education: The Way Forward”

Khwankeo Vajarodaya

Chairman

The Distance Learning Foundation
Wang Klaikangwon, Thailand

Knowledge, if properly transferred, if made available to all, gives the greatest opportunity for people to advance themselves and to progress in the fight against poverty. Knowledge has become the key to development in the emerging knowledge-based society. The information and communication technology has become the important interface to transfer knowledge, technical expertise, living skills as well as ethical and spiritual orientation.

The Distance Learning Foundation seeks to translate the enormous challenge of information technology into greater, accessible and more equitable lifelong learning opportunity, relevant to society and individual needs, reaching out to rural children and communities and disadvantaged groups, while minimizing operational cost.

The 24 hour satellite remote education broadcast on the 14 channels and the e learning services offered by the Distance Learning Foundation is fundamentally user - oriented and not technology – oriented. The “Full Cycle” distance education broadcast from Wang Klaikangwon School (His Majesty the King’s private school in Hua Hin District, Prachuab Kirikhan province, 200 kilometers south of Bangkok), Wang Klaikangwon Industrial and Community Education College, Wang Klaikangwon Rajamangala Institute of Technology including Sukhothai Thammathirat Open

University, is designed to address the specific educational needs of the children, people and society.

In Thailand, the shortage of teachers in the far remote area in terms of numbers and specialization especially science, mathematics and foreign languages remain a critical problem. To address the problem of teacher shortage, the Distance Learning Foundation is committed to integrate His Majesty the King’s advocacy of Lifelong Learning via Technology, Sufficiency Economy and moral teaching and training with the ICT technology in a humanized distance education module.

Within the span of 9 years since the first on air broadcast in 1995 and the subsequent formal establishment of the Foundation to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of His Majesty the King’s Accession to the throne in 1996, the live satellite transmission via Ku band and DTH system combines live primary and secondary curriculum broadcast from grade 1 to grade 12 in its entirety on 12 channels. The 13th channel focuses on vocational training, community education and university education. The international programmes supported by specialized agencies of the United Nations, foreign embassies and Thai embassies abroad and various academic institutions broadcast in 6 languages: English, French, Chinese,

German, Japanese and Thai can be viewed on the fourteenth channel. The Royal granting of home delivery education from Wang Klaikangwon School reaches neighbouring countries as far as Cambodia, China (Yunnan), Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam.

A number of schools and universities in these countries also receive the Royal granting of the distance education devices.

In 2004, the full cycle distance education is broadcast to all 3,140 secondary schools within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and 5,000 primary schools of the total number of 30,000.

Following His Majesty the King's advice, the Foundation sends the Teacher Manual to all remote schools one month ahead of every semester. In this way, teachers and students at the remote schools "learn by doing" not by watching TV. From 2003, another 100 Moslem schools in the 4 Southern provinces of Pattani, Yala, Satoon and Narathiwat, including Songkla and Nakhon Si Thammarat join the Wang Klaikangwon Distance Learning Scheme.

The unique feature of the "Wang Klaikangwon School, Hua Hin Model: Distance Education via Satellite Broadcast and Flexible Learning" is characterized by the technology convergence of Ku band satellite broadcast and Internet. The Telecommunications Association of Thailand and its members: TOT Corporation or former Telephone Organization of Thailand, CAT Telecom Public Company Limited or former Communications Authority of Thailand, together with the Institute of the Promotion of Teaching of Science and Technology, Ministry of Education, and NECTEC unanimously agreed on the Distance Learning Foundation's competence in offering eLearning services. The eLearning network can be readily expanded from the Wang klaikangwon School's database in the server.

All join hands to launch the DLF eLearning on 2 May 2002, to further honour His Majesty the King's Sixth Cycle Birthday Anniversary by offering free-of-charge content-based distance education via internet from the Distance Learning Television Station, Hua Hin District. The internet users anywhere can access the Distance Learning Foundation's www.dlf.ac.th to view live broadcast of the 14 channels and the 7,000 on demand contents including His Majesty the King's teaching in His programme "Suksathat" or "Quest for Knowledge" Vice versa, the internet signal can be uplinked to the satellite transmission as in the case of a series of videoconference conducted with Swedish Agency for Flexible Learning and with the University of Oregon.

The series of videoconference conducted nationally and internationally for teachers and students by working in partnership with institutes and individuals at national, regional and international level have extended the "reach out" of average community and provide instant access to unlimited supply of information and resources. It also opens up an innovative learning environment where teachers and students in distance locations are engaged in "learning from each other" in a one much bigger classroom community locally or in a global classroom at the international level, as in the case of the eTeacher Training with Swedish Agency for Flexible Learning or with the University of Oregon, which were conducted by means of videoconference via ISDN and connected to various local schools by means of IP Star.

For the Thais living overseas, the DLF eSchool Project provides both the mental and technical connectivity to the mother land. With support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the pilot projects are implemented at the Thai Temple in Los Angeles and the Royal Thai Consulate in Chicago, to be followed by France and Switzerland.

For regional human development, the Distance Learning Foundation has been requested by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation of Japan, JICA or Japan International Cooperation Agency, and the Papua New Guinea Ministry of Education to organize a numbers of research visits, study tours and actual hand on trainings for Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam and Papua New Guinea at the parent school and remote schools.

Appropriate technology, if sensibly used, for the advancement of lifelong learning for all, can build bridges of friendship, life skill cooperation, intercultural appreciation and global consciousness. The humanized and balanced globalization process with the help of the technology advancement would lead to a better livelihood, material and spiritual richness, which is key to people's security, peace and harmony that is truly sustainable.
