



Equitable Education: All for Education

A Lecture by
Her Royal Highness Princess
Maha Chakri Sirindhorn



Equitable
Education
Conference 2020



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Equitable Education: All for Education
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Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, Her Royal Highness Princess

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Foreword



Millions of hearts are captivated by the picture of Her Royal Highness Princess Maka Chakri Sirindhorn, with all Her natural demeanor, sheltering a young school girl from the rain under Her umbrella. Her Royal Highness's action reminds many of us of stanzas from Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* on mercy, viz.,

*The quality of mercy is not strain'd,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven.*

To all people who have served Her Royal Highness in Her many roles of relentless and continuous caring and supporting education, the marginalized, the children, to name just a few, Her work has indelibly imprinted in our hearts of Her Royal Highness unconditional care and commitments to hundreds of thousands of children in Thailand and the world over.

Her Royal Highness special lecture on *Equitable Education: All for Education* is a small opening into the universe of Her dedications and commitments to mankind. Let us be inspired by Her exemplary work and follow Royal Highness Princess in Her undertakings.

Dr. Krissanapong Kirtikara
Chairman
Steering Committee for the International Conference on
Equitable Education: All for Education



Equitable Education: All for Education

A Lecture by Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn

I have been working in my own projects in education for forty years. In fact, before that, maybe fifty years ago, I started working in education by learning from my parents. At that time, they went to the rural area and meet people. I went along, and my task was to interview people, especially in terms of their education, whether a family needed scholarships for their children or not. I have to note down the situations in these people's lives in every aspect, so that we could assess how much help they should have. This is how I learned bits by bits before I could start my own work forty years ago.

"Equitable Education", or equal rights to education, is the concept, existed in Thailand more than a hundred years ago. My great-grandfather, King Chulalongkorn, or King Rama V, said that everybody should have had an equal opportunity to be educated. He meant all children, those of his own as well as all the citizens' children. He said, "It is something that I'll try to accomplish during my reign".

Other key word of our today's topic is "All for Education". This signifies that we pull all resources for education, including integrated actions and interdisciplinary efforts to accomplish the educational goals.

Education: A Service, Not Compulsory.

To me, the rights to education, together with the rights to good food, nutrition and health care, are basic human rights of everyone. However, it is not that simple. King Rama VI was the first to announce the Compulsory Education Act for all Thais, and I heard about compulsory education since I was young. Despite the law, some children could not go to schools; for example, children with disabilities, and children who had to take care of their family members. In the law, those with these two conditions and some others could be exempted from the compulsory education.

Now there are special schools for people with disabilities. Some can even study in regular classes with other children, with the help of some extra teachers. I know a stone-deaf person who completed her Ph.D. at a world leading university abroad. Now she works as a scientist in a scientific research Institute, the Synchrotron Light Research Institute in Thailand. We try to explain why it is important that children with special needs should get education and advise the parents that their children should study, if not in the regular schools, then they should use the facilities of the Bureau of Non-Formal and Informal Education.

Education should be service, not something that it is compulsory. We should not force them to study, but we should give service to everybody.

Education Reform by King Chulalongkorn

Going back to King Chulalongkorn's time, he reformed education for all Thai people along with the administrative reform in 1892. He set up the Ministry of Education and many schools for basic primary and secondary education, and vocational and higher education in many disciplines, for male and female. At the primary level, children learned to read and write Thai language, mathematics and some vocational subjects such as agriculture and commerce. At the secondary education level, students studied science, such as physics, chemistry, biology, and more advanced mathematics. They also studied social sciences, such as history, geography, and foreign languages, such as English, French, German, Pali or Sanskrit, and Latin for people who wanted to become medical doctors or to work in legal profession. The concept of "All for Education" is evident here as we need people with different specializations to work together for educational purposes.

At that time, education reform in Bangkok went on well, but that outside Bangkok was too slow. King Chulalongkorn consulted with his half-brothers, the Minister of Interior and the Supreme Patriarch. Those two persons

helped him a lot by establishing schools in the temples, in which both monks and laymen became teachers. The Ministry of Education published textbooks. There were not enough teachers, especially English teachers. For novices, religious courses and Pali language were included in their curriculum. If there were vacant spaces in the temples near the schools, it was the policy to grow crops and trees to teach the children about agriculture, and to raise fund for the schools to provide good food for the children. So, school nutrition program started from that time on. If any child did well in school, he would get a scholarship to continue his study at a higher level, either in the country or abroad.

Later on there was more reform in education. Though boys had more opportunity, there were also schools for girls. I learned that monks started classes for girls. In secondary and higher education, girls could study many subjects. The popular ones were Education or Teaching, Nursing and Home Economics.

Equitable Education and All for Education

I will now talk about my own experience in “equitable education” and “all for education”. During the reign of my father, schools were under many agencies: Ministry of Education, Ministry of Interior, Northern Royal Project, and Police Department. My parents and my grandmother built many schools in both the cities and the remote areas. They supported government boarding schools and schools for children with disabilities. In fact, not only my great-grandfather, my parents and my grandmother but also my grandfather worked a lot to promote education. My grandfather worked not only education in medical field that he was famous for, but also education in general.

Encyclopedia for Youth

Another teaching media that my father initiated in Thailand was the encyclopedia for youth and children. He set up a committee to write a set of encyclopedia for youth. Now there are at least 41 volumes. He had an idea to create this set of encyclopedia in 1963. He explained to me that he would make these encyclopedias similar to the Book of Knowledge, A Treasure Island of Your Own. The book that I had seen in my parents' dining room, my father's encyclopedias or the Thai Book of Knowledge, has a different feature. One article has 3 levels. The first level is appropriate for all the children and adults who are not experts on that matter. The second level is for upper primary classes and lower secondary levels. The third level is for lower primary classes. Elder siblings can teach younger siblings. Now we add question-and-answer books and small books on each topic, which are not expensive. Though each volume of the big books is quite expensive, well-to-do people can buy these volumes, and the organization put the donors' names on the books and donates them to schools.

Hermit School

The Hermit School sounds quite strange. In Thai it is โรงเรียนพระดาบส. It was a school named and established by my father. He explained to me that in old-time legends or musical folk dramas, the king's sons who wanted knowledge had to go to the forest to learn from ascetics or hermits. That is where the name of the school came from. Here students do not normally pay the fees, but they have to study diligently and respect the teachers. In the old days, they had to find fruits for their teachers. Now the school is in the city, a concrete forest. The modern hermits are volunteers, and the students are from poor families.

Though at the beginning the graduates did not get any certificates, later on they do get certificates as in other schools. They have to work hard and

behave well to be there. The “hermits” teach them knowledge, skills and ethics. This started in 1975. They have to be good citizens of the country. The foundation pays for the accommodation, equipment, pocket money and food for both students and teachers. At the moment, the subjects taught are mechanics, electric and electronics, carpentry and furniture, welding, technician maintenance, and sufficient economy for agriculture. In fact, my father said that, “Anybody who has knowledge, any knowledge, and anybody who wants to study can become a hermit”. So they do not need to be technical people. The students are people who want to find jobs, such as the disabled war veterans or other poor people. For female trainees, the most popular course which is in great demand is caregivers for patients and elderly. The employers have to book in advance, for at least a year, to get the trained caregivers. Even I myself, when I want a caregiver for my nanny, I have to wait for about a year.

Sons of the Hermit School “โรงเรียนลูกพระดาบส” at Samutprakarn was established in 1998. At first there was a plan to collaborate with a private enterprise, but that company did not manage to take part in the CSR. There are many training courses such as hydroponic vegetable growing, green or bio agriculture, agriculture in saline soil, animal husbandry, orchid cultivation, mushroom cultivation, and production of hand gel, liquid soap and Citronella mosquito repellent. There are some experiments, such as alternative energy. Apart from giving training to Thai people, there were trainings for foreigners from overseas, such as the agronomists from Swaziland. Unfortunately, some training programs have to be postponed because of the viral pandemic.

The Hermit School in the southern border area “โรงเรียนพระดาบสจังหวัดชายแดนภาคใต้” is for poor male youths, of 18-25 years old, who had no education opportunity. Students must not be drug addicts. The courses offered in this school are motorcycle maintenance, car maintenance, and electricity. Besides technical subjects, the school also offers some life skill subjects, such as Thai language for communication, computer, English language, sufficiency economy agriculture, and religious studies. There are also some club activities such as music club, local crafts club, agricul-

ture club, etc. The school is a boarding. Students and teachers live in a dormitory where teachers can share more experiences with their students. We expect them to become good members of the society in the future. Not only the teachers but also many government agencies and private companies join hands in providing education for those youths.



Welfare Schools

There are many special schools under the administration of Special Education Bureau, Ministry of Education.

The government welfare boarding schools started in 1953, before I was born. They are Suksa Songkroh Schools “โรงเรียนศึกษาสงเคราะห์” and Rajprachanukroh Schools “โรงเรียนราชประชานุเคราะห์”, that I have an opportunity to work with. They are schools for children that the government has to provide special support, for example, children living in remote and difficult terrains on high mountains with no road access, or those whose villages are located in the national parks. Many of them come from various ethnic groups. Some are orphans without family support. Most welfare education begins from grade 1 up to grade 12. However, there are some schools that have kindergartens or daycare centers, because young children have to follow their older siblings to school. These little kids

are lucky because they have good opportunity to start when they are very young and very early in life. They get education and also good food.

Apart from knowledge from the usual syllabus, students and teachers, especially students, can have agricultural products to eat, preserve, and process. They learn how to sew, weave and do other handicrafts. Some of them open the shops to earn money from the crafts they have learned, for example, hair-cutting, motorcycle or bicycle maintenance or mechanic works. Some children set up a mini-company in their school, so they learn business or entrepreneurship skills as well. They can sell their products in the school cooperative stores or in the special handicraft shops. They can even do e-commerce.



IT for Education

Twenty-five years ago, I started the IT Foundation, which has organized many activities for schools in the remote and poverty-stricken areas. We tried to find second-hand computers in good condition and we have maintenance as well. Mostly these computers come from companies. As the computers were expensive, some computer experts volunteered to help with the maintenance. They visited those schools from time to time. The travel expenses were expensive and time-consuming, so I asked them

to take my checklist and check other matters for me; for example, the conditions of toilets, water supply and libraries, etc.

Now there are more junior high schools and high schools in the districts and sub-districts, and so students do not have to attend only the government boarding schools. Still, students want to attend those schools, which usually do not have enough dormitories, rice and food. Even now in the regular high schools, they have minimum dormitories only for students who live very far from schools. So we have to donate many things, like buildings, dormitories, rice and other necessities. The government boarding schools get more budgets than other schools with dormitories. So the latter much depend on donation from the people who can help.



Schools for Children with Disabilities

Next I would like to talk about the schools for children with disabilities and the centers for people with disabilities. There are schools for the blind and those with low vision, schools for the deaf and those with just hard-of-hearing, schools for children with motor disabilities, and schools for children with mental disabilities. When I was very young, my parents arranged a new-year party for children with all kinds of disabilities. So I learned from

a very young age that many people had some kinds of difficulties, and that I was lucky enough not to have them. The parents of these disabled kids have problems looking after them.

When I grew up, at first I worked a lot with the blind and the deaf, and the people with motor disabilities. Then a headmistress of the school for children with mental disabilities persuaded me to work with her. At first I was quite reluctant, because looking after people with mental disabilities or those who have some short-coming in learning is quite difficult and very complicated. But I learned from the headmistress and other teachers and have acquired some knowledge. The children in this school have learning disabilities, autism and Down's syndrome. Some have multiple disabilities. They can be in regular classes, mixing with other students. The Ministry of Education provides some special education teachers for general schools as well. This is very useful.

I have a case that I can explain to you. My mother look after also the sick people and people with disabilities. There was one child who could not even stand up. He was very disabled, and I would like to send him to this school. At first the teacher said that he was too disabled even to be in a disabled school. I said, "Please. Please help me." She said, "Okay. I'll try." Later on he could stand up, walk and tend hens and collect eggs for the school. At first he does not know the strength of his hand, he took an egg and squeeze. The eggs were all broken. Later on he learned how to use his hands properly. In the end he started a business at home, so this household have more income because of this disable child. The Department of Mental Health, Ministry of Public Health has the method to test the children and then improve the condition of delayed development. This is quite successful, and we continue this project.

Each province has a center for people with disabilities. The difficulty is to help people with disabilities to work, because workplaces normally do not have suitable accommodations and facilities. I have found that the most challenging thing is to help the people with multiple disabilities and mental disabilities. Anyway I think we can overcome all these challenges.



iCREATE

iCREATE or International Convention on Rehabilitative Engineering and Assistive Technology is the annual conference, established since 2007, as a result of my work on people with disabilities with Singaporean professors. We have tried to find ways to help people with disabilities to live their lives, get education, get employment and enjoy recreation just like others. Apart from academic conference, iCREATE is a venue for students' innovation contest once a year, to get new ideas from young people. We encourage the winners to put their ideas to marketable products.

Special Welfare School

There are many welfare schools, but I would like to mention one example, the Chitaree Government Welfare Boarding School “โรงเรียนศึกษาสงเคราะห์ จิตต์อารี”. This is a private school of the Foundation for Helping People with Leprosy, founded in 1957. The school separated children of the lepers from their families and educated them. At that time, people believed that leprosy was a genetic disease. So leper's family was discriminated for fear of inheriting the incurable disease. In fact, other poor children in the

neighborhood have come to study in this school as well. In 1982 the school was transferred to the Ministry of Education, and classes for hearing impaired children were added.

Now the school is considered one of the best welfare schools. Since 1953, there was a census by the Ministry of Public Health on the number of people who suffered from leprosy. There were many leper communities with a small hospital and some medical staff. My father talked with the experts in 1956, and later he founded Rajprachasamasai Foundation “มูลนิธิราชประชาสมาสัย”, the name meaning, “the king and the people helping one another”. The foundation helps the lepers and trains the personnel to look after them. There was also a research institute to study medication to treat the patients with leprosy. My father saw that some lepers’ children in school age had no opportunity to go to school, so he set up the school to provide education for them as well as other poor children in general. Later on, the school has also helped the children of AIDS victims. Now it is an ordinary government welfare school.

There are few government welfare schools that are specialized in helping the children of AIDS victims. I know a private boarding school that helps the daughters of AIDS victims, and some children were AIDS victims themselves.

Daycare Centers and Kindergarten

There are daycare centers built by many government agencies and private donors. Kindergartens are separate schools, but they can be in the same school as elementary schools, or junior high (grade 9) schools or even high schools. The schools with all levels are called K to12 schools. Daycare centers look after the children whose parents have to work, with no grandparents’ help.



In the remote areas, daycare centers help social workers a lot in weighing children, distributing nutritious food, conducting immunization program and deworming children. We do not have to chase after the children to catch them one by one to be immunized like I did before.

In the former days when I worked in nutrition and immunization program, the most popular formula that Dr. Kraissid taught me was rice, pea, and sesame. This is served as a single-plate menu. Another example of a single-plate menu is fried rice with eggs and chopped vegetables. Kids cannot be choosy, and teachers cannot choose good things to give only to their favorite students.

Some theorists say that, in a kindergarten, one should not teach only regular subjects, but should train the children to have social skills, including gross and fine motor skills. In my opinion, for schools in the remote border areas, education cannot be equitable unless the children start education early than Primary One. Education in early childhood makes a difference. So I have hired the teachers majoring in Early Childhood Education to teach the kindergarten kids.

In the second kindergarten year, they engage in the activity called “Little Scientists’ House”, like “Haus der kleinen Forscher” in Germany. This is implemented in almost 30,000 schools all over Thailand. Children learn about reasoning, observing and conducting scientific experiments about things around them. We have 240 local networks, 19 core trainers and 5 senior core trainers.



Sick Children in Hospitals

I have worked for the Thai Red Cross for about 43 years. In King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital or Chulalongkorn Hospital, run by the Thai Red Cross, there were some children who had been hospitalized for a long period of time, and non-formal education personnel helped teach these sick children in the hospital. There were not enough teachers. So I introduced computers. Later on the hospitals of the Ministry of Public Health were interested in the project. They cooperate with the Non-Formal and Informal Education Bureau, and some hospitals hire additional part-time teachers from Teacher Training universities.



Non-Formal Education and Learning Centers in Remote Areas

The Bureau of Non-Formal and Informal Education or กศน in Thai, was well known for its mission on adult education, providing education through correspondence by mail. It has also looked after public libraries. Later on it also takes care of the educational centers for hilltribes “ศูนย์การเรียนรู้ชนกลุ่มชาติไทยภูเขา กศน.”, mainly on high mountains in very remote areas. Starting with adult education, the hilltribe people in the vicinity could understand, speak, read and write Thai. They could take the examinations to get the certificates of primary level (grade 6), junior high school level (grade 9) and high school level (grade 12). Many continue their studies in the teaching universities “มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏ”. Children who live with their parents on the mountains cannot go to even the nearest schools. So the teacher teaches both adults and children, eventually the teachers know more about teaching children. So the retired teachers volunteer to train the new-batch of teachers.

Non-formal education teachers have many other tasks, for example, teaching in Ponoh or Madrasa Islamic schools, teaching in the hospitals, and teaching during natural calamity, such as flood, or even manmade calamity. This กศน. helps a lot. Once I watched TV and saw that there were shootings near the border. The children had to move far away from their homes and their school, and they were running about doing nothing useful. So I asked the non-formal education people to arrange the classes for them, and it worked quite good.



Religious schools



I know about the private school teaching Islamic religion, or in Malay “Ponoh” or Madrasa in Arabic “โรงเรียนเอกชนสอนศาสนาอิสลาม”, because some children who finished their studies from the border patrol police schools and from the schools run by OBEC (Office of Basic Education Commission) สพฐ. of the Ministry of Education continue their studies in Ponoh schools. I followed those children up, because I wanted to know how they were doing. Before, Islamic schools taught only religious studies. Later on the Office of the Private Education Commission “สำนักงานคณะกรรมการส่งเสริมการศึกษาเอกชน” sent the teachers to teach general knowledge. Some volunteers teach other subjects, such as computers. Some schools help teach by a two-way online system and a virtual lab. Some technical subjects are taught by technical and vocational colleges. We have a network. In this way, many graduates from the schools have passed the university entrance examinations. Some graduates could get into health science programs of the famous universities.



Buddhist Schools

Buddhist schools “โรงเรียนพระปริยัติธรรม” are the schools for boys, who are ordained as Buddhist novices. They studied both Buddhism and languages, Pali, Thai and English. They studied some local traditions and are trained to do handicrafts. I helped the schools to arrange similar activities as those in the border patrol police schools; for example, agricultural project (only plants and vegetables), water supply, cooperative shop, and nutrition program. There are Buddhist believers taking turn to cook for the monks' lunch (at 11 am), serve milk, weigh the novices, do exercises such as sweeping the temple ground, doing yoga, working out in the gym room, and going on an expedition. For general subjects, like computer and science, the novices can choose whether they would like to go to monk universities for religious studies or to leave the monkhood to study in regular universities. That is up to the universities. Some allow monks to study while in monkhood. One monk who studied physics taught Buddhism to his fellow students and teachers in his free time.





Science courses in novice schools are usually not good enough. Therefore, it is quite difficult if the novices leave monkhood and want to continue their studies in engineering, medicine or nursing, etc. Nevertheless, we have tried, and it is possible.

I have given scholarships to monk teachers to study in a master's degree program in Environmental Science, so that monks can give sermons on environment, in addition to the Words of the Buddha. Believers should also know about the ways to protect their environment.

The situation about public health, hygiene and sanitation in schools are mostly not bad at all, but some temples need improvement. For example, just during the height of the pandemic, the schools are closed, and so are the novice schools. The novices have to go back to the temples. What we try to do is to help the novice to continue their study. We donated money for the transportation of “พระอาจารย์” or the teacher monk to the temple. We also bought them televisions, so that the novice can learn from distance learning TV (DLTV). It worked well. These are smart TVs on which thumb drive can be used to load some other courses on. Then when I wanted to pay for the TVs, the company owner said, “No, no, you shouldn't pay. I will donate all these”, There are more than 100 TVs. I had to chat a bit in Chinese, because this is a Chinese company. I have an opportunity to practice my Chinese. Now if anything happens, I think we can use TV in most places. I am glad, because the children around the temples are also very poor. They have no computers or TV. So they can come to the temples and study along with the novices.

Education in Prisons

In prisons, some inmates are illiterate. There are warders who teach the inmates to read and write very well. I read somewhere about the prison libraries in England, and the inmates could write short stories. So we set up the libraries in the prisons, and encourage the inmates to write short stories, learn how to paint and do other activities besides handicrafts. Even foreign inmates can read Thai, and there are many library activities. The foreign inmates have become the best readers. Computer classes are also arranged. There are courses in music, painting, cooking, and famous carpentry. They are not allowed to go online, for fear of e-trafficking, e-robbery, etc., but they learn the techniques from which they can earn their living when they get out of the prisons.





Border Patrol Police (BPP) Schools "โรงเรียนตำรวจตระเวนชายแดน"



The schools that I have been working with most are those run by the Border Patrol Police. These schools were founded 64 years ago. My parents, my grandmother and some donors supported them. I have worked for the schools for 40 years. If there was no COVID virus pandemic, I would have been able to visit the Border Patrol Police schools 1,000th time by September of this year. I hope that I can have the 1,000th visit celebration this year.

I had been to remote villages and seen that there were big problems in health, hygiene and sanitation. Many children were malnourished. So I started by growing some fruit trees in a few village schools. At that time there were many agencies that supported lunch for many poor schools, such as the Foundation for Needy Students under the Royal Patronage of Her Majesty the Queen “มูลนิธิช่วยนักเรียนที่ขาดแคลนในพระบรมราชินูปถัมภ์” since 1961. One of my relatives suggested that it was not useful just to give them food. It was better to teach the children to do farming, like growing vegetables, raising animals, raising fish, growing fruit trees. I thought that was a good idea, so I follow his advice

I had some money from my savings, and so there was no need for fund-raising. Some people taught me knowledge on agriculture and nutrition, and I chose to work with the Border Patrol Police, because I had been familiar with them since I was little. They were not teachers by profession, but they had access to the poorest of the poor who lived in remote areas. It was during the Cold War, and there were fewer roads then. In the beginning, they just built shacks and taught the children they ran into. Their administrators agreed and tried to help in whatever way they could. I remember well a poem written by one of a Border Patrol Police teacher:



*"I am merely a fighter, who braves the jungle to meet you.
I have no high education degree,
I have only forceful faith from within my soul,
That I will light a candle in order to brighten the wilderness,
Regardless of looks and languages,
In spite of all the travails,
I'll endure every hardship with a teacher's heart"*

I do not know whether my translation is correct or not, but it is something like this.

When I started the project, I bought some seeds, agricultural utensils, kitchen utensils, and condiments. A professor helped train the teachers for me. From the beginning, I used the knowledge about the 5 groups of nutritious food that I studied when I was in primary school. After I took a course in nutrition at the Institute of Nutrition, Mahidol University, the professors helped draw the guidelines of food intake, such as vegetables, fruits, meat, eggs and dry peas. We weighed and measured the height of the pupils.

There are plenty of health issues. For example, we dealt with iodine deficiency by adding two drops of iodide solution in a liter of drinking water. We supplemented iron tablets for iron deficiency. There were problems with malaria, and we used mosquito nets and tested medication. For different kinds of worm and parasites, toilet sanitation, foot-wears, and deworming were used. We taught them hand-washing and bathing to treat skin diseases. Hair cutting and hair washing with medication were used to get rid of lice. Dental care was introduced to cope with teeth problems. Eyesight testing, eyeglass making and hospital visit helped them with their eye problems and other disabilities. Personal hygiene and sanitation introduced the cleanliness concept to the villages and the schools.

Professor Scrimshaw

I would like to mention about my American mentor, the late Professor Dr. Nevin Scrimshaw. He often came to Thailand and traveled elsewhere in the world. I think he had a notebook in which he wrote the names of his students and what they were doing. When he met his student, for example, when he met me, he always asked, "What are you doing now?", and I had to explain to him what I was doing and what would be my future project. Then he would add that in fact I could continue this way. He would tell me the kind of things that I could do, and I followed his instructions every time we met.

I had worked with primary schools and daycare centers, and then he said that I should have taken care of 0-3 year-old babies, and paid attention to birthweights. The next year he said I should have surveyed and followed up pregnant women. Then he talked about health education, including reproductive health. This was particularly difficult for me, because I mostly looked after primary school pupils. I dealt with only a few secondary school cases, but he said that secondary school students or the teenage group was also important in health matter. In fact, the problem of teenagers is very important. There have been a lot of drop-outs due to teen-pregnancy, and the research conducted by a teaching hospital about teen-pregnancy has shown that it affects the ability to learn. As a matter of fact, the teenager group is in general the most neglected group of all, because everybody thinks that they are old enough to look after themselves.



Scholarships

Since 1988, I have given scholarships to pupils who have finished grade 6 to continue their studies to as high as they can. Most are poor and have no opportunity to attend secondary schools at that time. In the past, there was no secondary school near the BPP schools. So I had to send those students to the government welfare schools. Later on, there have been many good schools around. So Khun Ying Kasama from the Ministry of Education has advised me to send the pupils to local schools.

There are other projects such as giving extra lessons to pupils of grade 8 and grade 11. There are also counseling and tutoring for the pupils who are preparing for entrance examinations. I have also sent some pupils to India to study for the bachelor's degrees. Scholarships are also given to teachers' children. Scholarships help support disadvantaged children to develop up to their fullest potentials.

This year I am unable to arrange projects, like tutoring, that I have done for a long time, but we are able to use online tutoring, which works for a lot of people.



School Buildings

Before, there were only few buildings in a school. Now with more pupils and more activities, they need more classrooms, toilets, bathrooms and places to brush their teeth and now also to wash their hands. The teacher also looks after family members of the pupils and helps the health station in looking after pregnant mothers. In some remote areas he or she also acts like a midwife. The teacher helps the malaria unit in checking on malaria problem. He or she can use microscope to find out whether the strain is Pv (*Plasmodium vivax*) or Pf (*Plasmodium falciparum*). In some remote areas, health station is built right in the school. Apart from a teacher, there is another trained employee to deal with telemedicine through the connection with a bigger hospital. The health station looks after health of pupils, school staff and villagers. It is very effective.

Schools should have a dining room that can be used for other activities when needed. Nearby there is a kitchen and a storage for vegetables and other important items, such as rice, powder milk, sugar, condiments and iodized salt, etc. Villagers take turn in cooking. They work together with a teacher and some pupils. Pupils also learn about mathematics and science as they turn the kitchen wastes into bio-fertilizer and animal feed, etc.

Cooperative room has a corner or a small building for a cooperative shop to sell farm products of schools and villagers, and also useful things for daily life. Children learn how to run the shop. Accounting is taught by the Cooperative Promotion Department and the Cooperative Auditing Department. There is a meeting room for the committee members to discuss about how they can improve the performance of the cooperative and what kinds of goods they want to sell. Children learn about accounting, mathematics and computer in this activity, and the committee has an opportunity to go on a study tour, mainly to see other cooperatives. During COVID-19, I distribute the leaflets about cooperatives along with the knowledge of COVID.

School library is not only for pupils and teachers, but also for alumni and villagers who can come to read and borrow books. There can be many activities in the libraries, such as story- telling, questions and answers from the encyclopedia, and writing your favorite books, etc.

Agriculture

Agriculture is our main activity in addition to the national syllabus. Agricultural colleges, palace agronomists, the Ministry of Agriculture and other volunteers help the schools with some training. Our aim is to have nutritious food for children. So there must be a way to grow vegetables for food for the whole term. The examples of vegetables are morning glory, Chinese cabbage and other kinds of cabbage, many kinds of gourd, spring onion, eggplant, cucumber, lemon grass, chili, broccoli, kale, lettuce, chive, etc. Vegetables can be grown in vegetable plots, containers and wooden tunnels, etc.





We also have fruit trees. It is not easy to have enough fruits for all pupils, because the planting areas are not enough. First we try to grow fruit trees that bear fruits fast, for example, banana in many varieties, papaya, jackfruit, mango in many varieties, lemon, mulberry, passion fruit, dragon fruit, avocado, pineapple, custard apple, coconut, lime, okra, etc. Growing dry bean or pea, such as green pea, soybean, pigeon pea, peanut and Bambara groundnut, etc., is not easy, because it needs a big area. When there was the policy to give school children soybean milk, we had to buy the soybeans and ground them with stone mortar. It was not easy, and it was time-consuming. Later UHT milk and powder milk (cow milk) were used instead. Children also learn about the methods of propagating trees.



In animal husbandry, there are hens for eggs in battery cages and “happy chicks” free-range system, indigenous roosters, meat roosters, ducks, Muscovy ducks, goats, pigs, boars and cows, etc.

In fishery, there are activities of raising cat fish, *Tilapia nilotica*, chanos (ปลานวลจันทร์ทะเล), and some local fish. The people from the Department of Fishery also teach students how to preserve fish. In some schools they raise frogs.

Animal feed is also an important matter. Some have to be purchased, and some can be produced in the farm.

There are other activities, such as growing mushrooms, raising stingless bees.

Vocational Trainings

Vocational trainings for pupils have been conducted by the vocational colleges of the Office of the Vocational Education Commission, the Non-Formal and Informal Education Bureau and local wisdom teachers. The courses offered are, for example, electric circuit, motor cycle and bicycle maintenance, hair-cutting, cooking, food preserving and food processing, weaving, sewing, embroidery, broom-making, basket-weaving, flower arrangement, silversmith (mainly for secondary school students and villagers) and handicrafts. I thought of vocational training,



because 40 years ago people without citizenship were not allowed to study too far away from home or even to receive primary school certificates. If such people did not have enough vocational skills, they may resort to illegal occupation. We also deal with marketing the products.

Conservation of National Resources

In the BPP Schools, pupils have to learn and pay attention to the conservation of natural resources, for example, forest, soil and water. They learn about reforestation and how to use vetiver grass to prevent soil erosion. Many schools join the project “Plant Germplasm Conservation”.

Preservation of Tradition and Culture



Pupils are encouraged to join local festivals and religious ceremony. They learn about local and tribal cultures, stories, music and dances. That is how they preserve the traditions and culture of their own.

Centers for Knowledge Transfer

Another activity of the BPP schools is to arrange the schools into Learning Centers or Centers for Knowledge Transfer with different stations to teach agriculture, health and accounting, including management of personnel, farm and shop. Another activity is to transfer knowledge to the communities near the schools, with some given materials, such as seeds, fingerlings of fish, tree saplings, chicks and ducklings, etc.

Water

School is a gathering place for people. So water is very important for drinking and also for use in the toilets, bathrooms and kitchens. In the schools with agricultural activities, water for agriculture is very important. Now it is not very easy to find water. It can be done by digging ponds and building weirs, dams, or reservoirs. We can build a check dam by ourselves, but often it does not give enough water.

We need experts to help. The people who have helped me are from the Royal Irrigation Department (RID). They have the techniques to find water, not only for our schools, but also for farmers in the area. Pipe systems have to be installed to bring water from the reservoirs to schools and villages. Another source is rain water. We have to installed rain water troughs and collect water in the containers. In some places, not everywhere, we can try to get the underground water. Water in the ponds can also be used.

If there are a lot of activities in agriculture, water may not be enough, and the quality of the water may not be good enough, for example, too acidic. Drinking water is even more difficult. It has to be tested to make sure that there are no germs and are not contaminated by some toxic chemicals or heavy metals.

Electricity

When I started working, electricity in the schools was only for lighting. In the daytime, natural light was used. When the rooms were too dark, they took some roof tiles out and replaced them with transparent tiles. In the evening or after dark, they used oil-operated generators. Later on, the generators are run by solar cells, if the schools were outside the national grids. If there are too many electric gadgets, computers, overhead projectors, rice cookers, refrigerators, etc., electricity may not be enough, and the batteries may not always be in good condition.

The schools were on fire from time to time. People thought terrorists burnt the schools, but I thought that one of the causes might be electricity. I asked many agencies, government and private sectors to look into this matter. My suspect was electricity overload, or rats or cockroaches biting the electric wires, and my guess turned out to be correct. Now the problems are mostly solved.



Literacy

Adult teachers and even young children help teach their grandfathers and grandmothers. In schools, especially the BPP schools, the teachers in each division check the performance of the pupils, based on the level of their reading and writing with various techniques, and then retest them.



Citizenship

Thailand's borders are porous. Many parts are mountainous and sparsely inhabited. Some people call those parts "the no-man's land". There are many ethnic groups living in those areas. We usually do not know which country we are standing on. In the past people on two or three sides of the border were relatives. They lived on cultivation or trade. Now they attend schools and need to have citizenship. Stateless people have difficult lives, because people with Thai citizenship have a better chance in getting education and going to the hospital.

It was more difficult decades ago, but now they are allowed to study and go the hospital. The most difficult situation was that they cannot easily get good jobs and government services. Now I was told that people who can apply for citizenship should get a university degree and work for the country for a while. I do not know whether it would be possible for them to work with non-governmental organization first, and then apply for citizenship before getting better jobs in an official or a private sector.

School Mapping

How can we know that there are places that need schools or lack of educational service? This question came to my head when I studied Remote Sensing and Geographical Information System (GIS). We can look at the aerial photos or satellite images to see where the communities are. We can also have the people like the BBPs who are good at forest trotting and mountain climbing to do the survey for us. If there is no school, we can arrange one and start planning a child's life, starting from kindergarten to primary school, secondary school, university (bachelor, master, and doctoral degree) and then work. We work with BPP or the Border Patrol Police, OBEC or the Office of Basic Education Commission, the Bureau of Non-Formal and Informal Education, and so far it is quite effective. This is another good example of "All for Education".

Education during Crisis

We have been working towards the goal of "Equitable Education: All for Education" for years. Now we are challenged by the worst pandemic of our time, caused by COVID-19, and it is seriously affecting our children's education.

Are we going to lose the battle this time?

We should do all we can to encourage our young people to study even in a crisis like this. We have been through many obstacles before, like tsunami, big floods and political unrests, and we have overcome some, though not all, of them.

Now people talk about online education, but in some places children are too poor to have computers. Even those who do may find online courses uninteresting. Some may not have good enough access to new teaching media.

During the last big flood, we distributed “survival bags” with things that one could use without leaving the house for a few days. For children we added “survival bag for education”. I cannot remember exactly what were in the bags.

Now we are in the COVID-19 crisis, and we have also prepared “survival bag for education”. This time a bag consists of a self-learning kit, the teaching media to celebrate my 60th birthday anniversary “^{สิบ} 60 พรรษา”. It is a set of instructions for Thai language and mathematics courses. In some villages, teaching clips are used, and children do their homework. The teachers can grade the homework with the help of volunteer messengers.



In the bag, we also provide teaching media about COVID-19, exercise books, pencils, rubber, cloth masks, mung beans and manual on how to grow beansprouts, some vegetable seeds and family accounting bag. In this crisis, the “meals on wheels” activity is not convenient. So, we have to give the families some materials for cooking.

I think exercise book or notebook is very important for children to practice writing. Yesterday I listened to a radio program. There is a volunteer group called “Paper Ranger” asking for the donation of A4 paper on which only one page was used and the other page is empty. From the used paper they make new hand-made exercise books with nice drawings on the covers. About 250,000 of such notebooks have been distributed to small children.

Another activity I would like to talk about is the teachers who travel to pupils' houses to teach. They call themselves “horseback teachers”. I have tried to provide 4-wheel drive cars called, “off-road trucks”, to take the BPP teachers to children's houses. Anyway, I cannot give enough cars, so they have to find all kinds of vehicles to take them to teach. Many teachers join my group for food production for communities and the project of model schools. I asked the military personnel in the military camps and bases near the schools and community to help grow vegetables and fruit trees and to raise animals such as hens, ducks, fish and frogs. The soldiers are from the project, called “Good Breed Soldiers” (ทหารพันธุ์ดี). They are soldiers who have been trained at our Chaipattana Foundation premises to propagate good varieties of vegetables, fruit trees and animals. “Good breeds” here do not mean breeds of the soldiers, but those of vegetables and animals. The soldiers are good as well. They send their report to me every day. Now schools are open, but the soldiers are still in the villages and schools to teach agriculture and help the teachers and students clean up the schools.

I have asked some education specialists to write a manual on how to teach without being a teacher and how to use agriculture as a tool to teach 8 groups of subjects like; Thai, foreign languages, mathematics, science, art and music.

We now have to help looking after health of children. Prevent even common cold. I think whether we should have umbrella for them because now it is raining season. Even they do not have COVID, they may have common colds, which is quite bad as well. We promote cleanliness by distributing soap, alcohol gel and other disinfectants. Checking everybody's temperature, promoting clean food. It has been more than a week now, and I have no report of somebody having COVID yet.

Conclusion

In 1990, I wrote a motto, "Let's join in making a literate world". It was at Jomtien that the Minister was talking about. I worked with UNESCO and the Ministry of Education. Today I continue to hold on to this idea. It is the ideal of Education for All, and All for Education.

Thank you very much for your attention.

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