

A TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF MOM LUANG PIN MALAKUL

by VICTOR ORDOÑEZ

We mourn the passing of Thailand's revered scholar and true friend of UNESCO to whom this office, in particular, owes an indelible debt of gratitude.

Mom Luang Pin was among the small band of Asian educators who in the early 1950's already had a vision of universal, compulsory, primary education for Asian children.

As a member and Vice President of the Executive Board of UNESCO from 1952 to 1956, he fostered the beginnings of regional co-operation in the field of education among countries in the Asian region which were emerging from colonization and taking the first steps to know their Asian neighbours.

With a penetrating insight into the future, he was convinced of the supreme importance of sharing of experiences among countries and mutual co-operation and collective effort in solving the massive problems in education in the countries of the region. Such convictions included the sharing of expertise and research across countries as was being encouraged at the UNESCO associated International Institute for Child Study in Thailand.

Once again, his vision extended beyond education, to the importance of international understanding among nations in the Asia and Pacific region as a contribution to peace and harmony among nations and peoples in the region.

Mom Luang Pin was remembered in the Executive Board of UNESCO as being a man of very few words, so few that when he spoke, he was listened to attentively and his words were accepted.

It was his actions that spoke for him. His vision of universal, compulsory, primary education for all children led to his strong support for UNESCO's programme to achieve this through the decision of the General Conference of UNESCO to initiate a major project on the extension of compulsory primary education in Asian countries, as envisaged in the Working Plan that emanated from the findings and recommendations adopted by the Regional Meeting of Representatives of Asian Member States in Primary and Compulsory Education, held at Karachi from 28 December 1959 to 9 January 1960, internationally known as the Karachi Plan.

Supporting his vision of universalization of education was not merely idealism at its refined best. His intellectual acumen had discerned the insights and integrated the multi-faceted consequences of the number of seminal conferences and meetings which acted as the foundation for the formalized Karachi Plan. Among these were the Regional Conference on Free and Compulsory Education for Southern Asia and the Pacific, (Bombay, December 1952); the Regional Seminar on Primary School Curriculum for South and East Asia, (Karachi, May 1956); Regional Seminar on Education Reform in South and East Asia, (New Delhi, August-September 1958).

His support was concrete and committed. He was instrumental in persuading the Government of Thailand to offer host facilities for a planned regional office which would devote itself to achieving the goals of the Karachi Plan. Thus, as the leader of the Thai delegation to the eleventh session of the UNESCO General Conference in

1960, Mom Luang Pin Malakul conveyed the offer of the Royal Thai Government to host the UNESCO Regional Office for Primary and Compulsory Education in Asia.

His actions continued without delay. He personally secured temporary premises for the fledgling office in the old Ministry of Culture building at Sanam Sua Pua and provided a whole wing of the building as the staff and programmes expanded.

Whereas the negotiations of other organizations for host agreements were sometimes long drawn out, thanks to the high regard in which Mom Luang Pin was held, the Agreement between the Royal Thai Government and UNESCO was signed within a matter of months and the official opening of the UNESCO Regional Office on 2 December 1961 within a year of Thailand's offer to the General Conference.

Always keeping in mind that the office space provided at Sanam Sua Pa was only temporary, Mom Luang Pin pursued with the Government its pledge to provide permanent and appropriate accommodation for the UNESCO Regional Office. He personally reviewed possible sites and in 1970 saw the inauguration of the newly built Darakarn Building (named by him).

Thailand truly fulfilled all its pledges to UNESCO by constructing the building, completely furnishing it and providing meeting facilities. Twenty-five years later, Darakarn Building and its compound stand as an oasis of green in a heavily built up Sukhumvit, and while many new conference sites offer grander facilities, its possession of simultaneous interpretation equipment is still called upon from time to time.

A part of Mom Luang Pin's scholarly pursuits was also devoted to UNESCO and he is without doubt the best chronicler of UNESCO and Thailand co-operation. His historical collection is probably the most comprehensive and will hopefully be preciously preserved.

Mom Luang Pin Malakul was born on 24 October long, long before the United Nations came into being, but he was perhaps a forerunner to that vision and devoted his life to those noble ideals enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights wherein is also the right to Education for All.

BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR



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1979-1981 Acting Deputy Minister, Responsible for the management of foreign trade activities, Department of Trade, Philippines.

1979-1986 Lecturer, Teaching and research in the field of comparative education and management of educational systems, University of California, Los Angeles, USA.

1986-1990 Executive Director of the Educational Development Projects Implementing Task Force, Philippines; Under-Secretary, Chairman of the Board of Higher Education, Vice-Chairman of the Presidential Commission for Culture and Arts, Department of Education, Culture and Sports, Philippines.

1990-1995 Director of the Division of Basic Education and Co-ordinator for basic education programmes, UNESCO.

Since 1995 Director of the Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, and UNESCO Representative to Thailand, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Japan, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Democratic Republic of Korea and Vietnam.