

# Towards Lifelong Learning

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The value of lifelong learning has long been embedded in most cultures, but the strong emphasis on attaining formal credentials has often overridden its importance. When UNESCO reignited the concept of lifelong learning in the late 1960's, the idea challenged educators across the globe to think beyond literacy and primary education. It also set in motion the often heated debate on whether such concept was feasible or desirable.

While the paths to lifelong learning may differ from one country to another, case studies from these experiences help illustrate how the concept of lifelong learning gradually gains supports to become the cornerstone of most education systems, some further strengthened by legislations. Furthermore, country experiences help us to understand how the seemingly elusive concept can be translated into reality.

Thailand is one of the countries that have pursued the vision of lifelong learning for the past forty years. While the journey continues to evolve, the lessons learned along the way can help to identify key facilitating factors as well as pitfalls to be avoided in formulating future lifelong learning strategies.

## **Literacy and adult education as primary advocate and supporter of lifelong learning**

When the concept of lifelong learning was introduced in Thailand around 1970's, educators were quite at loss as how to translate it into concrete actions when the country was still struggling to reach the remaining illiterate population and to provide universal primary education. While the idea was dismissed by many as unattainable and ridiculed by others, it caught the attention of adult educators who had to cope with the problems of the lack of motivation among target literacy learners. "What for?" and "what next?" were the most frequently asked questions when persuaded to join classes as many of the learners knew from prior experiences that they could easily revert back to illiteracy due to the lack of usage.

One of the early attempts to realize the concept of lifelong learning in Thailand, therefore, was to propose to the government to invest in the establishment of a network of newspaper reading centers into rural, remote areas to provide continuous flows of up-to-date and interesting reading materials to the learners in the same package as the literacy program. When questioned by the Cabinet as to the necessity of such a strange and seemingly non-educational undertaking, Dr.Kowitz Vorapipatna, the renowned adult educator of Thailand, convinced the non-believers by explaining that the learners would need the opportunity to use the newly acquired skills just as” cars need to have refueling stations”.

More than forty years have elapsed since the first newspaper reading center was set up. At present, the Ministry of Education no longer finances such a center as the demands from the rural subscribers had reached the point that it is now financially viable for the publishers to operate the delivery system even to the remote areas.

Over the years, however, millions of literacy and adult education graduates from diverse backgrounds ranging from prominent political, business and community leaders to workers in informal sectors have generated new demands for further and continuing education. Such challenges have pressured the adult and non-formal education providers to diversify the services and bring about a series of innovations which would, in later years, influence formal schooling and the education system to review and bring about large scale reforms.

Adult education programs were among the first to depart from the centralized curriculum to become more learner-centered and tailor made to cater to different groups of learners. After years of continuing negotiations with the formal school system, graduates from these curricula eventually receive equivalency credentials up to higher secondary education.

In subsequent years, adult education programs also provide opportunities for learners to transfer life and work experiences to be accumulated and counted towards formal education equivalency credits. The involvement of non-traditional “teachers” facilitators” and “resource persons” have transformed the learning processes to take into account learners’ prior experiences and preferences with the introduction of

dialogue and other interactive learning process, bilingual approaches combining mother tongue and standard Thai language, distance education, specially designed computer and learning aids, more hands-on and project-based learning activities.

### **Some concrete examples include**

Children and youth who become ordained as *Buddhist novices* and study the Pali Canon can take additional classes in order to obtain basic education certificates.

*Muslim youths* in religious schools are acquiring basic equivalency education through learning units integrating life skills with religious teaching.

*Learners with disabilities* who have missed their childhood education, are now catching up through specially designed computer programs and learning aids.

*Learners who do not speak Thai as their first language* are now enjoying bilingual teaching with learning materials designed to strengthen mother tongue languages and facilitate acquisition of standard Thai.

*In factories*, workers are able to upgrade their basic education and skill qualifications through workplace education that allows for transfer of work experiences towards educational certificates.

*In Kanchanapisek Home for Youth*, youngster with serious criminal records engage in daily analysis of real-life moral dilemma selected from daily newspapers, practicing critical thinking, dialogues, and personal reflections in diary writing. The process has boosted their self-esteem, sharpened their critical thinking abilities, fostered moral development and reduced violent incidents.

*In prisons*, educational provisions are no longer limited to basic education and skill training courses. The inmates have access to a wider range of challenging learning opportunities from well-equipped libraries, advanced courses in computer technology, fashion design, choral singing and university education.

Across the country, over 4,000 *private adult education providers* have registered and continue to grow in number and diversity to respond to the increasing demands from adult learners to upgrade their skills and pursue personal interests

through short-term courses, correspondence schools and various forms of distance and on-line education.

During the past 70 years, Thai literacy and adult education has gradually expand to involve providers in all fields and touch upon the lives of the large majority of the population. It has also exerted tremendous influences on the formal school system, other development agencies, the communities and the individual learners.

### **Formal education working in synergy with non-formal education to promote lifelong learning**

The increasing number of adult education graduates has created not only demand for new types of education services but also new aspirations for the education of their children and their communities. Over the past decades, we have seen these demands translated into heightened participation in education and pressures for reforms from the civil society. The concept of lifelong learning gradually penetrates formal schooling, the way of thinking of the educators and the country as a whole.

While lifelong learning first made the impact in the areas of literacy and adult education, around 1974, *the report of the education reform committee entitled "Education for Life"* clearly advocated that the entire education system be developed to insure lifelong learning through synergy among formal, non-formal, and informal education.

By 1999, when *the Thai parliament passed the influential Education Act*, lifelong education was mandated as the basic guiding principles and the goal of the education system. The architects of the Education Act were so concerned that the entire educational provisions be based on lifelong learning that they decided to merge the offices of adult and non-formal education and formal education together under the management of the newly created Office of Basic Education.

This decision led to nationwide protests among adult education providers and supporters who fear that the distinct nature of adult and non-formal education will be under the shadow of the powerful school system. As a result, the government decided to reinstate *the Office of Non-Formal Education as an independent organization*,

not under the wing of the Office of Basic Education. Nine years later, the parliament promulgated *the Non-Formal and Informal Education Act* with the aim to mobilize all government agencies and all sectors of the society towards realization of the vision of lifelong learning.

It is important to note that the close cooperation among formal and non-formal education that flourished before the Education Act, subsided during the merging policy and resumed soon after both offices regained their independent and equivalent status.

Some of the concrete examples resulting from close linkages between formal and non-formal education are as follows:

*Revision of the national basic education curriculum* from centralized curriculum for all learners to standard based curriculum with provisions for locally relevant contents to serve the diverse groups of learners.

*Development of self-directed learners* with critical thinking and problem solving abilities, fundamental learning skills and metacognitive abilities became the primary aims of basic education. The once all-important contents now become recognized as means through which self-learning skills can be enhanced.

*Action and experiential learning* initiated in non-formal education are now common practices in formal schools through community service programs, internships and apprenticeship with local workplace, part-time employment, small scale student run enterprises, cross registration among formal and non-formal programs, all of which can be transferred for credits.

Schools are encouraged to offer *alternative pathways* for learners with special needs, combining the better equipped facilities and personnel of the schools with the more flexible non-formal education curricula, inclusive admission policies and regulations, and specially designed support facilities for groups with special needs. As a result, a vast number of drop-outs, out-of-school youth and adults are returning to the schools and universities, altering the student profiles and enriching the learning environment.

Teachers have also benefitted from innovations first piloted in non-formal education. *On-line training programs and distance education* once catered primarily to adult learners are adopted to train teachers on a nationwide basis. One noteworthy effort was initiated by HRH Princess Sirindhorn to assist teachers from ethnic backgrounds who work with preschool children on mountainous ranges to obtain university degrees and teaching certificates through distance education. Teachers also form *professional learning groups* to upgrade their competencies through sharing of knowledge and experiences, coaching, mentoring and various forms of knowledge management techniques.

*The universities* have also been influenced by adult and non formal education, initially, by the new demands for higher education from the massive number of adult education graduates. While the two major open universities, Sukothai Thammathiraj and Ramkhamhang Universities, were among the first to accommodate such demands, soon after , many other universities adopt open admission policies which embrace adult learners and learners with special needs. The inclusive admission policies, in turn, bring about more inclusive teaching and learning practices, more flexible transfer of prior learning towards credits, more responsive regulations and codes of conducts for students and deeper understanding of the principles of andragogy among formal school teachers and university faculty members.

To respond to the diverse, participatory and learner centered educational strategy, *the structure of the education system has been decentralized* to school level and operational units with members of the communities, parents and alumni serving on the increasingly powerful school boards and school district committees. Adult education and non formal education have been called upon to assist parents and school boards to develop greater understanding about child rearing practices, new issues confronting today' youth and their contribution to the education of their children. Within the schools, student clubs and student councils are now widespread, empowered by the participatory techniques of adult and non-formal education.

*Close linkages between formal and non-formal education* have yielded mutual benefits. Capital intensive infrastructure invested for the school system such as

the nation wide internet connection, educational radio and television broadcasting facilities, water systems, school libraries, laboratories, sports facilities have been fully utilized for adult and non-formal education programs, community based learning activities as well as the universities reaching out to learners in rural areas. Adult learners have also benefitted from policies originally formulated for school students such as the supports for free tuition and free text books for those engaged in all forms of basic education. Universities with extension services have contributed to the wealth of knowledge on adult education, served as strong advocates of lifelong learning policies and developed new generations of lifelong learners.

Working in complementary to each other, formal and non-formal education have greatly inculcated the culture of lifelong learning, enriched the learning opportunities and contributed towards the strengthening of lifelong learning.

### **Lifelong Learning beyond the Ministry of Education**

The impact of lifelong learning reaches far beyond the realm of the Ministry of Education. Other development agencies have long worked with communities and adult groups to upgrade their skills and competencies. Although they may not identify their work as adult non-formal education nor lifelong learning, knowledge and skills acquired through these activities can be transferred for credits. Coordination among the various agencies is achieved through the Ministerial Level National Coordinating Committee for Promotion and Support of Non-Formal and Informal Education.

*The military*, one the biggest providers, constantly upgrades training programs for new draftees to insure that they leave the service with literacy skills, basic education and fundamental vocational skills.

The Ministry of Public Health recruits close to one million health volunteers to serve every village of the country with continuous training programs which can be counted towards basic education certificates. These volunteers, in turn, work with the schools and organize health related activities in the communities. Some of their most spectacular achievements include campaigns to improve public toilets of the country and to organize community based aerobic exercise. Such activities have greatly

influenced not only the health habits but also the learning behaviors of the population as a whole.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives operates a network of extension workers in various fields related to agriculture across the country as well as farmers cooperatives, imparting exemplary practices and enriching the indigenous learning systems within the community.

The Border Police initially trained village scouts for security and development purposes. Over the years, the membership grew to several millions and became recognized as powerful social movement, supported by various government agencies to enhance their knowledge, skills, and participation..

There are now several thousands non-governmental agencies and community based organizations working in educational and development projects. Chai Pattana Foundation and Thai Rice Foundation under Royal Patronage, for example, established the first Farmer School in the province of Ayudhaya to provide opportunities for the farmers and extension workers to meet, share experiences and conduct experimentation in order to compare the benefits of traditional and new ways of rice farming. The school succeeds in disseminating more effective farming practices and in generating learning groups within the community. A few years later, the Foundation set up another school to revive the use of buffaloes for tilling the land.

Unlike other member states, supports from local government, which now receives over 30 per cent of budget allocations, however, are still limited as their priority is placed on preschool and formal education. Inspired by the business sector and examples from other countries, the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority has declared the goal to become a Learning City and many local governments are investing in libraries and learning resource centers.

### **New perspectives emerging from the Private Sector**

The concept of lifelong learning has also influenced the business sector. In an attempt to meet the challenges of globalizations, business corporations have placed priority on human resource development and on creating learning organizations.

The active participation of the business community brings new perspectives to adult and non-formal education that hitherto, have been predominantly community and basic education based. The new adult learners are now university graduates with international exposures and standards. The organizers are business executives and industrialists. The money invested per trainee far exceeds most provision provided by previous literacy and adult education programs. Sophisticated training techniques are adopted from more developed economies or created by universities funded to conduct research and development.

Once the human resource development system is in place, many companies move on to Corporate Social Responsibility projects to utilize their resources and personnel to contribute to the development of schools and the communities, resulting in fascinating synergy between business and community based wisdom.

The Siam Cement Group is an example of a conglomerate that places priority on the value of the people and was the first to establish human resource management unit. Mr. Paron Issarasena, the former CEO who served for eight years as the company's Human Resource Manager believed that "our personnel is our most valuable asset. The more competent, knowledgeable and ethical people we have in our company, the more effective we can move towards our goal. Our company can only survive on two critical factors: our human resource and technology. Not to invest in people is to go against the fundamental business principle." Mr. Paron later founded the Suksapattana Foundation which supported satellite transmitted educational programs and worked with Massachusetts Institute of Technology to introduce the concept of Constructionism to Thai schools and the communities.

The Thai government has carried out many proactive measures to mobilize the supports of the business sector to invest in human resource developments. Expenses incurred in training of personnel or in supporting schools receive double tax deductions. Campaigns are launched to invite companies to "adopt" schools or libraries and to provide scholarships for students and teachers. Krung Thai Bank adopts 97 schools and assigns executives and board members to supervise the assistance rendered to each school.

The mass media have been most instrumental in facilitating lifelong learning. Survey has found that on the average, Thai people spend more than four hours watching television and listening to the radio. Close to 60 per cent of the Thai population aged 15-59 read newspaper every day. In order to counteract the commercial influences dominating the media, several measures have been undertaken. These include, inter alia, provision in the education act to provide free educational broadcasting frequency, trust funds set up from earnings from telecommunication monopoly fees to develop “edutainment programs”, establishment of a public broadcasting television station, and time allocated to children and educational programs during prime time.

The use of communication technology is also transforming the learning styles of the Thai population. In 2008, mobile phone, computer and internet users account for 52 per cent, 28 per cent and 18 percent of the population respectively. The internet users alone increased from 220,000 in 1997 to 13,146,000 millions in 2007. The 2008 survey also indicates serious digital divide among people of different regions, age groups and educational backgrounds. Bangkok residents have the highest usage at 36 per cent while only 13-18 percents of those living in other regions are internet users. Close to 70 percent of university graduates use internet while 29 percent and 6 per cent of secondary school and primary school graduates do so respectively. Similarly, around 78 per cent of the professionals use internet compared to 2 percent among farmers. Among women who have attained educational parity with men, lower percentage have experience using e-commerce.

Since 2005, the Thai government has tried to improve accessibility by connecting all schools with the internet. While the project has greatly transformed learning and teaching processes in schools as well as facilitated the use of internet in the communities, much more needs to be done to bridge the widening gaps.

Among the internet users, entertainment and games account for 50 per cent of their usage compared with only 8 per cent for news and education. To insure that the wider access to internet will be utilized for meaningful learning experiences, the Ministry of Culture along with Ministry of Education and Ministry of Technology and

many non-governmental agencies have carried out several innovative measures. These include the promotion of “Good Internet Cafés” which agree to use creative and educational software and adhere to strict regulation on the usage by children and youth, training of youth in computer programming including those who have become game addicts, support for Thai language educational websites, training in media and computer literacy to foster responsible and ethical usage of computers, programs to educate parents to keep track of computer usage of their children and development of screening devices and mechanisms.

### **Strengthening lifelong learning at community and individual levels**

The ultimate support for lifelong learning comes from the communities, learning groups and the individual learners themselves who generate new demands for learning opportunities, offer their own services as resource persons or organizers and contribute towards the development of lifelong learning culture..

Some notable case studies help to illustrate how communities, groups and individual learners have been transformed by lifelong learning and they in turn, serve as catalysts for enriching lifelong learning opportunities.

With over 30,000 temples and 400,000 monks across Thailand, *the Buddhist institution* is potentially the most powerful educational delivery system of the country. Over the years, however, the school systems and the mass media have taken over the prominent roles in educating the Thai public.

Within the past few years, new and exciting innovations have emerged in the teaching of Buddhism and proved to be highly successful in renewing public interests. These approaches include, inter alia, production of attractive publications with colorful illustration, down to earth writing style, dealing with topics close to the concern of youth and the general public, the use of animation, text message and music to convey Buddhist concepts, training of monks to teach in schools and to conduct their sermons more effectively and campaign to ordain youngsters as novices or to form voluntary groups for community services.

With the shift in the age structure of the society, the aging population is now receiving a great deal of attention with concrete plans to provide a variety of services as well as to utilize their expertise. The Brain Bank organization, for example, has been set up to mobilize retired academicians and scholars to provide advice and voluntary consulting services.

**OPPY: Old People Playing Young Group** was founded eight years ago by a prominent business woman at the age of 70 with the aims to encourage and assist people over the age of 45 to learn to use the internet. The project has grown into a club with over 3,000 active members who join to pursue other learning activities such as photography and water painting. The project was among the first to recognize and try to bridge the gap between the older generation and the skills required to function effectively in the society.

Among the communities that have turned around as a result of lifelong learning, **Limtong Village** is perhaps most well known. The village is situated in Buriram Province in rich and fertile land with a huge swamp providing the village with fresh water and abundant supply of fishes. Over the years, the swamp gradually dried up, making rice farming increasingly difficult. At the same time, new roads brought in luxury goods and opportunities to migrate from the communities. With fewer helping hands and lower communal spirits, the villagers stopped helping each other and had to hire outsiders during farming season. Soon, most families were in heavy debt.

Several agencies started to assist the community to transform on the principles of Self-sufficiency bestowed by His Majesty King Bhumipol. Suksapattana Foundation was the first to help with agriculture activities, Auntie Noy, a lower primary school graduate, learned to keep a family account. She soon discovered that the large majority of their expenses went into alcohol and gambling. Auntie Noy vowed to stop buying lottery ticket and helped her husband to get rid of his drinking habits. Soon the family saved enough money to invest in improving their soil for vegetable farming. Auntie Noy went on to learn computer skills through which she became aware of the fluctuating prices of vegetables in the different markets and

learned of new varieties of cash crops, new production, marketing, and management techniques.

Meanwhile, the entire village was inspired by Auntie Noy's determination and followed her example in keeping account of their spending. Eventually, the entire village succeeded in cutting down their gambling and drinking and saved enough money to open a community grocery store. The success of the grocery store motivated the community to move on to other development activities such as community computer center, the use of GPS to survey the landscape and identify appropriate sites for water canals serving the entire village and preparation of village production and marketing plan. While the village received assistance from many agencies, the key to the success lies in the transformation of each individual learner and the community to become self-directed learners, continually seeking, sharing, experimenting and disseminating new knowledge.

At the individual level, *Sunan Sangsuwan founder of an Export Pottery Factory*, represents another self-directed learner who became a millionaire from her determination to learn. Upon her graduation from the university with a social science degree, Ms Sunan ran a family own catering service with little success. Noticing the interests of foreign visitors of the local pottery, she began a small souvenir shop selling local products. When the business proved to be more successful than the catering service, Ms. Sunan took an intensive English class just enough to communicate on export of pottery. The first three years of her business were devoted to learning and experimentation on every dimension of the business from management, export business, financial management, personnel management, production techniques, and the lifestyles of potential customers in foreign lands. Ms.Sunan now runs a factory employing 300 workers, all of whom receive on the job training, exporting over 5 million US dollars worth of pottery to 26 countries each year. She attributes her success to "the unceasing desire to learn and to teach".

These success stories are growing in number, portraying that lifelong learning no longer confines to policy statement or government initiated activities but has affected the lives of people at all levels of the society. The value of lifelong learning,

once embedded in most cultures is now regaining its strengths. It is important to recognize, however, that promising as these case studies may seem, they are only isolated examples. If lifelong learning is to serve as powerful vehicle for development, lessons from past experiences must be examined and new challenges emerging foreseen.

### **Lessons learned from the Thai experiences**

Thailand's forty years of experiences in pursuing lifelong learning illustrate its dynamism. From continuing education for literacy and adult education graduates, lifelong learning now encompasses a rich diversity of learning opportunities extending far beyond education sector into the communities, business sector and overall social and economic development arena. The key strategies and facilitating factors have included the following,

**1. Sustained commitment to lifelong learning.** While the initial commitment began in small scale with narrow focus, there have been unceasing efforts to expand the vision, to reach new groups of beneficiaries, to respond to new learning needs, to introduce innovations and technology as well as to mobilize new alliances. By institutionalizing lifelong learning as the guiding principles of the education plan and later on, in legislation, it has been possible to insure continuity, mobilization of supports and to a certain extent, appropriate budget allocations.

**2. Effective adult and non-formal education.** Without the active supports from adult and non-formal education, the provision of lifelong learning would not have progressed thus far. Adult and non-formal movement has been most instrumental in advocating the vision of lifelong learning and translating it into reality. With a history of uninterrupted development for over seventy years, the Thai adult and non-formal education is unique in many ways. It has become widely respected as the champion of the disadvantaged. It has established close alliance with other adult education providers, with the independent Office of Non-formal Education shifting its role from provider to coordinator. It has nurtured and enjoyed the support of the powerful network of adult education alumni covering all segments of the society.

Most importantly, it has been able to exert influences on the formal schooling and has been recognized as an equal and complementary component of the education system.

**3. *Inclusive formal Education.*** Mandated to insure universal education for school age children and youth, formal school system had taken longer time to respond to the challenge of lifelong learning. The vision of lifelong learning, however, cannot be realized without the support of formal education. While adult and non-formal education has the advantage of being responsive and innovative, the formal school system's network extends across the country with far more resources to be utilized for lifelong learning. The formal school system, however, must be transformed to serve the goal of lifelong learning, striving to guarantee not only access but meaningful, relevant quality learning experiences for all. In particular, self-directed learning competencies and the culture of lifelong learning must be given priority in the curriculum. The teachers and all educational personnel must serve as role models of lifelong learning behaviors and help to facilitate conducive learning environments within the school, the home and the communities.

**4. *Enriched Informal Learning Opportunities.*** The Thai experiences have demonstrated that the learning environment and indigenous learning mechanisms can be further enhanced. Some of the promising strategies have included allocation of broadcasting time to educational and development programs, support for libraries and learning centers, cooperation with religious leaders, parent education, training of folk artists and radio talk show hosts and incentives provided to business sector to organize educational activities.

**5. *Facilitating role of Government in promoting Lifelong learning.*** In the Thai situation, the role of the government has changed over the years. When opportunities for basic education were limited and the value of lifelong learning not fully recognized, the government had to take more proactive roles as primary organizers. In subsequent years, when universal basic education became more widely accessible with diverse providers of adult and non-formal educational services, the government has shifted the role to promoters, coordinators and supporters with more decentralized and participatory structure. Too strong and prescriptive government

control has been found to stifle initiatives and participations. At the same time, attempts to dismiss the functions of the government in adult non-formal education had seriously weakened its positions in providing alternative perspectives and options.

In assessing the present conditions of lifelong learning in Thailand and looking towards the future, there 5 major areas of concerns.

**1. The need to reaffirm our commitment to serve the educationally disadvantaged**

With increased enrolment rates and progress towards achieving education for all targets, pressures towards searching and reaching the educational disadvantaged have been vastly reduced. The new marginalized groups are often overlooked especially those left out by advancement in technology, those endangered by armed conflicts and those affected by the continuing education for adult graduates to encompass all segments of the society has greatly shifted program's priorities. It is quite likely that once again the needs of the educationally disadvantaged will be secondary to the needs of the better endowed and high profile learners. It is important to insure that lifelong learning continue to serve as the tools to help bridging and not widening the opportunity gaps within the society.

**2. The threats and the benefits of technology in insuring equitable lifelong learning**

While Thailand has allocated significant proportion of the budget to equip schools and education facilities with internet and new technology, it has not been able to tackle the problem of digital divide. Furthermore, the new technology has not been fully harnessed to benefit the educational disadvantaged. Inadequate preparation has also led to wasteful and harmful utilization among the learners. Unless, more effective strategy can be formulated to handle this critical challenge, technology will undoubtedly become the key deciding factor on the issue of equity and quality in the future.

### **3. The search for more appropriate concept of quality**

The education system based on the principles of lifelong learning has brought about more diversified learning goals and approaches with transfer of credits across programs organized by different providers, alternative pathways to serve the diverse groups of learners, and more tailor made curricula. There is a need to review and reformulate working definition of quality to attain a balance between standards required and flexibility in response to the diverse needs and conditions of the learners.

### **4. Preparing for the new players of lifelong learning**

Over the years, facilitators of lifelong learning have extended beyond those involved in literacy and adult education. Active participations have arisen from the schools, universities, communities, business corporations, mass media, religious institutions, social, cultural or even political movements. These new players brought with them new resources and approaches which have further enriched and expanded the vision of lifelong learning. In most cases, however, the new players do not consider their work as adult or non-formal education. Coming from vastly different backgrounds, they do not share the same ideology and often lack the abilities to work effectively with disadvantaged adults. Adult educators, at the same time, are often concerned about the new comers and feel the need to control directions and goals. There is an urgent need, therefore, to establish a mechanism to mobilize participation, develop sense of ownership, and provide opportunities for learning and sharing so that synergy between the diverse groups of lifelong learning facilitators can be achieved.

### **5. Fostering moral and ethical development through lifelong learning**

While lifelong learning has proved to be effective in enhancing literacy and communication skills, for upgrading educational qualifications or preparing for the world of works, its success in transforming the ethical values and the behaviors of the learners is much more limited. The commercial sector, on the other hand, has fully exploited the power of the mass media and informal education in creating new and often unnecessary demands among the consumers. Greater attention must be given to foster moral and ethical development, responsible global awareness and empower our learners for social causes through lifelong learning.

Thailand is proud to have made some significant progress in realizing the vision of lifelong learning. We feel indebted to UNESCO and international organizations for inspiration and support, to UIL for expanding the concept and the network of lifelong learning, to member states for exemplary practices. Even though we have much to celebrate, we are acutely aware that the road ahead is even more challenging. CONFITEA VI is organized at the crucial moment when we need to harness all our wisdom to cope with the increasingly detrimental global issues. It is our hope that CONFITEA VI will serve as a venue through which we can assess the present situation, review our ongoing practices and pave the way for future lifelong learning strategy to unleash the human potentials for sustainable development.

