

Harmonizing Differences: Nurturing Our Humanity with ICT

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According to the 17th APEC Ministerial meeting in Busan, Republic of Korea in 2005, the member economies reaffirmed the great importance of promoting education and training, all ministers unanimously welcomed the achievements made by the APEC Future Education Consortium and the APEC Education Foundation in accomplishing a learning community and a stable supporting system for educational development in the APEC region. The success of the primary stage of APEC learning community is an exemplar of learning involved with a deepening process of participation in a community of practice which has universal relevance in all educational institutes in the era of knowledge societies. Educators are constantly engaged in the pursuit of excellence, from ensuring performance standards of pupils to their own professional development. The efforts were not operated in a vacuum. All these are not achieved alone. Educators interact with and learn from one another. Over time, this collective learning results in practices that reflect both the pursuit of excellence and the development of shared practices within and across communities of practice.

This paper is to share and demonstrate the harmonizing technology and human values by examining the case of APEC ICT Model schools. Due to the time constraints, I can not capture all dimensions or efforts which administrators, teachers,



and students put into the program from all participating schools. Moreover, this paper reflects only the sister schools where Thailand and Korea have been collaboratively working with each other to strengthen the mutual relationship between the two countries, and share their experiences among administrators, teachers, and students. Satri Sisuriyothai School and Wandang elementary school have been in my perspective since I

have joined the APEC Future education as a research committee. Therefore, I would present the sister-school activities to answer the question of how technology and human values can be harmonized. My heartfelt thank goes to teachers and students from Satri Sisuriyothai School and Wandang elementary school for their tireless efforts to cultivate from program participation which allow me to learn from their work, play, and study.

Significance of Human Values in Education

This is because values are more important and primary than facts in forming and understanding all kinds of human purposes. Values, rather than observes facts, are keys to understanding the reality behind the scene outwardly presented by human behavior. Although I could see how present technology enhances human capacity in communicating and living, harmonizing technology and human values has to be carefully examined. I have been fortunately to have an opportunity to observe the APEC ICT Model school program which Wandang elementary school in Seoul and Satri Si Suriyothai have been sister schools for two years. They have been collaborating to encourage both school teachers and students to extend their relationship via communication technology; e-mail, chat room, video conference, and web board etc. Moreover, the exchanging themes are centered on cultural activities, folk games, food, and music etc. On the week of full moon night celebration in 2006,



thirteen students and four teachers from Wandang elementary school have visited Satri Si Suriyothai. It was Miss Arunee Nagadatta, the director of Satri Si Suriyothai, who had the vision to share the Thai values to other students and teachers in other parts of the world. She has requested her teachers and students to show our Thai identities and hospitalities to our new brothers and sisters from Korea. Mrs.Somsri Boonyapanasarn, the deputy director of the school, mentioned that the school has been successful in implementing the program because the parents and teachers were eager to participate and learn from their involvement.

Ultimate Experiencing

Not only is the technology a crucial part of the project, but also the cultural exchange and appreciation are vivid. As a generous host, Satri Si Suriyothai School, created various activities which Korean students have opportunities to experiences the



Thai life style, for instance side seeing along Klong Ampawa and experienced home stay at Satri Si Suriyothai students' home one night and another night at Ampawa area. In addition, they learned to make Krathong for Loi Krathong festival like other Thai students. All these interesting activities to Korean and Thai students will lead to virtual environments later on. The relationship has been built. The challenge is to extend their relationship across the ocean and time

zone. The program has demonstrated how these two schools shares values which ties together teachers and students' perceptions and judgments, motives and actions. The essential goodness of teachers' and students' nature is ultimately something for all

participants to reach out together, through discovering, experiencing and further developing it personally and collectively both physical and virtual setting. In nutshell, the experience of teachers and students in utilizing the information and communication technology encompassed interwoven with intercultural exchange would challenge our minds in at least three fundamental and related ways; by virtue of being participatory, by encouraging and nurturing each others to learn new interfaces, and by creating new channels for social interaction.

The significance of ICT on human resource development has been emphasized again on the latest APEC ministerial meeting in Vietnam. The 18th APEC Ministerial meeting in Hanoi, Vietnam in 2006, the joint statement clearly contends that “in today's era of rapid technological progress and innovation, the world's economies are constantly seeking ways to invest in human resources to build knowledge-based economies and to achieve sustainable economic growth and prosperity” It has clearly demonstrate to us that if we want to keep the collective direction to achieve ultimate human development, we are required to put our effort to the root of our society, young generations, not being alone in the cultivating the use of ICT, but we need to stretch our hands to our friends hands, open our heart to our friends hearts, and widen our horizons to new perspectives. Another greater challenge is that how more people would be able to experience the harmony of technology and human values.

Bridging All for Education: Thailand

As a member economy in APEC, Thailand has stepped forward to bridge the digital divide to all students in the country. There are 14.1 millions students in Thailand over computer across all levels of formal education. All schools in Thailand have access to the internet and over two-thirds have their own websites to promote teaching and learning and internal management and administration. The ministry of education currently provides 27 educational TY programs covering 700 learning topics. There are an estimated 5.4 million viewers watching these programs and over 15,500 reception sites and 3,000 internet viewers per month. According to the statistics provided by National Electronic and Technology Commission, there were nearly 7 million internet users in 2004, a rise from 3.5 million in 2001. In 2004, most internet users in Thailand spend more than 20 hours a week online, a rise from 5-10 hours in 2003. Based on the recent evidence, 72% of computers in schools are for teaching and learning process and 52% of these come from community and corporate sector donations.

Recently, the bureau of information and communication technology has put together policy planners from various offices in the ministry of education to propose the ICT master plan. The plan seeks to support Thailand's learning society aspiration by enabling learners, teachers, administrators, and all Thai citizens to experience the benefit of ICT. Three key strands for ICT are proposed to transform the education. These are the quality of learning, educational management, and the quality of ICT graduates. First, the education should allow more accessibility to new learning resources for formal, non-formal, and informal education. The aims are to develop high-order thinking, communication, problem-solving, creativity and other skills to support Thailand's knowledge economy aspirations. Second, ICT is an

enabler for societal improvement. Educational management and administration will be accompanied by innovations in the monitoring and evaluation of learning as well as new opportunities for collaboration and resource sharing between students and teachers within educational institutions as well as with their local, national, and international peer groups. Third, the quality of ICT graduate, the country will put its efforts to produce more number of ICT specialists to international standards which will stimulate innovations in education and related resources to support Thailand's learning society.



Lesson-learned from APEC ICT Model schools is valuable for educators, teachers, parents, students, and also policy makers. Having ICT in schools is not a panacea for educational provision, not a solution for building the network for human resource development, and even not a remedy for transforming education in the knowledge-based society.

Teachers and students are centre of the countries development. Currently, increasing number of Thai schools is evidence. Those schools have gained more benefit from the network participation. The Ministry of Education will later on support more schools to extend their hospitality and warm friendship to other oversea schools. We than can learn together to harmonize the technology and human values. So, our children can be harmoniously united and humbly respect each other differences.

References

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**Dr. Rangsun Wiboonuppatum's work is to promote and integrate e-learning in the Thai public school classrooms and to design national educational policies affecting information and communication technology. To serve as liaison between the Royal Ministry of Education and Oracle, Intel, Microsoft and other private technology companies to integrate technology into classrooms. Dr. Wiboonuppatum's work also extends to the university and international level. He collaborates with six universities in their supervision of 14 schools' efforts to integrate ICT into learning and curriculum, and frequently represents the Ministry of Education in international conferences. He also joins international projects, such as UNESCO ICT in education programs and APEC Future Education forums.*