



Towards the 21st Century

by
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IN THIS WEEK'S HRI-POST CO-OPERATION COLUMN, Dr. Chira talks about macro-micro human resources linkages; introduces two influential colleagues at Thammasat; underscores the importance of putting ideas to the test; and urges renewed efforts to focus leadership and public attention on major issues instead of petty politics.

This week, we begin our summary of the HRI/POST seminar entitled Economy, Politics and Human Resources 1995. There will probably be more next week. I hope you will find that the talks provide some useful food for thought about the general human resources situation in Thailand, and perhaps also prompt you to take some decisive action in your own organisation. I feel it is vital to link the macro and micro policy and implementation levels, and hopefully the HRI/POST cooperation is a good example of these linkages in action.

Although we have high hopes for the private sector, we still need to have appropriate government policies at the macro level in order to produce effective improvements in our organisations at micro level. In the matter of human resources management there is much to consider, and more information and ideas are added all the time. We should make sure that we use this expanding pool of knowledge as inputs in our human resources development strategies.

In this week's discussions about human resources, I feel I must mention my good friend Assoc. Prof. Thongchai Santivong, who writes a regular column for another newspaper. I follow his ideas closely because he is a very good partner of mine in the pursuit of human resources development. We first met more than 20 years ago while he was still a junior lecturer at the Faculty of Commerce and Accountancy, Thammasat University. He has an excellent vision for human resources, and is a good example of someone who has focused attention on the issues and managed to expand the horizons of the subject. I think I can say that Prof. Thongchai has developed his ideas from micro to macro level and, having started at the organisational level, he is now very comfortable with discussing national development strategies. I urge him to keep writing about his ideas so we can all share them, and fortunately I know he is enjoying doing exactly that.

Another friend of mine, Dr. Somjai Phagaphasvivat is also an increasingly active and influential figure in debates about human resources issues. Dr. Somjai has a very thorough understanding of business which has enabled him to develop his own concepts of human resources. I would like to encourage him to write and speak on these topics more often.

All three of us represent Thammasat University, although we are from different faculties. I was originally from the Faculty of Economics, before I moved to the HRI. Khun Thongchai is from the Faculty of Commerce and Accountancy, and Dr. Somjai is from the Faculty of Political Science. We all develop our ideas using what I call 'Lateral Thinking.' This involves taking different disciplines into consideration. We at Thammasat represent a new breed of people who know how to develop new ideas and put them to the test. The decisive issue here is not just whether we can identify the symptom or problem, but whether the ideas work in practice. In the future lateral thinking will be essential for all academics. For instance, there are at least 5-6 disciplines involved in human resources alone.

For my own part, over the next 2-3 years I will devote myself to trying to develop, influence and coach the future leadership of Thailand in human resources disciplines, so that there will be enough people in the next generation to follow up on these issues. My vision involves influencing the leadership in politics, government and business, as well as young students, to try to ensure that they are successful in developing and implementing improvements. I would also like to have these ideas become more widely understood overseas, because our knowledge and experience is valuable to other countries also. To this end, I am planning to publish several books based on my experiences.

Finally, I would like to express my sadness over the recent cabinet reshuffle involving Khun Thaksin Shinawatra's resignation from the Foreign Ministry, and his replacement by the Minister of University Affairs, Khun Krasae Chanawong. In the light of these tumultuous events our universities seem to have been given second priority in the news, and nobody seems to care. Indeed, the amount of concern for long term development shown by the media and society in general is negligible. But why I ask, should a foreign minister be considered more important than our universities?

It is a constant battle to change the attitude of people towards anything which is significant, but which seems remote to them. Until society re-engineers its thinking, my job is not finished. We have to keep pushing for some kind of attitudinal change towards education and human resources. Some of the blame for this must also fall on the media, which often tends to take too narrow a view of the agenda. If we are not careful we will end up with the right foreign minister, but still with a lot of disadvantaged people in society.

See you next week.

P.S. If you missed my television interview with Prof. Michael Hammer, you can catch it again on Channel 11 today at 8.30 p.m.

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