



Towards the 21st Century

by
Dr. Chira Hongladarom, Executive Director, Human Resources Institute, Thammasat University.

IN THIS WEEK'S HRI-POST CO-OPERATION COLUMN, Dr. Chira gives practical illustrations of how Thailand is fulfilling its role as a leading force in human resources development in developing countries both in and beyond the region. He also applauds the Ministry of Commerce's vision in embarking on a course of upgrading its human resources to meet the demands of the era of globalisation.

This week the rainy season came early to Bangkok. Over the next few days the schools start back and the traffic situation will be the same old story.

Nevertheless, the hottest issue in the minds of most Thai people should still be the up-coming no-confidence debate scheduled for 17-18 May. What will happen, nobody knows.

Meanwhile, as developments unfold at national level, our work at the HRI is also moving into another gear this week.

Firstly, let me say welcome to 20 senior representatives of the State Planning Committee of Vietnam who are joining us to attend a high level training course on market economics. This is actually the fourth such course we have hosted. The first three courses were financed by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation, whereas the current one is supported by the Royal Thai government through the Department of Technical and Economic Cooperation (DTEC).

At the opening ceremony held last week, we met the Director-General of DTEC Khun Pichet Soontornpipit, and happily in the course of our discussions we learned that the market economics course will also be offered to China and Africa. It is hoped that as soon as this year the government will begin financing some training programs for African countries, which as we all know are among the poorest in the world.

As we live in the era of globalisation, I wonder what the future of these poor people will be. I also wonder if Thailand can play a role in helping to uplift their standard of living. I believe that we have much to offer Africa in terms of human resources development, especially in the fields of commercial agriculture, agro-processing, labour intensive industries, banking and public administration. In fact, I would go so far as to suggest that a commitment to sending an academic mission to the African continent should be contained in the drafting of the planning for higher education in the next 15-years. Hopefully the DTEC/HRI project in Africa will serve as a prototype for future cooperation at other levels.

As far as China is concerned, I received a request from senior government officials to send a delegation to attend our market economy course. I believe that it will be extremely beneficial to Thailand to work closely in human resources and related fields with what in the future may become the most important country in the world both economically and politically.

Another interesting project we launched this week is the Third High Level Training Course on 'HR Strategies: Thinking and Action' for senior Thai managers. This will be the third occasion on which we have organised this 100 hour intensive training course. I took our first group of 45 people to a get-together seminar in Pattaya last week. Surprisingly, one of the main concerns voiced by this group was the standard of education for Thai people. They were interested in the role of the private sector in human resources development and worried whether we have enough leaders at every level with the necessary long term vision.

It seems that people in Thailand are generally pessimistic about the quality of our education. The top management's motivation behind sending people on this course was in order to raise their companies' productivity in order to compete globally. But after sharing some ideas about education in Thailand, they began to see that the subject is too important to be left in the hands of government. Education must also be a concern of the private sector.

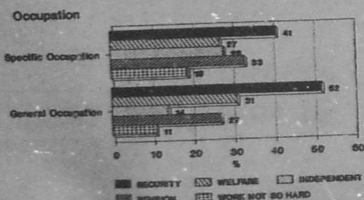
At least I am happy to say that during the past 12 months the government sector and state enterprises have begun to take a serious look at improving human resources capabilities. I have already informed readers that the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives through the Office of Agriculture has enlisted the help of the HRI Economics Commission to research into the question of human resources in agriculture, and I am happy to say that the project is due to start this week.

The HRI's next big project will be with the Ministry of Commerce under the leadership of Khun Charae Chutharatkul, the Permanent Secretary. He has agreed to be on the HRI Commission which will plan for the improvement of staff performance in 7 departments within the Ministry. It is a great honor for the HRI to accept this challenge, especially as I believe that the Ministry of Commerce has a lot of people-capable of increasing its role in the global trading system.

I told the Permanent Secretary that one of the indirect benefits of the Ministry's foresight in addressing the issue of human resources will be to set an example to the country's export sector of the importance of upgrading its manpower too, just as the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MITI) does in Japan. As we are looking for some strong leadership and vision in the matter of human resources, let's hope that the Ministry of Commerce will accept the challenge.

See you next week!!

Reason of Still Working in Public Sector



Source: HRI, 1995.

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