1. The Global and National Settings

As late as 150 years ago, neither people nor information could travel faster than a horse pulling cart. Only 125 years ago Alexander Graham Bell invented telephone communication. Forty years ago a computer was perceived as a "huge" black box.

Nowadays, an instruction to invest funds in a liberalized capital market or to withdraw funds from it or to engage in foreign exchange transactions across the globe travels at the speed of light or 300,000 kilometres per second. Fund managers and foreign exchange hedgers make seemingly heartless speed-of-light transactions for their gains at the expense of the life-savings of those unprepared and unaware of the consequences of the might of technological globalized world.

The last two decades have seen a tremendous advancement in an integration of electronics, computers, telecommunication and information or ECTI technology, of which the effects upon human civilization are far beyond imagination. The might of information technology not only enables human beings to be in contact with one another more speedily and conveniently, but also propels the emergence of a new borderless world. This world of a new mainstream socio-economic and political order affects every country; it is a world that seeks a new balance between global and local values, thoughts and ways of life amidst existing national and local cultural diversity. Truly, the era of globalization has arrived with many implications on national stability. Only countries endowed with vision and wisdom to understand the globalization process and its oncoming threats and opportunities will be able to secure a peaceful and productive co-existence in the global pluralistic international community.

In addition, the more fluid transnational mobilization of investment capital has also proven that the competitive advantage of a nation is no longer the richness of its natural resources but the richness of its well-educated manpower capable of living up to the challenges of an ever-changing world. With the globalization movement thus comes the notion of global citizens that necessitates a new form of education aimed at enabling them to live and work with peoples of different races and cultures. The globalization process urges men and women of the future to be more critical of, and adaptive to, economic and social transformations while maintaining national and local cultural heritage. They must be prepared for multi-cultural interaction, values changes, cosmopolitan way of life, yet struggling to maintain their own ideals and identity.

2. Development Fundamentals for Thailand

Let me take the case of Thailand as an example. Unmistakably, the developmental prospects of Thailand in the future lie with the strength of the Thai people; the strength of both individuals and communities whose vision, creativity and self-governing capability will secure and sustain through generations a successful venture through the path of
development. It is particularly crucial that the future development of Thailand must reflect the economic and social importance of local communities deep rooted with local culture and wisdom. Economic vigor along with social, cultural and environmental vitality of thousands of urban and rural communities are the source of collective strength of the nation. In short, the community must be capable of maintaining itself not only as a strong and dynamic unit of the economy, but as proud and lively part of the social and cultural life of the country as well.

The new generations of Thai should be blessed with a peaceful and productive life within their home communities instead of being forced to find a better life in big cities or elsewhere. They should, therefore, be able to preserve and pass on to their future generations their cultural identity. In order to achieve this goal, they must be equipped with adequate skills, knowledge and understanding that are appropriate in the local environment. Still, local authorities must be empowered with self-governing responsibility together with better distribution of economic activities to rural areas. Local authorities should, therefore, be encouraged to take initiatives in the way of community well-being with full participation from the people.

3. Toward a Learning Society

It is imperative that Thailand must radically improve its educational and training system as a foundation of national development. An education reform with the aim toward decentralizing administrative power to local authorities is called for. The desirable system of education and training must provide Thai people with self-sufficiency and adaptability. It is, therefore, the kind of education that gives to people not only general and vocational skills, but also adequate learning skills and perceptive minds; the love for learning and the learning how to learn skills. It is education which provides the people with an ability to make rational judgments and choices, a conviction of their civic duty, and a courage to express their democratic rights and freedom. It is an education that enables them to see things clearly, to choose what is sensible for their family and community and to disregard what is irrelevant. It prepares them to take up prospective occupations in the community or elsewhere with sufficient confidence and yet be alert and receptive to continuing improvement through new information and knowledge. It also enlarge their horizons regarding social and cultural diversity, thus showing them how to accommodate themselves to others. It is an education that gives them a common ground to share with other members of society and with the international community. It is this kind of education that will pave the way for Thailand to become a learning society.

4. Strategic Vision of Learning

The desirable system of education for a bright future for Thailand should enhance the individual's access to education so that his or her full potential can be realized. Educational access should be extended to all, regardless of sex, race, financial status or physical and mental conditions. Education should be a means of social mobility for everyone and thus pave the way for more equitable society. This vision implies measures affecting not only the formal system of education, i.e., the extension of compulsory school years to 9 or 12, but also, and perhaps more importantly, the non-formal sectors of continuing education for
people from all walks of life. It is the kind of education that aims to eliminate all sorts of boundaries of education, be they age, race or other limitations of economic, geographical, physical or mental nature. It also promotes community-based lifelong education, offering the enjoyment of learning to every member along with an easy access to a multitude of education and training programs within their own neighborhood. Thai citizens, rich or poor, urban or rural, normal or bled, should be able to receive proper education they way they want, as long as they want, and be able to enrich their families, their communities through education.

It is not easy to establish such a personalized, community-oriented system of education. It requires a much larger amount of resources, technology, management and cooperation among social institutions. It also requires the united force of various related agencies in order to promote lifelong education and create an environment conducive to learning in all respective communities. Successful educational reform in present-day Thailand thus requires a new paradigm of thought in which families, religious institutions, business establishments, mass-media enterprises, non-governmental organizations, must be brought into a holistic view of lifelong educational process. It is an "education-for-all" and also "all-for-education" way of educational thinking. These social institutions are prospective partners of local schools in developing education and training programs most suitable to the community. This paradigm change must coincide with a rapid decentralization of educational administration to local authorities based on a firm belief that only local authorities can realize local needs and can enable the local education system to be adaptive to an over-changing environment. Following are strategies for education reform in Thailand that will help country realize its educational vision.

5. Strategies for Educational Development

The new educational system in Thailand can be best characterized by a learning network concept of educational provision. It is a network composed of thousands of individual communities, involving teachers, parents, community leaders, business entrepreneurs, and civil servants adapt in educational management. Instead of the traditional hierarchy of educational administration, these independent, self-governing communities, through mutual support and continuing exchange of information, should constitute a solid path to the much needed dynamism and adaptability in Thai educational system. It is a network in which each segment of the society may have its own unique, self-sufficient learning mechanism suitable for each community, yet remaining an integral part of national development perspectives. It is a drastic shift from the old days of uniformity and centralization to the new dawn of diversity and self-governance. Such a far-reaching goal thus requires two major strategic components: the reform of learning, and the reform of management, both of which are aimed at capitalizing individual and community potentials.

6. The Essential Elements

The reform of learning takes a comprehensive view of human development, looking at human learning needs from early childhood throughout a child's life. In the context of globalization, it embraces strategies that start with basic child development as a foundation for physical, mental, emotional, social and intellectual growth of our people. It
then addresses *basic education* for a diverse group of clientele with emphasis on long-term learning ability. It also puts an accent on *national competitiveness* to which vocational and professional education, skill training as well as work ethics are the main contributors. Finally, the new form of learning will promote *lifelong education* for individuals and communities as a means to cope with incalculable changes and uncertainties so as to assure quality of life and society. Specific recommendations for each stage of development are made as to what and how to do with some key targets.

The reform of management is an essential condition in national educational reform without which other reform efforts could become a failure. In the era of change and uncertainty, the new management system must clearly demonstrate dynamism and flexibility on one hand, and efficiency and responsiveness on the other. The proposed reform package, therefore, focuses first on the new administrative structure under which *local administrative commissions* are empowered with decision-making responsibility. It also welcomes new partners in educational administration, i.e., parents, local community leaders, Buddhist monks and local religious leaders, etc. Second, it highlights *the increasing role of the private sector* in educational provision. Third, it stresses a radical *reform in the higher education sector* as a cutting edge in the educational development scheme of the country. Fourth, it emphasizes the importance of *quality assurance* mechanisms as a basic rule of the twenty-first century educational management. Finally, the management reform must emphasize the *mobilization of resources* from various sector for the betterment of educational service.

One of the most crucial factors of *learning how to learn and its management* is the encouragement of provision of an environmental setting conducive to self- and group-learning. We believe that a diversity of learning networks is the key. I describe a voluntary network of education institutions indiscriminate of levels and types, enterprises public and private, social institutions in the community and the mass media together opening their doors and joining forces with a common goal to promote learning. One may call it real linkages, virtual linkages through digital technology or otherwise, university-industry linkages, outreach program. The means and the end of the learning networks converge towards *a learning society for quality life-long education for all.*

7. **National Education Law**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have outlined to you the crux of education reform. You may ask who is listening to me and how do I translate these principles in to action.

What I have outlined to you is the work of over 100,000 Thais participating in the drafting of the Eighth and Ninth National Economic and Social Development Plans (1997-2001, 2002-2006), the National Education Development Plan and the Commission on Thailand’s Education in the Era of Globalization supported by the Thai Farmers Bank.

Another question may still be raised, namely, with the Thai Government and Ministers of Education and University Affairs changing every year or so, how can we implement reform. This is a very valid question. One of the answers is an education law which was drafted by a panel organized by the Office of the National Education Commission. The panel consisted of about one hundred researchers, educators, teachers, administrators, natural and social scientists and politicians. I also was privileged to chair this panel. From early 1998,
the draft bill was discussed at public hearings around the country and distributed to various media, home-page, world-wide-web sites through Internet to gain a wide response from the public. The views of the public were incorporated into the law. On June 23, 1998 the Cabinet approved the Bill and it was debated and fully deliberated on by the House of Representatives and the Senate, both of which passed the Bill almost unanimously. H.M. the King affixed His signature and published it in the National Gazette on August 19, 1999. The National Education Law has been effective since August 20, 1999.

What I have described is now embodied in 78 sections grouped into nine chapters and one additional chapter on transitory provisions. There are three major reform principles, namely,

1. Access to quality life-long education for all,
2. All for education, and
3. Reform of learning: learning how to learn.

These three principles are implemented through six interrelated strategies, i.e.

1. Unity of policy with diversity in education provisions,
2. School-based management coordinated and supported by local education authorities,
3. Annual internal assessment while five-year external third party quality assurance,
4. Teachers and administrators licensing,
5. Resources mobilization from all sectors of society, and
6. Participation by all sectors of stakeholders.

8. **Agenda for Education**

Many key points that have been outlined are not only specific to Thailand but also relevant to all SEAMEO member countries. These challenges require a whole system reform of education. The reform is not just a one-shot affair but a process that must be carried out over a short duration of time - say a few to five years while concurrently carrying out continued monitoring and necessary activities in a fashion of P, D, C, A (Plan, Do, Check and Act). The whole process has to be repeated every decade or so depending on the rapidity of the rate of change in technological advance that affects human life and society.

8.1 **Reform Basics**

Basic to the reform are: first, quality lifelong education for all; second, all sectors of society for education; and third, the reform of learning how to learn. The strategies
will be different for different societies. For Thailand, six strategies have been identified as described in Section 7.

8.2 Key Implementation Issues

The crux of the issues for Thailand is the cooperation of home, social institutions and school. The degree of participation depends on the levels and type of education. For example, in early childhood the child-care center should work closely with the home, the temple or musjid or church and the environment around the child in the village. At higher education level, the home is signified by knowing oneself and one's society and the social institutions are knowing others in the whole world and environment. One of the key issues of the future is harmony of development and environment. Just this one issue alone requires curriculum and teacher reform. Another key issue is in the area of learning how to learn, independent of livelihood or vocation or profession a person is in or wishes to be in, what are the basic skills for the future generation? Here four basic skills, among others, are communication skills (mother tongue, national language, neighboring country's language and English language); mathematical and computer skills; managerial skills and cross-cultural skills.

8.3 Utilizing ICT

Never before in human history has a technology been so pervasive in all activities of individuals and societies coming in a short span of time - a decade or less. A person has no time to adapt. The Agricultural Revolution on the planet earth took thousands of years while the Industrial Revolution took a few centuries. Those people and societies that are literate in ICT (Information and Communication Technology) are at the advantage. In the highly competitive-led world, those who know take advantage of those who know-not.

On the one hand this ICT, or in broader terms, the digital technology creates the Digital Divide. The digital divide is not only between developed and developing countries but also within a country. The last mile problem, meaning lacking access to telephone lines or a satellite dish or outside roaming circle for a mobile phone, is still a problem even in the richest countries. Another issue is the last meter problem, meaning the problem of those who are not computer and/or modern machine literate. Many nations, bilateral and multilateral organizations are working hard to close the gap of the Digital Divide, but so far, the divide seems only to widen.

On the other hand ICT can greatly strengthen access to learning through the use of the Internet, access to libraries and learning about thinking and the thoughts of other people, if they put their thoughts and findings on the web. Educators, governments and the private sector have to work together so that the frequencies, the backbone and the local area networks spread to all schools, communities and homes. It has been shown in many places where ICT is used effectively in addition to the normal teaching -learning process, that the success of learning is enhanced.

8.4 Nuts and Bolts Instruments

This paper has presented the reasons for education reform or the why of this process. The whats and the hows were embodied in the law to ensure continuity. Technology
can further strengthen achievement of our goal. The nuts and bolts are really financing and management. A new way of financing and resource mobilization is a must. Here again the way depends on different type of settings, in the place and in time. There is no one single formula for all cases. Management, although in many cases is culturally specific, the principles and technologies are common. Here one can learn from each other.

8.5 The Philosophy : Belief System, Faith and Wisdom

Are we merely flying geese led by markets and materialism?
Do we have minds of our own that care for a network of civil societies of diverse culture at peace with ourselves, with others and with nature?
Is it needs or greeds that we are aiming for?

These questions are not easy to answer. The answers are different for different societies and countries. The related questions are: what is the role of education? What is the purpose of education reform?

As for Thailand, academics, village leaders and strategic planners have raised these questions off and on. And over the past decade, most thinkers agreed on the basic philosophy of Sufficiency Economy. The underlying principle of the people-centered development of the Eighth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1997-2001) is quite close to this philosophy. The Sufficiency Economy philosophy is the underlying principle of the Ninth National Economic and Social Development Plan for Thailand.

Sufficiency Economy is a philosophy bestowed by His Majesty the King to his subjects through royal remarks on many occasions over the past three decades. The philosophy provides guidance on appropriate conduct covering numerous aspects of life. After the economic crisis in 1997, His Majesty reiterated and expanded the Sufficiency Economy in remarks made in December 1997 and 1998. The philosophy points the way for recovery that will lead to a more resilient and sustainable economy, better able to meet the challenges arising from globalization and other changes.

Sufficiency Economy is a philosophy that stresses the middle path as the overriding principle for appropriate conduct by the populace at all levels. This applies to conduct at the level of the individual, families, and communities, as well as to the choice of a balanced developmental strategy for the nation so as to be able to modernize in line with the forces of globalization while shielding against inevitable shocks and excesses that arise. Sufficiency means moderation and due consideration in all modes of conduct, as well as the need for sufficient protection from internal and external shocks. To achieve this, the application of knowledge with prudence is essential. In particular, great care is needed in the utilization of untested theories and methodologies for planning and implementation. At the same time, it is essential to strengthen the moral fiber of the nation, so that everyone, particularly political and public officials, technocrats, businessmen and financiers adhere first and foremost to the principles of honesty and integrity. In addition, a balanced approach combining patience, perseverance, diligence, wisdom and prudence is indispensable to cope appropriately with critical challenges arising from extensive and rapid socioeconomic, environmental, and cultural changes occurring as a result of globalization.
9. **Concluding Remarks**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have outlined for you the forces of globalization and the Information and Communication Technology revolution. Each nation has to ponder and discover for itself a set of solutions to ensure they take up the opportunities and alleviate the threats arising from globalization. Education is a necessary major answer but by itself it is not sufficient. Education and health are necessary twin sisters for the betterment of the populace. Economic and financial systems reforms to assure strong foundation for development, reform of the governmental system, good governance in all sectors and legal reform with an aim to effectiveness and efficiency are but a few additional requirements needed to take up these new challenges.

Above all revitalization of values, morals and ethical heritage with a philosophical depth of our culture must be the core that binds the society together.

The challenges to education in the new millennium are indeed monumental endeavors for us all.

How can we educate, inculcate and stimulate our children and future generations to live peacefully with themselves, with others and with nature on this small Planet Earth?

May I wish for successful and fruitful deliberations for this session.

Thank you,

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