

## *Keynote Address*

# **In Honour of His Majesty the King's Sixtieth Anniversary of Accession to the Throne on "Tenth Anniversary of the Distance Learning Foundation"**

by

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Professor Dr. Srisakdi Charmonman,  
Dr. Arthur Morse,  
Distinguished Participating Universities,  
Esteemed Members of the Thai Public and  
Private Sectors,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today is a special occasion. This year 2006, we celebrate His Majesty the King's Sixtieth Anniversary of Accession to the Throne. This year 2006 also coincides with the Tenth Anniversary of the Distance Learning Foundation.

Exactly ten years ago, in order to honour His Majesty the King's Fiftieth Anniversary of Accession to the Throne, the Distance Learning Foundation decided to launch the first live satellite transmission of the full secondary curriculum, Grade 7 to Grade 12 on His Majesty the King's Birthday Anniversary, Fifth December 1995.

That was a great leap forward to overcome the ailing structural problems of teacher shortage. The remote tele-education by means of satellite broadcast opens up "a new paradigm of learning". This new

paradigm shift has defied the orthodox educators for the very first time in the history of Thailand's modern day education.

Ten years have passed. What have we achieved?

In ten years, we have achieved our prime objective to telecast live the whole range of basic education Grade 1 to Grade 12 from Wang Klaikangwon School to the students in the rural areas.

The Foundation, with the help of the Royal Thai Army, has completed the free installation of the distance learning equipment at all the secondary schools, around 3,000, under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education. In 2006, out of 30,000 primary schools in Thailand one third of the primary schools have been equipped with the distance learning devices.

Right now, Twelve thousand two hundred and twenty one (12,221) primary schools, including 400 Moslem Schools in the Southern provinces of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, Satun and Songkla join the

distant learning programme from Wang Klaikangwon School.

In terms of scholastic achievement, schools in the North, Northeast and the South including the Moslem Schools, and the poorest part of Thailand that have incorporated distance education from Wang Klaikangwon in the teaching and learning process have made remarkable academic record.

Seventy Five per cent of their students in their Grade 12 class could enter university. What's more, the "white elephant" university graduates with First Class and Second Class have grown in numbers from the Academic Year 2001 until 2005. There are 21 First Class Honours and 6 Second Class Honours from all over the country in the Academic Year 2005.

Upon request, the distance learning devices have also been installed at schools and universities in China (Yunnan), Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. Our students and teachers have been connected, taught and trained together.

In terms of activities, the Distance Learning Foundation has taken bold initiatives. We have forged new educational partners at home and abroad, capitalizing on our unique technology convergence of satellite broadcast and internet.

Regular videoconferencings with Sweden, France, Switzerland, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and Oregon, have been organized to offer free knowledge and trainings in a number of disciplines, in methodology, technology and management of distance education, teaching of English, Science and Mathematics.

In this way, I am pleased and much honoured to be invited on this special

occasion by Professor Dr. Srisakdi to share with you the subject that I have devoted myself to The Low Cost Rural Distance Education via Satellite.

The project started in 1995 is a realization of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej's life-long goal – that every Thai child, especially those in the remote parts of the Kingdom, should be given an opportunity to learn.

I am sure you have noticed when you are in the rural area that Teacher shortage is critical. Rajapranugroh Boarding Schools along the border with 1,000 students have only 20 teachers. Lack of teachers at the primary and secondary levels in terms of numbers, qualification and specialization – science, chemistry, physics, mathematics and foreign languages – has continued from ten years ago, when the Foundation was set up until today.

The major stumbling-block in Thailand's education is the huge gap between the numbers of secondary schools and the primary schools. For a total of 30,000 primary schools there are only around 3,000 secondary schools. Children aged 12 have no place to further their secondary education. Still immature, they are unable to tell right from wrong. They may become victims of human trade, drugs and other abuses.

I have been working as Director of the Wang Klaikangwon School, His Majesty the King's private school in Hua Hin for 27 years since 1979. For 54 years, since 1952 I have been assigned by His Majesty the King to work as Director of the Royal Radio Station. At that time, Bangkok had no television station or other forms of entertainment. The A.S. Radio Station in Dusit Palace provides the only means of connecting to the people. It becomes the first

community radio. It was at the A.S. Radio Station that I learnt the arts of acoustics and photography. His Majesty the King is the Great Teacher.

I returned from Lausanne in 1951, having completed the hotel management course with 3 top distinctions in Culinary Arts, Service, Administration and Accounting. I took to Her Royal Highness Princess Mother's guidance that "It is fundamental to have a thorough knowledge and learning in whatever field of study and to be able to put into practice and to teach".

So in 1952, at the age of 24 years old, when this world is yet unknown to many of you, I started to teach hotel management, during the construction of Erawan Hotel. Mr. Kittisak Sriamphai, Member of Parliament and Ms. Thipawanee Snidswongse, children story writer were among my students.

At the Pranakorn Finishing School now known as "Rajabhat Suan Dusit", I taught the French Cuisine and French Arts of Dining or "la Gastronomie Francaise", French Service, "Service a la Francaise", French Menu and French Wine. My students were Khunying Somjintana Bhaksriwongse, former Director General, the Department of General Education, Ministry of Education and Mrs. Malinee Chomchengpaite, a well-known businesswoman, Goki Deep Fry Flour Company.

A fair rebuttal to criticism from some well-known educators that I neither have a degree nor possess any background in education. My idea to set up distance education via satellite system for the rural schools in Thailand to meet the needs of the children has never been an easy privileged path that all my positions would have suggested from the very beginning.

To His Majesty the King, education is one means to make a good person. His Majesty does not want walking school books. What He wants is honest, truthful young man and woman, clean in body, habits and thoughts. Agricultural training therefore becomes an integral part of the students' learning at Rajaprajanugroh Schools.

To carry out that mission, the Distance Learning Foundation is committed to integrate His Majesty the King's educational policy of "Ob Rom Bom Nisai" or moral teaching and training and "Lifelong Learning via Technology" with the ICT module.

Myself, I have envisioned that these lifelong learning opportunities, "The Free for All Open Distance Education" by the Distance Learning Foundation must serve the needs of the children, the communities, the people and the disadvantaged group. It will not be a technology-oriented project.

The challenge is "How". How ICT could be properly used in a cost-effective manner in order to efficiently distribute and make available to all education, knowledge, technical expertise, living skills as well as ethical and spiritual orientation.

Wang Klaikangwon School is His Majesty the King's private school located in Hua Hin, Prachuab Kirikhan Province, 200 kilometres south of Bangkok. It is a common ordinary school just like any school upcountry. Wang Klaikangwon School offers free education from Kindergarten, Grade 1 to Grade 12. The Ministry of Education sends qualified teachers to support the teaching and learning activities at Wang Klaikangwon School. For sometime, the school has been recognized as Model School by the Ministry of Education.

The Wang Klaikangwon School, together with Wang Klaikangwon Industrial and Community Education College and Ratanakosin Rajamangala University of Technology, Wang Klaikangwon campus provides a one stop service for “full cycle education” from kindergarten, primary, secondary, vocational to university level.

The Ministry of Education and the Distance Learning Foundation came to the conclusion that we could readily transmit the full cycle education from Wang Klaikangwon School to the distant schools throughout the whole kingdom by means of live satellite broadcast via Ku band and DTH or direct to home system.

Within the span of 10 years, Ku band has proven to be cost-effective and efficient technology option. The antenna is small and handy only 75 centimetres in diameter. So anywhere you see the “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Stars”, you can receive the Ku band signal.

From Wang Klaikangwon School to the Uplink Station in Pathumthani, TOT has kindly provided 2 fibres optics, land line and sea line, each at the distance of 200 kilometres for free. So unlike Bangkok, these signals are free from interference. The clear audio-visual signals could reach as far as China (Yunnan), Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Singapore and Hong Kong.

For the past 10 years, the Foundation has absorbed the cost of renting half the transponder and the uplink by Shin Satellite.

For children upcountry, they suffered terribly from the lack of teacher and proper schooling. This new form of home delivery education has injected a renewed self motivation and planted a new seed of learning culture.

The gift of quality education from His Majesty the King’s school, and the same treatment as His Majesty the King’s students has helped the upcountry children to build up their confidence and motivation to build their future with their own hands. The “TV Teacher” uncompromisingly teaches and trains them to be punctual and self-disciplined, skillful in capturing the lecture. Students develop the passion for learning in a natural way. They are trained to be responsible for their own learning and accountable for their own life.

Having seen the concrete outcome of the live secondary broadcast via satellite to all around 3,000 secondary schools under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, it was in the year 2004, that the Ministry of Education requested the Distance Learning Foundation to combine the live satellite broadcast of full primary and secondary curricula, Grade 1 to Grade 12 on 12 channels.

English, Chinese, Japanese, French, German and Thai are taught on-air. The other three channels focus on community education, university education and international programmes.

I am proud to say that the DLF instructional TV operation under the “One Class, One Channel” modality is one of its kind in the entire world.

Many educational theorists did question about the live satellite broadcast of the primary classes. At that time I was not in the position to respond. The idea is totally new and unprecedented and unorthodox. To keep the attention of those young kids at the primary levels are like as Thai people say, catching baby crabs crawling in and out of the basket.

But, the launch of the live primary classroom broadcast turned out miracles. The young kids want their mommies and daddies and their friends all over to see them on the TV screen. Teachers do not need to prod them to take part in the classroom activities.

They just love it. They happily sing and dance confidently grasp the microphone and make their public appearance. They are at ease and at best enjoying themselves in “learning by doing” far greater than I would say their secondary peers.

Our technology cutting edge is the “Simplicity” of “The Wang Klaikangwon Model of Low Cost Classroom Management.”

To save cost, the 12 actual classrooms Grade 1 to Grade 12, at Wang Klaikangwon School are used as studios. Normal fluorescent lights are used instead of the 500 watt flashlight. With normal light, students and the teachers do not have stage fright.

Without glaring light, there is no need for heavy make-up. Camera angle that focuses on the nose tip produces a natural soft look on the screen. Wrinkles can not be seen. Some of you have already experienced how the “Magic Camera” works at the Distant Learning Television Station in Hua Hin.

Unlike the professional Hollywood studio, we do not use expensive carpet. Students’ presence serves as natural acoustics. The sound has a beautiful natural echo, not the sort of dead echo. To adjust the light, we use Venetian Blind instead of the curtain which can be costly to maintain in the long run.

The dust might damage the two rather expensive cameras in the classrooms. Therefore, blackboard is replaced by

whiteboard. Magic pen replaces chalk. Maintenance on a daily basis is also cost saving.

These simple thoughts about the technology applications have accumulated from the 53 year work experience at the Royal Radio Station. I am most grateful to His Majesty the King’s advice and guidance.

With technical simplicity and personal awareness, we manage to run 15 channel broadcast on a 24 hour basis, by saving huge cost of lighting, air-conditioning, electricity and make-up. The excellent maintenance of the Station has earned us many awards from the world-class telecommunications companies. In terms of staffing, we only have 130 people. That includes 77 engineers and technicians. You can compare that with commercial televisions in your countries. We might as well be included in the Guinness Book of Record.

In a nutshell, we could get the most and the quality out of the least that we have invested.

We don’t need the 2 way audio visual communication in order to be interactive. In the case of one to multi-point broadcast, that would indeed be a waste of money. A combination of One way visual and Two way audio connection with Wang Klaikangwon School already serves the purpose and saves cost. The remote students can call or fax or email right into the actual classrooms while on air. The TOT Public Company Limited or previously the Telephone Organization of Thailand allocates 4 toll-free telephone lines for the connection. The parent school can hear the remote schools. The 4 million students at the distant schools can see and hear the parent classroom.

At our webpage [www.dlf.ac.th](http://www.dlf.ac.th), internet users can view live broadcast of the 15 channels or select on demand. All the distant learning contents automatically recorded on the server are easily transformed into eContent at very low cost. The free-of-charge eLearning services are the fruit of collaboration of the Telecommunications Association of Thailand, the TOT Public Company Limited, CAT Telecom, NECTEC and the Institute for the Promotion of Teaching Science and Technology.

The DLF eSchool project was launched in 2003, supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Information, Communications and Technology. Thais living overseas and overseas learners at the four DLF eSchool Centres in Los Angeles, Chicago, France and Switzerland can study Thai and Thai culture from Wang Klaikangwon School.

Five Universities in Yunnan China, are now studying Thai language and culture from Wang Klaikangwon School. The Chinese Government, the Thai-Chinese Chamber of Commerce and the Assumption Commercial College have supported the production of the Standard Chinese Mandarin textbooks for the on-air broadcast of Chinese language and culture. The 8 volume textbooks have become immensely popular.

Like our Chinese friends, Schools in Laos, Mattayom Santipab, School for the Gifted Students and the Orphan Cultural School Lak 67 in Vientiane together with another school in Bo Kaew and the Industrial, Economic and Technical Junior College No.1 in Hanoi, and Hanoi Open University enjoy their learning in a one much bigger classroom with new friends.

Our parallel focus in response to His Majesty the King's concern in education is

on teacher training. Have any of you seen His Majesty the King's teaching a group of Wang Klaikangwon students on soil conservation and Royal Rain Making Project?

The University of Oregon Faculty at Eugene was watching that documentary series "Quest for Knowledge" at our website [www.dlf.ac.th](http://www.dlf.ac.th). They understand His Majesty's concern over the need for teacher development. They are willing to open the door to His school at Wang Klaikangwon, Hua Hin.

The new partnership, between a local Thai school and an American university, is probably unthinkable in the mind of the conventional educationists. Neither is it "American share" but "American contribution".

Since 2003, we have jointly organized, with support of the American Embassy, the THAI TESOL, and TOT, two Certificate Courses on English Teacher Trainings by means of videoconferencing. Oregon – Bangkok – Hua Hin – School Lak 67 in Vientiane – Hanoi Open University had a great time learning together with all the smiles and laughter in the videoconferencings broadcast live via Ku band and internet to the whole world. On 17 July 2006, from Oregon, Eugene, Her Royal Highness Princess Bajrakitiyabha has presided over the Opening Ceremony of a new series of Teacher Trainings on Green Chemistry and Mathematics with University of Oregon.

The Foundation also organized technical trainings during 2002-2004, for Papua New Guinea's 4 research and study missions, which includes JICA member from Japan. In January 2006, His Excellency Sir Michael Somare, the Papua New Guinea Prime Minister has sent his high level delegation to

study the system. They are now planning to set up the distant learning education system in Papua New Guinea.

The Distance Learning Foundation is a non-profit organization. The Foundation alone cannot achieve what it has aspired to do. It is the support from the people, Thais and foreigners, academic institutions or organizations at home or abroad. It is the selfless partnership with genuine concern to create a better future for the children and their families. It is this type of sustained partnership that has helped to advance the noble cause of His Majesty the King's educational goal of lifelong learning.

All of us here is accountable for this mission. It is up to each and every one of us to work together to share and optimize whatever existing resources we have to cultivate and educate our youth and our people. So we can prosper together along the upward path of shared wisdom.

The "Shelter for Knowledge" concept to be located in the Tsunami-stricken Rajaprajanugroh School no.35 in the southern Province of Phang-Nga could be an example of our renewed partnership to promote public education and training free and open for all in the field of natural disaster preparedness and early warning. I trust in our mutual support. And I assure you of my full support.

Thank you