

I believe that one of the UNESCO's principles is its conviction that though the stage of development may differ from one country to the next, the cultural and human values in different societies are equal. I strongly endorse this spirit and I do hope UNESCO will develop further in the coming years, for the cause of educational, scientific and cultural development of the human being, in spite of difficulties that UNESCO faces in the current world situation. I further express my sincere wishes that NIER will continue to enjoy its closer ties with UNESCO.

### **STOU's Reflections on Significant Activities of ROEAP**

*by Wichit Srisa-an\**

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was established at a London conference in November 1945. In 1946 it became a specialized agency of the United Nations. Its purpose was to further the cause of peace by increasing understanding among nations through education and research. The organization was the culmination of almost 40 years of attempts to establish international co-operation in education and culture and is a successor to the League of Nations International Committee on Intellectual Co-operation.

Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU) recognizes and admires UNESCO's purpose and activities. UNESCO's activities deal largely with educational development, as shown by the following general aims: expanding and directing education so as to enable the people of every country to further their own development; and developing means of communication in order to facilitate a balanced flow of information, and information systems for the universal pooling of knowledge. UNESCO is geared to act even in crisis situations, such as when, for example, it set up emergency schools for Arab refugee children in the Middle East.

UNESCO has inaugurated many successful and useful projects for educational development. Over half of the world's children of school age do not attend school because of insufficient facilities and

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\* Dr. Wichit Srisa-an is Professor and Rector of Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, Bangkok.

## *Unesco in Asia and the Pacific*

lack of teachers. In 1957 UNESCO instituted a major project on the extension of primary education in Latin America designed to train more teachers and study the reasons for children dropping out of school. Successful elements of this programme were later applied to similar projects in Asia and Africa.

In developing countries, educational development activities are greatly needed. The role of education in helping to develop human resources has an immense influence upon the progress of these countries. In 1961 UNESCO established the Regional Office for Education in Asia and the Pacific (ROEAP) which has played a significant role in educational development in the region. For its part, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU) believes that all countries participating in ROEAP, including Thailand, have greatly benefited from the latter's activities.

STOU has participated in various ROEAP projects which provide opportunities for sharing knowledge, experience and skills through meetings, training workshops, study visits, joint research studies and exchanges of information. One of the most important components of the projects is related to distance education and the open structure associated with it. STOU has played a key role in formulating and implementing these project activities in distance education, such as the project entitled 'Regional Co-operative Programme in Higher Education for Development' which includes many useful activities. Examples of these activities include 'The Technical Working Group Meeting on the Use of Advances in Communication Technologies in Higher Education', and 'The Regional Training Workshop on the Development of Distance Education Instructional Materials'.

The Technical Working Group Meeting on the Use of Advances in Communication Technologies in Higher Education was held for six working days in June 1985 at STOU's headquarters in Nonthaburi. There were participants from Australia, India, Indonesia, Japan, New Zealand and Thailand. In addition, members of staff from UNESCO joined the meeting, which enabled STOU and all participants to examine and study the possibilities, afforded by advances in communication technology, for improving educational methods and for organizing distance teaching systems, including the analysis of the use and limitations of computer technology in relation to the administration of higher education institutions.

The Regional Training Workshop on the Development of Distance Education Instructional Materials was held over a period of ten working days in September 1985 at STOU's headquarters. There were 12 participants from Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. The participants were introduced to various principles, practices, and issues related to the development of instructional materials. They underwent practical experience of developing such materials in print, audio and video media. The workshop produced a package of materials which included a report on the workshop, a set of technical papers and a workbook, and also sets of printed materials, audio cassettes and video cassettes as sample packages for dissemination and use by concerned institutions.

From the evidence of the examples above, every activity organized by ROEAP is useful to educational development in the region. STOU recognizes that the activities will benefit higher education in Asia and the Pacific through the exchange of educationists in the region, increasing the efficiency of the instruction systems of higher education in the region, the exchange of knowledge and experiences concerning teaching and learning at the higher education level, and providing direction in the analysis and revision of higher education plans.

As the Lead Institution for the Consortium on Innovation in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific, STOU organized the Attachment Programme for Personnel in Distance Education. The programme, an example of co-operation between STOU and UNESCO, was held at STOU's headquarters in November – December 1985. There were seven UNESCO scholars from China, India, Indonesia and Pakistan. They had an opportunity to participate in the seminar and to observe and study STOU's experience in the four areas concerned: computer application in the management of distance education; the use of media in distance education; programme development; and evaluation in distance education, and the organization and management of distance education.

Finally, STOU hopes for the continuation of the co-operation among STOU, other academic institutions and ROEAP, in order to develop education in the region further.