

FOREWORD

This December 2016 issue witnesses a once-in-a-life-time phenomenon in Thailand's history: the passing of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, and hence, the ascension to the throne of His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn Bodindradebayavarangkun.

It has been over 50 days since his passing and Thailand is still in deep mourning. Meanwhile, we have witnessed many good things happening, e.g. Thais are suddenly more united, generous, patient, volunteering and willing to help out. Incredibly, his presence is even stronger than ever before as many untold heartwarming stories have continued to pour out from his subjects. There are two main reasons why we are so touched, many break into tears, after hearing these stories: first, they essentially reveals how selflessly and tirelessly His Majesty cared for us, throughout his life even in his final years, when he was sick in the hospital, and secondly, he did it so quietly behind the scenes. We now realize that the two books translated/composed by the late King, *A Man Called Intrepid* (นายอินทร์ผู้ปิดทองหลังพระ) and *The Story of Mahajanaka* (พระมหากษัตริย์), essentially reflect his two distinctive virtues: '*placing gold leaves on the back of the Buddha*' and *perseverance*.

Among the many facets of his expertise, King Bhumibol was a prominent soil scientist and hydro engineer. In 2009, the UN World Intellectual Organization (WIPO) presented King Bhumibol with the WIPO Global Leader Award recognizing him as an 'acclaimed artist and accomplished inventor' holding over 20 patents and 19 trademarks, including artificial rain making technology and water aerators that 'have generated concrete and practical benefits for rural communities in Thailand (<http://www.un.org/News/>).

Along this line, King Bhumibol was a researcher and developer, a prominent R&D expert who described his approach with three simple words, '*understand-access-develop*' or '*เข้าใจเข้าถึงพัฒนา*'. He also said "Be cautious. Don't be misled by knowledge and theories. You need to work with people in the field before you apply knowledge." With that he traveled every square inch of Thailand, met and talked with local peoples and studied their histories and communities before royal initiatives took shape. More than physical access is needed to build understanding. As King Bhumibol insightfully put it, "You need to grow trees in people's hearts before you attempt a reforestation project!"

Throughout his reign, 4,685 royal projects in 8 different categories as of September 2016 (<http://www.rdpb.go.th/rdpb/projectdata/>) were initiated, all of which helped alleviate poverty and enhanced the living conditions of his subjects in rural communities in Thailand. He truly led an exemplary life for us to follow.

As usual, this issue is packed with eight interesting articles each in a different focus area to serve your diverse interests and, as always, a book review is also included.

The first article is an R&D piece addressing the decades long issues related to school leaders. In ‘Designing Simulation for Assessing People Skills and Competencies of School Leaders in Thailand’, Dr. Suebsakul Narintarakul Na Ayudhaya, et al. designed and developed a simulation for assessing essential skills and competencies for Thai school leaders. The findings reveal that ‘people skills and competencies’ were rated the highest in the needed competency category. For themes and content for the simulation, they found ‘self & social awareness’ in managing ‘school and local communities’. Thirdly, they developed a computer-based simulation program assessing skills and competencies of school leaders using a five-step simulation framework.

Still in Thailand, we shift readers’ interest to Chinese language testing by Dr. Yan Ye. As we are all aware, China is emerging as a world leader, with a resulting increased popularity of Chinese language among foreign learners. This research paper found that new HSK test takers are predominantly female students from public schools, from Thai-Chinese family backgrounds, and took the test at the beginner and intermediate levels. She also found that female students have higher learning motivation than males. The author discusses the findings and provides ideas for future research in this topic.

The third paper in education is from Iran by Mehri Izadi, et al. addressing reading strategies for literary texts. In this article the researchers explored the effect of reading comprehension strategy on the literature comprehension of Iranian EFL learners through an analysis of SQR3—survey, question, and 3Rs (read, recite, review) and TPS (think-pair-share) methodologies. The data were collected and analyzed with t-tests and ANOVA. Results showed that SQR3 and TPS groups outperformed the control group who did not receive any treatment. The authors then discuss the implications of this study in reading instruction.

The next two papers are on tourism. In recent decades we have witnessed a steady increase in tourism in Thailand and many other countries with tourist attractions despite a globally stagnant economy. In the paper by Thaned Heyprakhon, et al., the researchers examined tourists’ perceived value on ASEAN- standard vernacular homestays. The results showed that a single latent factor structure was fitted and acceptable, and another five factors ranging from highest to lowest were based on either functional or experiential factors. The authors conclude that functional and experiential factors are important determinants of homestay tourism.

In another academic paper by Dr. Adarsh Batra provides an inclusive view of the gap between tourism education at the college level and the needs of the tourism industry in Thailand. In light of the ASEAN Community and AEC single market effort beginning in December 2015, in a wider context of globalization and technological advancement, tourism educators need to take a critical look at their tourism programs in order to meet the new more dynamic demands of the tourism industry to ensure employability of their graduates. As such, Dr. Batra offers 12 points to ‘bridge the gap’.

As depletion of the environment has been one of the major global issues facing developed and developing countries alike, Sepideh Bazrafkan in ‘Tax and Environment Incentives to Use Hydrocarbon-Based Air Conditioning Units in Thailand’, calls attention to the issue of Thailand having no environmental tax law. Under the Montreal Protocol, Thailand has committed to phase out the use of ODS (ozone-depleting substances. But this would be impossible without a clear environmental tax law. The author also looks at the environmental tax laws of Australia and the United States as best practices.

Dr. Duongsamorn Manowan in ‘Purchasing Behaviors of Consumers on Functional Drinks in Bangkok Metropolitan Region’ reveals a trend on health concerns of urban people in modern living. By ‘functional drink’ she means a healthy drink that benefits the human body. With limited time commuting to work and back home daily, people living in a big city like Bangkok seem to find that fresh functional drinks are a healthy nutritional solution at both an affordable price and convenient to purchase e.g. at the sky-train stations on their way to work.

The last article is an academic paper addressing piracy, an increasingly controversial issue in a digital age. The author presents a conceptual framework for doing research using structural equation modeling of variables that influence Thai digital music piracy. In times of economic turmoil, coupled with technological advancement, the issues of digital music piracy have intensified. This study proposes a conceptual framework for research to effectively address factors influencing music piracy.

For a book review, Dr. Absorn Meesing presents her review of an English translation of a book by a famous Thai poet, Sunthorn Phu. Despite being a UN-awarded poet, and most well-known among Thais, Sunthorn Phu has not been recognized by western readers due to all his literary works being only in Thai. Ms. Sawanee Niwasabutr has made overcoming this language barrier a possibility with her fine translation of นิราศเมืองเพชร, or *Journey to Petchburi*. The reviewer strongly recommends that Thais and non-Thais alike read this book.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to all individuals who contributed to the publishing of this issue. My deep thanks to Daniel Merillat, Dr. Ian Jacobs, and Dr. Kuldeep Nagi for their professional help with editing.

So, indulge yourselves with reading and please keep us informed of what we can do to make the ABAC Journal better serve your interests.

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