

FOREWORD

Education and developmental economics are the primary topics of this issue of the ABAC Journal. These topics are, of course, closely related in so far as no economic development effort will succeed if a country does not have an educated population that is suited to the modern world. These issues are very much at the heart of Assumption University's mission and we are thus very glad to present the articles to our readership.

The first article confirms the belief that while the goal is economic development, the process cannot be simply reduced to the technical aspects of economic policy, but must also include the socio-cultural, political, moral and Spiritual contexts of the development agenda. As Dr. A. Noel Jones notes in his provocative article "Why Getting the Economics Right is not enough for Development!", Qualitative factors must be included with the quantitative if sustainable development is to proceed apace. This article will provide much food for thought for those who see development as merely a matter of pushing economic buttons. An important element of Dr. Jones analysis has to do with the interdependency of nations, an interdependency that belies simple notions of the so called dependent or 'borrower' nations and independent or 'lending' nations.

This idea leads fairly directly to the theme of our second article, by Dr. Ioan Voicu, which relates the critical notion of sustainable development not simply to economics but to a moral idea of promoting international solidarity. Unless we can move towards accepting that the status of all human beings demands such solidarity, the movement towards bridging the gap between the richer and poorer nations will not have full success. There is an urgent need for multilateral diplomacy to contribute to the universal recognition of global solidarity as an imperative prerequisite of authentic sustainable development.

Dr. Sureepong Phothongsunan's examination of the social context of gaining English language skills among Thai students also looks at a seeming technical education matter from a wider perspective. As expected, the study finds that a critical factor in success in learning the language is the ability to practice its use in concrete social contexts. Educational techniques are not unimportant but they must be supplemented with contexts of application. Only then will the acquisition of English language skills lead to a facility that will make those skills an important resource for a modern businessperson. The wider cultural perspective is also emphasized in Dr. Michael S. Christopher, June Bernadette D'souza, Dr. Matthew W Kirkhart and Dr. Gemma D Skillman's comparative study of help-seeking behaviour of American and Thai college students. As expected, the authors found cultural differences, with individual, behavioural-focused information being most effective among the American students and relational, normative-focused information among the Thai students.

Each of the articles in this issue emphasizes taking a wider rather than a narrower perspective in solving specific problems. This is particularly important in an increasingly globalized world where it is all too easy to focus on commonalities, while thereby ignoring differences.

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