

**Remarks by Mr. Anand Panyarachun
at the Morning Convocation, University of Victoria
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It is highly significant that of the three recipients of honorary degrees of the University of Victoria in 1993, two come from a region which is now commonly referred to as East Asia. Dr. Chen-Fu Koo from Taiwan is a much – respected figure not only in his own country but is well – known all over the region. His name is synonymous with the remarkable progress and development of Taiwan. His consistently wise counsel to the government played an important role in enabling Taiwan to achieve its present status.

I myself also come from that region. Admittedly, Thailand's record in the past decades cannot match that of Taiwan, but gradually she, along with other Southeast Asian countries, is travelling towards the same destination.

East Asia stands out among developing regions for its spectacular economic growth and impressive reduction of poverty. But it also stands out as a region marred by degradation of air, water, land and biodiversity. If not corrected in time, this encroachment on the environment will undo the tremendous progress in human development that the region has achieved. It will make long – term economic growth unsustainable in East Asia.

Global Changes

Much of the economic success of East Asia has to a large extent been a result of the region's commitment to the role of education in development. The long-term returns of the region's educational investments are beginning to bear fruit. If we are to continue to move forward, we must ensure that education in East Asia and elsewhere always responds more readily to the changes taking place around us.

There have been many in recent years:

- the end of the cold war has altered the types of problems mankind is dealing with to include more economic and social issues;
- improved information and transportation flows have increased the amount of ideas and goods available to address these new questions; and
- the increasing integration of the world economy has given us more choices and options, increasing the complexity of the environment in which these questions are both posed and answered. Actions we take increasingly “spill over” to affect other countries or sectors.

All these developments have radically changed the way we look at the World, and education must equip us with new tools with which to approach the challenges.

Promoting development means promoting responsibility. This is the more traditional, and time-tested, role of education in development. Education plays a crucial role in creating not only personal development, but also social progress.

One example of this increased consciousness is the ability to gain a better understanding of politics and democracy and of events beyond one's own locality.

Another example of increased consciousness is looking at how industrialization and the economic development process can be pursued to truly benefit all members of our society. With such an awareness, we will be able to address income and regional disparities that often occur along with economic development, and which can prevent the benefits of development from reaching those who need it most.

True education not only creates awareness of technological possibilities, but also develops a moral consciousness to manage the development of those possibilities.

Expanded information and technology flows require that we prepare our people to be a part of the information age; expanded training in electronic data processing and communications technology are necessary for such countries as Thailand to maintain the economic progress it has experienced in recent years.

Education and Regional Development

A recent study of the Asian Development Bank on regional cooperation in the education sphere concluded that there is a strong link between "education and training on the one hand, and productivity and income on the other".

At a most basic level, education, especially of women who have been a neglected target group, has a crucial effect on poverty, health and nutrition, and can drastically improve basic standards of living.

While improvements in primary education are seen as most likely to yield the highest returns, technical and vocational education, especially management training, is singled out by the Bank as the most important way to help alleviate serious skills shortages in certain parts of the region. Focused training can promote such sub-regional sectoral efforts as development of tourism and of new technologies.

Consultations with regional governments showed they feel that coordinating at least some elements of higher education, especially research capabilities, on

a sub-regional basis will increase the region's knowledge base and ensure that skills crucial to economic development are available from among the population of the region.

Challenges

The following are the challenges as I see them:

First, to promote the internationalization of education by forging more International linkages between educational institutions. Regional information networking, faculty and student exchanges, and International cooperation on research, curriculum development and training at both graduate and undergraduate levels are ways to further Internationalize education.

Second, to encourage educational institutions to continuously enhance the relevance of educational curricula to respond to evolving economic, political, and social conditions and to improve linkages between the education sector and other sectors in the economy. All areas of knowledge must be approached by being placed within a comprehensive international context.

Third, to use education as a tool to promote social progress of our nations and increase mutual trust and understanding. World leaders can make peace and war, but it takes ordinary citizens to create world understanding. Proper education can encourage social responsibility, individually and collectively, and an awareness of global perspectives and common global problems that can override parochial concerns.

In all these areas, the University of Victoria has consistently taken the initiative to pursue courses of action, which are designed to meet these challenges.

I wish you success in your commitments to the future.