A Newly Proposed E-Learning Law to Promote Education and Lifelong Learning in Thailand

Prof. Dr. Srisakdi Charmonman
Father of Thai eLearning, Father of Thai Internet and Fellow of the Royal Institute of Great Britian
charmonman@gmail.com, www.charm.SiamTechU.net

Pornphisud Mongkhonvanit
President of Siam Technology College
pornpisud@gmail.com, www.SiamTechU.net

Abstract - In August 2013, the House of Representatives of Thailand established subcommittees to revise existing laws and draft new laws for preparation to enter ASEAN Economic Community in 2015. The senior author of this paper was appointed a member of the subcommittee on human resource development. He proposed and was appointed Chairman of the Working Group to draft a new eLearning Law to Promote Education and Lifelong Learning in Thailand. The junior author of this paper was appointed a member of the Working Group. The newly proposed law will promote usage of eLearning in all aspects of human resource development for all levels and types of education. A requirement will be made for any and all graduates from high school to have taken at least one eLearning course in order to be able to use eLearning in lifelong learning later. Some exceptions of the copyrights law will be made by Certification Subcommittees mandated in this law.

Keywords - E-Learning Law, Chief E-Learning Officer, Lifelong Learning, Copyrights Law Exception

1. INTRODUCTION

In the year 2002, the senior author of this paper proposed to the Thai Government that eLearning be legally allowed in Thailand. He drafted the first law (in the form of Announcement from the Ministry of Education) to allow eLearning in Thailand and took 3 years to convince 5 Ministers to have the law published in the Royal Gazette in October 2005. Then in January 2006, he became the Program Director of the first eLearning Degree Program in Thailand (MS in Management at Assumption University). In the year 2006, he became the founder the first Ph.D. program in eLearning Methodology in the world [1]. On 7 June 2006, he was named "the Father of Thai eLearning" by the International Biographical Centre in Cambridge, England. By the year 2013, there are about 50 eLearning degree programs in Thailand. However, it was said that a senior Thai educator visited India and found a university offering eLearning without any quality assurance. So, he convinced the Office of Higher Education to delay approval of eLearning degree programs and proposed 54 rules to assure good standards. Unfortunately,
it was said that the 54 rules may make Thailand an underdeveloped country in eLearning [2]. Many educational institutions in Thailand complained that the 54 rules would delay or even make it unpractical for them to start any new eLearning degree program. For over 20 years, the senior author of this paper used to serve as the Chairman of several Subcommittees to Consider and Approve Establishments of New Degree Programs at the Ministry of University Affairs before it was merged with the Ministry of Education. His subcommittees helped the proposers improve their proposed programs until they were acceptable. It was complained that the current subcommittee scrutinizing new eLearning degree program takes a different approach by setting up roadblocks rather helping the proposers. As an example, one of the 54 rules specifies that any institution wishing to offer eLearning program must register the institution to be an eLearning institute. The process may take a long time to get approval. In the US, any institution which has been legally accredited can go ahead to offer eLearning program without having to re-register. The authors of this paper suggested the use of standard accreditation like in the US for both eLearning and classroom learning rather than using the 54 roadblocks [3].

In August 2013, the House of Representatives of Thailand established subcommittees to revise existing laws and draft new laws for preparation to enter ASEAN Economic Community in 2015. The senior author of this paper was appointed a member of the subcommittee on human resource development. He took the opportunity to propose and was appointed Chairman of the Working Group to draft a new law which he hopes will provide remedy to the problem of the 54 rules as well as using eLearning to promote education and lifelong learning. Exceptions of the copyrights law will be made in this new law so that copyrighted materials which can be used in classrooms can also be used in eLearning. New position of "Chief eLearning Officers" will be created for every and all ministries to be in charge of using eLearning in recruiting, orientation, capacity building, and solution of problems encountered while working. Certification of eLearning courseware for all aspects of lifelong learning for all groups of people will be made by Certification Subcommittees mandated in this law.

2. ELEARNING MUST BE INCLUDED IN LONG-TERM STRATEGY IN EDUCATION

For K12, from the web of "Teachthought.com <http://www.teachthought.com/industry/charte-r-schools-and-blended-learning-10-statistics-that-outline-change-in-education/>" [4], there are some interesting statistics about K12 eLearning and blended learning from the Education Work Force of the House of Representatives of the US:

- 31 states allow full-time online eLearning schools, with 275,000 students enrolled in 2011-2012, and
- Nearly 70% of school districts now offer blended learning programs.

For higher education, most advanced countries believe that eLearning is very important. For example, the web of "OpenCollege" [5] stated that 60.5% of private-sector institutions and 63.4% of all others reported that eLearning is critical to their institutions' long-term strategies, and that 67% of academic leaders at higher learning institutions rated the learning outcomes in eLearning as the same as or even superior to those in face-to-face education.

Also for higher education, the Sloan Consortium 2012 Survey of Online Learning [6] stated that the proportion of Chief Academic Leaders that say that online learning is critical to their long-term strategy is at a new high of 69.1%.

For corporate eLearning or eLearning in organizations rather than in educational institutions, market statistics are available from the web of "eLearningIndustry.com" [7]:
• eLearning is 56.2 Billion US$ business and is likely to double in size before 2015.
• The U.S. and Europe utilize 70% of the world's eLearning, but Asia Pacific is gaining ground.
• The fastest growing eLearning markets are Vietnam and Malaysia.
• 77% of American Corporations use online learning.
• 72% of companies surveyed report that eLearning keeps them on top of their industry changes.
• In 2011, 51% of companies did at least one training session with eLearning to more than 50% of their employees.
• Corporations save 50-70% when they replace instructor-based training with eLearning.
• eLearning classes are generally 25-60% shorter in duration than traditional classes.
• 23% of employees leave their jobs because the position lacks opportunity for development and training.
• Online education is proven to increase knowledge retention by 25-60%.

3. HIGH-POWER COMMITTEE AND CHIEF ELEARNING OFFICERS

In the proposed law, the National eLearning Committee will be headed by the Prime Minister of Thailand. There will be two Deputy Chairmen, namely, the Minister of Education and the Minister of Information and Communication Technology.

The Minister in each and all Ministries in Thailand must appoint a Chief eLearning Officer (CLO) to be at the level of Director General. The CLO must be in charge of all eLearning activities in the Ministry, e.g.:

• eLearning courses to prepare people interested in applying for a job at the Ministry,
• eLearning courses for orientation with examination to assure that everybody knows everything needed to be known,
• eLearning courses from which every person in the Ministry must take at least one per year for capacity building in the Ministry.
• eLearning to allow every person to use to solve problems he encounters while working.

4. ELEARNING FOR LIFE LONG LEARNING

The law will provide guideline and template for eLearning courses for lifelong learning. From the web on "Lifelong Learning" [8]:

• Lifelong learning includes home schooling, adult education, continue education, on-the-job training, and self-directed learning.
• Since the year 2007, several of Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) [9] have been available free of charge for millions of students.

There are many examples of MOOC. The first example started in 2007 is "ALISON" which has delivered over 60 million lessons with 1.2 million unique visitors per month. As of January 2013, there are 250,000 graduates. The second example is from Stanford University which in the year 2011 offered the course on Introduction to AI which has enrollment of 160,000 students. Later, Coursera was announced with corporation of Stanford, University of Pennsylvania, Princeton University, and the University of Michigan to expand the AI course to include more courses and called the new MOOC by the name of “Coursera”.

The third example is MITx started in 2012. Later, MITx was renamed edX and joined by University of California, Berkeley: University of Texas; Wellesley College, and Georgetown University.
The proposed law will encourage adoption of MOOC as well as encouraging organizations in Thailand to develop their own eLearning courses for lifelong learning. These courses will be certified by Certification Subcommittees similar to the case of Ministry of Labor which has established over 900 committees to certify courses. The senior author has served as Chairman of 5 such subcommittees at the Ministry of Labor: on Authorware, on Web Programming, on Web Master, on Computer Repair, and on Interactive Programming.

5. ELEARNING FOR WOMEN, ELDERLY, UNDERPRIVILEGED, DISABLED, AND CHRONICALLY ILL PATIENTS

The proposed law will also provide guidelines and templates of courses for all categories of potential students, especially including women, elderly, underprivileged, disabled, and chronically ill patients.

HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn said that if you want to know anything, ask Professor Goo (Google) as shown in Figure 1. Courses for women may be found by searching Google. An example of courses for women may be found in the web "elearnuk<www.elearnuk.co.uk/category/womens-health-and-beauty>" [10]. Sample courses are Anti-Aging, Beauty Salon Management, Women's Health Practitioner, Beauty Therapist, and etc. The second example is from the web "MITOPENCOURSEWARE" [11] under the section "Women's and Gender Studies". Sample courses are Rethinking the Family, Sex, and Gender; Introduction to Women and Gender Studies; Sexual and Gender Identities; Gender, Sexuality, and Society; and etc.

An example of eLearning courses for the Underprivileged may be found in a Chicago-based college named “BenchPrep” [13]. As of August 2013, the College has over 500,000 students with over 250 courses. It also offers “All-you-can-eat monthly subscription” for students to study multiple subjects without paying additional costs. BenchPrep achieved 16% average score improvement over a 90-day period for students utilizing its digital study materials and 20.5% average score improvement for students who use the product on both the web and mobile device.

An example of courses for people with disabilities may be found in the web “www.ccoz.org.au” [14]. Sample courses are All about Hygiene; Being a Worker; Rights and Responsibilities; Being Assertive and Self Esteem; Fire Prevention and Safety; Food and You; Enjoying Healthy Eating Food; Goal Setting; Managing Anger and Understanding Our Feelings; Networking and Making New Friends; Protecting Yourself from Abuse; Recreation and Leisure; Relating to People; Safety in the Community; Safety in the Workplace; Disability Services Standards; Understanding Ourselves; Leadership at Work; Living and Sharing with Others; Looking Good; Making Decisions; Protecting Yourself from Abuse; Safety in the Community; and etc.
From Wikipedia [15], common chronic diseases include arthritis, asthma, cancer, diabetes and AIDS. Sample courses are Building Healthier and Safer Environments in the Communities, Expanding Preventive Services of Proven Effectiveness and Benefits, Eliminating Health Disparities, and etc.

6. CONCLUDING REMAR克斯

It may be said that Thailand was a leader in eLearning in the sense that Thailand is the first in the world to establish the Ph.D. in eLearning Methodology Program. Unfortunately, eLearning in Thailand has been delayed because a subcommittee at the Office of Higher Education has delayed approval of new eLearning programs and proposed 54 rules which were accused of being roadblocks to eLearning. The senior author of this paper was named “Father of Thai eLearning” by the International Biographical Center in England, partly because he drafted the first eLearning law (in the form of Announce from the Ministry of Education) to allow eLearning to be offered legally, served as the Program Director of the first eLearning degree program in Thailand, and founded the first Ph.D. in eLearning Methodology in the world. To try to remedy the road-blocking problem, he proposed and was appointed by a Subcommittee at the House of Representatives to be the Chairman of the Working Group to draft the New eLearning Law to Promote Education and Lifelong Learning in Thailand. It is hoped that this law will allow Thailand to return to be a leader of eLearning again.

REFERENCES


