

# Training needs in the use of media for distance education in Thailand

Wichit Srisa-an.

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For Distance Education In Thailand**

**By**

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### **The Development of Distance Education in Thailand**

The development of distance education in Thailand can be divided into three phases, namely:

**Phase 1:** When Thammasart University, or the University of Moral and Political Science, was established in 1934 in the form of an Academic Market University, it applied the open admission system in that it placed no limit on the number of enrolments and did not require applicants for admission to undergo selective examinations. Although classroom lectures were provided, attendance was not compulsory and the only thing required of students was that they sit for examinations given by the University. The outcome of this type of educational system was that lecture notes covering a variety of subjects were printed as a service to the students. Students who were unable to attend lectures at the University were thus able to study independently from their lecture notes.

Although the Academic Market University was not, by nature of its objectives, an open university in accordance with the meaning in current usage, it was by way of organization given a single media form of distance education employing the use of printed materials. This can be regarded as development at the basic level and can be considered the first step in developing the ideal form of distance education in Thailand. Even though Thammasart University later became a conventional university with limited admissions, Thailand saw the establishment of Ramkhamhaeng University, in the year 1971, as an alternative Academic Market University employing the use of classroom lectures together with media such as radio and television for the benefit of those students unable to attend the University in the usual manner.

**Phase 2:** After World War II, Thailand began to apply more educational technology at every level of education, both formal and non-formal. Apart from using projected and non-projected audio visual aids in classrooms, broadcast media was also used, especially for broadcasting school radio programs for both classroom learning and for imparting knowledge to the public in general. Various educational organizations in Thailand are currently making preparations for the use of television to support classroom instruction and for a wider and greater dissemination of knowledge to the people. The increased use of broadcast media for educational purposes, from the post World War II period to the present day, represents another form of distance education and marks the second step in developing the form and system of distance education in Thailand.

**Phase 3:** The past ten years have been a decade during which further developments have been made to the appropriate form of distance education in Thailand. Education has been expanded to provide the people with more opportunities than they have ever had in the past. Distance education has also been included in the National Education Plan as part of Thailand's education system. During the past decade, many major developments in distance education have been witnessed in Thailand. These include:



(1) An Open University employing the Distance Teaching and Learning System has been established. It is a state university offering home-based education at the degree level, through the use of multi-media, to people all over the country. It is the first Open University in Southeast Asia to employ the complete form of distance teaching and learning. The Open University referred to is Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU) which was established in the year 1978. At present it has an enrolment of approximately half a million students of whom 90% are working adults. Each year approximately 12,000 students graduate from this University with Bachelor degrees.

(2) The Department of Non-Formal Education has been established to provide the public with non-formal education. One method employed by the Department of Non-Formal Education is the Distance Teaching and Learning System which provides primary and secondary level programs known as "Radio-Correspondence Courses" for out-of-school youth. It is a primary and secondary level Distance Teaching and Learning System which relies on Multi-Media or Integrated Media teaching through correspondence and radio.

(3) The Educational Radio Network of Thailand has been established in accordance with the World Bank's Loans for Education Development Project. Since 1984 programs have been broadcast nationwide. As a result, organizations concerned with education through the Distance Teaching and Learning System now have sufficient air time to broadcast radio programs to their respective target groups. The following air time has been allocated to each organization:

**Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University** –  $49\frac{1}{2}$  hours per week for educational programs of the university.

**The Department of Non-Formal Education** –  $25\frac{1}{2}$  hours per week for school programs and 20 hours per week for radio-correspondence.

**The Teacher Training Department** –  $10\frac{1}{2}$  hours per week for In-Service Teacher Upgrading Programs.

**The Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives** – 7 hours per week to impart knowledge to people involved in the agricultural profession.

**The Ministry of Public Health** –  $2\frac{1}{2}$  hours per week for programs aimed at promoting public health amongst the people.

(4) A national television network for education and public relations (Channel 11) has been set up. Through this network education programs and government public relations programs are broadcast nationwide, with each category occupying 50% of the broadcasting time. This project, which has received unconditional aid from Japan, is currently in the construction stages and will go to air upon completion in April, 1988. It is scheduled to operate 18 hours per day and will allocate 9 hours broadcasting time per day to educational organizations. Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University currently broadcasts programs  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hours per day, or  $10\frac{1}{2}$  hours per week, through the existing television network, Television Station Channel 9. With the completion of the new television network, STOU broadcasting time will be increased to 26 hours per week. Other educational organizations such as the Department of Non-Formal Education, the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives and the Ministry of Public Health will also have increased time for broadcasting programs aimed at imparting knowledge to the public.

### 3

The four aforementioned developments, which have taken place during the past decade, have provided Thailand with the opportunity of developing the ideal Distance Teaching and Learning System, one which employs the use of mixed media and applies the Distance Teaching and Learning System, at every level from primary to tertiary, in both formal and non-formal education. The organization responsible for the all-round development of the Distance Teaching and Learning System in Thailand is Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University. As such, a major portion of this "Country Report" will thus be devoted to this University.

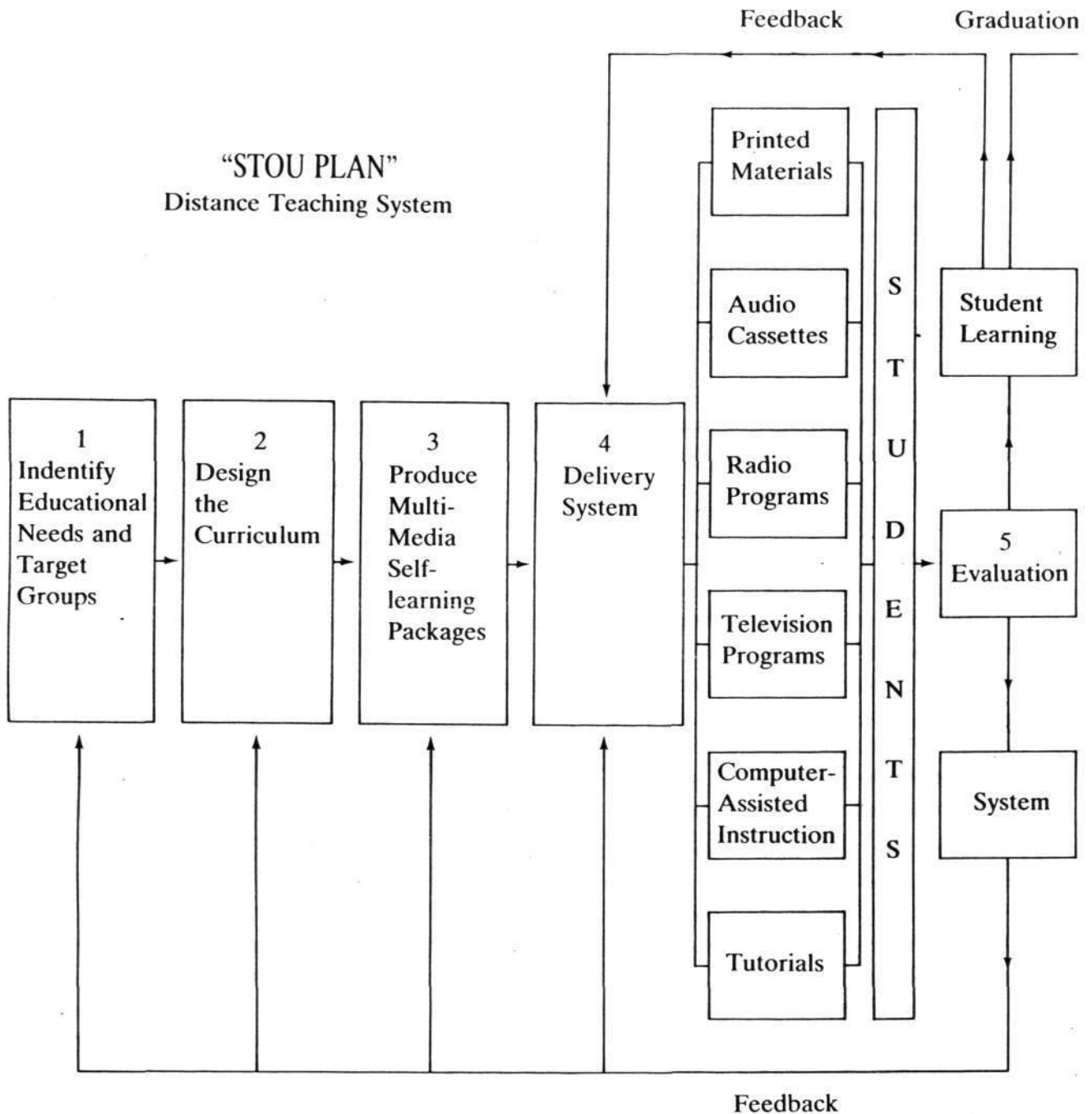
#### **The Use of Media for Distance Education.**

Distance Education in Thailand, so far as it has been developed to the present day, provides distance education through multi-media, with printed matter being the main media supported by electronic media, to enable students to study as much as possible by themselves in accordance with the main principle of distance education. The Radio-Correspondence Project of the Department of Non-Formal Education employs two integrated media namely: printed materials in the form of programmed lessons, and radio programs. With regards to STOU, distance education at this university employs a multi-media package which is comprised of the following different types of media:

1. Printed Materials – These are the main media and are arranged in the form of programmed texts which include both texts and workbooks so as to be self-instructional materials.
2. Audio-Cassette Tapes Recorded with Course Block Materials – There are approximately three to ten 60-minute (C60) cassette tapes for each course block.
3. Radio Programs – There are approximately seventeen 20-minute programs for each course block.
4. Television Programs – There are approximately five 30-minute programs for each course block.
5. Computer Assisted Instruction which is organized only for specific subjects such as Science, Mathematics and Statistics. They comprise approximately 5 to  $7\frac{1}{2}$  hours of each course block.
6. Tutorials – Approximately 15 hours for each course block.
7. Practicum – This is organized especially for those subjects which require practical experience. The number of hours devoted to practical training varies according to the nature of the subject.



The "STOU PLAN" for Distance Teaching System, which is composed of 5 stages, can be concisely illustrated in the following chart.



The first stage in the development of the distance teaching system involves identifying the educational needs of the target groups through preliminary surveys and research. This enables us to know the needs of the general public as well as various individual groups. This information can then be used as a basis for the development of the following stage.

The second stage is curriculum development, and the structure of the curriculum must be set up in such a way that it facilitates the use of distance teaching techniques. The academic structure in the "STOU PLAN" is based on the principle of course integration. That is, an

attempt is made to integrate different academic areas into specific groupings or categories which will facilitate the student's ability to synthesize and apply the knowledge acquired and which will be easy to study on one's own. Course integration is primarily of an interdisciplinary nature. The curriculum is divided into "course blocks," each of which carries 6 semester credits. Four-year bachelor's degree programs are composed of 20-24 course blocks or 132 to 144 semester credits.

The third stage involves selecting and producing the teaching media packages. The "STOU PLAN" was chosen to make use of a mixed-media approach based on the five following criteria: availability, accessibility, acceptability, validity, and economics. Printed materials are the main or core medium, and tapes, radio and television programs, CAI and special tutorial sessions are the supplementary media. For each course block, the student is expected to spend approximately 180 hours per semester studying the printed materials. (This amounts to roughly 12 hours per week for 15 weeks). He also listens to three to ten 60-minute tapes (for some course blocks, such as the English courses, the student will listen to as many as 15 tapes.), listens to seventeen 20-minute radio programs, and views five 30-minute television programs. He also has the opportunity to attend 15 hours of special tutorials held in local study centers located in each province. In producing teaching media packages according to the "STOU PLAN", the first step is the production of the printed texts and workbooks. Selected portions of the text are then used as the basis for tapes, radio and TV shows, and tutorial-session workbooks. These latter media are considered as supplements to the printed materials – the core medium. The completed teaching package is thus in the form of a multi-media self-learning package.

The fourth stage involves establishing delivery systems in order to communicate knowledge to the students. The printed materials and accompanying tapes are sent by mail to the student's home, and radio and TV shows are aired at the same time throughout the country. The tutorial sessions are held on weekends in local study centers located in each province. CAI programs are provided at selected study centers and function as "electronic tutors" for such courses as Science, Mathematics, and Statistics. The distance education system established according to the "STOU PLAN" is thus in the nature of home-based education.

The fifth stage is composed of evaluation and follow-up, which is of two types. The first is evaluation of student learning by final examinations held each semester in the local study centers. A student must sit for the exam in the study center to which he has been assigned, and the exams are held at the same time throughout the country, ordinarily on weekends. The second type of evaluation is system evaluation, which is conducted in order to obtain feedback that can be used to improve the effectiveness of the curriculum and the teaching-learning process.

In using these media, the institution offering these courses has to produce its own media, because the characteristics of the media to be produced require specific techniques which cannot be produced by other institution in Thailand. The language of instruction is Thai, which means that media produced outside of Thailand cannot be used unless it has been translated or adapted for suitability, which would be no less of a burden than the production and development of the media itself. As such, the development of the knowledge and skills of the personnel in producing and developing distance teaching media is a matter of the utmost importance. This is because the degree of success of the Distance Teaching and Learning System depends on the quality and effectiveness of the teaching media. Moreover, the quality and standard of Distance Education depends on the quality and effectiveness of the teaching materials.



### **Training Needs in the Use of Distance Education Media**

As the Distance Education System in Thailand, in its present form, uses a multi-media system produced and developed by the course organisers themselves, the problem arising from a lack of personnel, in particular academic staff possessing the knowledge, capability and experience in producing and developing media, is a major one. Academics who are interested in and willing to join in the work are mostly familiar with conventional systems, because they themselves are direct products of those systems. There is, therefore, a great need for training in the use and production of distance teaching media. Training needs can be divided into the following four categories:

1. Training needs in Printed Material Production to enable academic staff to know how to produce self-instructional textbooks in accordance with the programmed text format. Full-time and part-time academic staff who have been assigned the task of producing printed materials require training to enable them to produce effective and high quality printed materials.

2. Training needs in Radio and Television production to enable academic staff and educational technologists to efficiently perform their duties as producers and to be capable of producing high quality radio and television educational programs.

3. Training needs in CAI Courseware Development to enable academic staff and computer technologists to carry out their duties with the greatest efficiency and to be capable of producing high quality CAI Courseware Development materials.

4. Training needs in Engineer and Technician Development to enable engineers and technicians responsible for the service and maintenance of different types of production equipment to perform their duties efficiently and in accordance with the rapid changes which take place in technology. Participants in these training programs include, for example, printing, radio and television technicians, and computer technologists.

The response offered by the existing universities or local specialized training agencies to the abovementioned training needs is often limited. Help mainly comes in the area of pre-service education by educating personnel in preparation for their vocation or profession. When the Open University and distance teaching institutions employ personnel, they must arrange their own additional training programs. The responsibility of training programs is thus a heavy burden. In the case of STOU, it was necessary to spend 2 full years preparing personnel before distance teaching, as it is practised in Thailand, could be commenced. Response to training needs concerning the use and production of media is generally carried out as follows:

1. Key personnel are sent abroad for training in selected specialized agencies which offer training programs in areas corresponding to the needs. For example, personnel participate in training courses on the production of radio-television educational programs as offered by NHK in Japan and the BBC in England. Participation in these programs is restricted to key personnel, as there is a limit on the number of participants accepted into the programs and the cost is very high.

2. Personnel participate in practical training programs conducted in centers recognized as having a high degree of experience in the production and use of certain types of media. Participants are mostly key personnel who receive on-the-job training or they are attached to more highly experienced Open Universities. As it is more difficult to find sources providing this type of training, than it is with the first method, participation is rather limited.



3. Personnel take part in training programs at a regional level as organized by regional offices of various organizations. At present the UNESCO Regional Office for Education in Asia and the Pacific, which has an office in Bangkok, has set up a Consortium on Innovations in Higher Education which emphasizes cooperation in distance education in the Asia and Pacific Region. UNESCO's ROEAP has, on many occasions in the past three years, supported the organization of seminars, meetings and training programs on distance education which have been attended by representatives from different Open Universities in this region.

4. In-house training programs are organized by the University for junior staff using its full-time academic staff, as well as outside resource persons, to serve as trainers.

The only organization in Thailand which has developed a system and methods of training in the use and production of distance teaching media to the degree of being self-reliant is Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University. The University has, since its establishment, included in its development plan, a plan for the training of personnel. The plan has been followed continuously up until the present time as one of the University's main activities. A study and analysis of training needs has been carried out and sources of training, both in Thailand and abroad, have been identified. The training plan has been applied according to the following stages:

1. During the first three years, emphasis was placed on sending key personnel for training, and for developing additional experience, at specialized training agencies so that they themselves would later be able to act as trainers. It was, in effect, training personnel and prospective trainers at the same time.

2. Training key personnel by inviting experts from various Open Universities which had already been successfully established, such as the Open University in England.

3. Personnel who have successfully undergone training programs as mentioned in 1 and 2 above, together with experts from NHK assigned to the Open University under the Technical Cooperation Project between the Thai and Japanese Governments, organize on-the-job training for production and technical staff. Training packages for Instructional Materials Production and Media Production are also prepared for use in workshops organized for full-time staff, newly appointed academic staff, part-time course production teams and media production teams.

4. Training in Media Production has been integrated with personnel selection. After completion of the academic records assessment and interview, candidates are then required to participate in workshops on the printed materials production in accordance with the programmed text format prescribed by the University, and produce simulated radio and television programs. They are accepted for employment only after having been assessed as being capable of producing the aforementioned media.

5. Short-term training programs are organized and personnel are periodically sent for training, participation in seminars, and on observation tours, to enable them to develop their experience and capabilities and to ensure that their level of knowledge is always up-to-date.

STOU is now sufficiently self-reliant in terms of training. It is not yet at the stage, however, where it can respond to the training needs of other institutions in the use and production of distance teaching media. These training needs are continually increasing as a result of the growth of distance education and the increase in the use of broadcast media and computer technology, as well as the construction of the National Television Network for Education and Public Relations which will go into operation in 1988, and the expansion in the

use of CAI. The dependency on specialized training agencies in foreign countries, particularly in the Asian and Pacific Region, for training in these areas is still very high, and if it can be done within the region, costs involved in sending personnel for training will be reduced.

### **Conclusion**

Distance Education is an alternative means organized to provide greater access to higher education and to promote equality of educational opportunities. This system has been successfully developed and put into use in Thailand. The effectiveness of distance education depends on the quality of the media and concerns the application of appropriate technology in accordance with progress being made in modern communication technology. The necessity of and the needs in training personnel to increase their ability in using and producing distance education media is also a matter of great importance. To give sufficient and continual response to the aforementioned training needs, it is necessary to adequately develop training programs by establishing specialized training agencies at an institutional, a national and a regional level.

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