The Path to Excellence in Thai Education

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Abstract

This academic paper is an adapted version of the address to educators at Chulalongkornrajavidyalaya University and the College of Education of Dhurakij Pundit University, Thailand in 2018. The author's purpose was to show the path to excellence in Thai education supported by the results from the analysis of skills needed for the changing education trends in the twenty-first century. The points under discussion included (1) desirable characteristics of learners, (2) seven new trends that affect the direction of society and the world, (3) skills for the twenty-first century in developed countries with personal/ social/ economic considerations, (4) the CCPR Model as applied to the teaching process, and (5) standards of excellence for leadership for quality education. The author closed the paper with seven proposed pillars for quality education implementation.

Keywords: Excellence in education, Thai education, characteristics of learners, skills of the twenty-first century, the CCPR Model

1. Introduction

Thai education has been through its struggle for quality in its process and target outcome since its first attempted establishment after the second world war. As shown in the literature on Thai education developments, educators and layman authorities assigned to the Ministry of Education and the office of Higher Education Affairs (formerly known as the Office of Higher Education Commission OHEC, and currently as the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation MHESI) have been continually upgrading Thai education at different levels in a series of models after the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia and Finland, but not with much success as planned by the National Development Plans for Education, Social and Economic Developments: The Second 15-Year National Education Development Plan 2008-2022; Higher Education Standards, 2015, 2018; Undergraduate Standards in the 4-Year Education Program, 2019; The National Policy and Plan for Digital Development for Economy and Society 2018-2037. Recently, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation have focused on the development of learners for learner autonomy and self-learning, desirable characteristics responsive to demands for hard and soft skills of the twenty-first century, and the teaching process in congruence with Information Communication Technology ICT. Educators and researchers have been funded by the government units to conduct research on immediate education issues to yield answers in support of the new trend in education and beyond (The Ministry of Education, 2008, 2019; Office of Higher Education Commission, 2015, 2018; Office of the Prime Ministry, 2018).

2. Characteristics of Learners

In education management, classroom teachers and course instructors should pay attention to characteristics of learners. In this paper, the author considered characteristics of students to meet the demands of the ASEAN context. They are (1) Rational thinking, (2) Adapting ability to the environment, (3) Love of knowledge, (4) Ability to use modern technology, and (5) Have respect for oneself and others.

These characteristics are supposed to blend into five functions: (1) Adapt to social production and innovation, (2) Understand Thai culture, (3) Learn about culture of the neighboring countries, (4) Understand the world's problems, and (5) Make full use of world resources. It is worth noting that society and the world at large have imposed specific learner characteristics for success in the new social and economic arena. It is therefore vitally important for Thai students to know Thai society and understand the world society, and beware of their role in Thai society and the world society to become leaders in their respective communities.

3. Seven New Trends

In view of education management in the twenty-first century, the author looked at the future direction of society and the world. From the document analysis, the author identified seven trends: (1) Technologicalization, (2) Commercialization & Economy, (3) Globalization & Network, (4) Urbanization, (5) Digitalization, (6) Individualization, and (7) Environmentalization & Energy.

Technology serves as a driving force for change in trading systems for globalized networks. Globalization will lead to urbanization and a digital society in which people will be individuals in a tech-connected society. And they will face environmental problems especially of technological in nature. However, changes that occur will lead to the path of excellence, particularly in the area of education in Thailand in its attempt to cope with demands in educating or training the workforce for the twenty-first century. Figure 1 shows the future of 21st century work in more and less developed countries.

Figure 1: The Future 21st Century Work by Trilling & Fidel (2009)
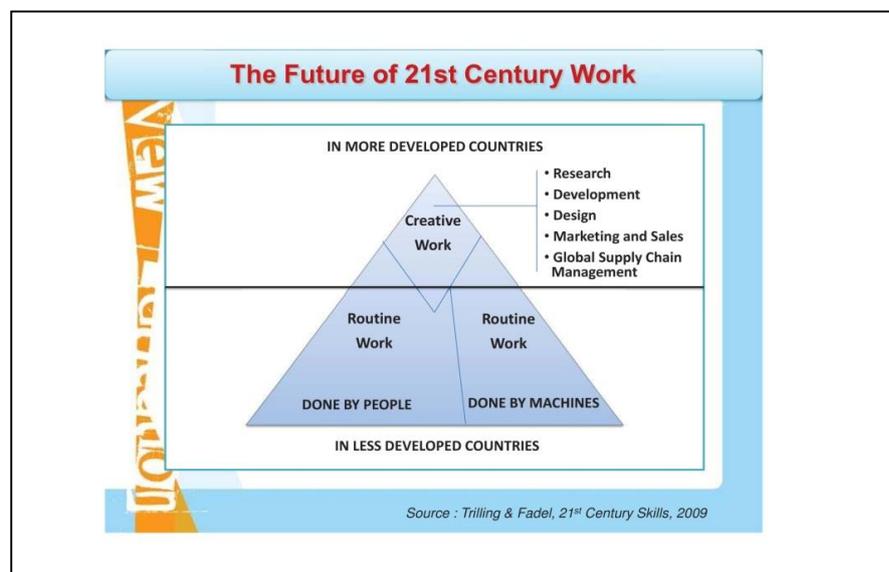
We can see that the western world with more developed countries has its direction toward creative work which is a research-based task. In developing and designing creative work for sales in the global market, those less developed countries need to learn and adopt ideas, technologies from the western world for upgrading their products to be creative and innovative. This is how the 21st century skills come in and people need them to catch up with competition in terms of quality workforce and products.

4. Skills for the Twenty-First Century: A Case of Developed Countries

There are two main conceptual groups for the 21st century skills frequently reported and discussed in the literature of the 21st century. The first group on Partnership for 21st Century Skills contains Life Skills, Learning and Thinking Skills, as shown in Figures 2 and 3. The second group on ICT skills for learners is shown in Figure 4 and 5.
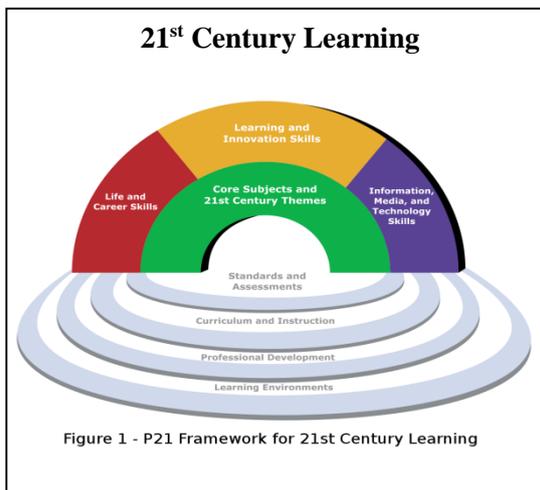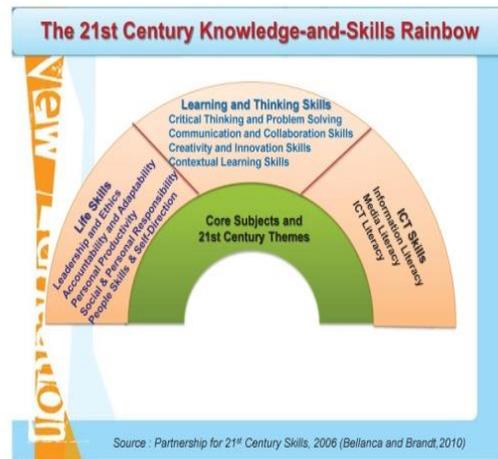
Figure 2: 21st Century Learning

Figure 3: 21st Century Knowledge-and- Skills Rainbow

skills for 21st cen

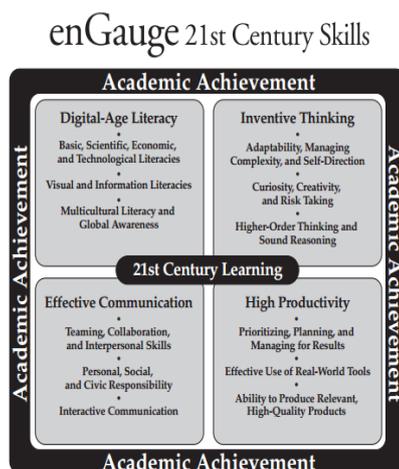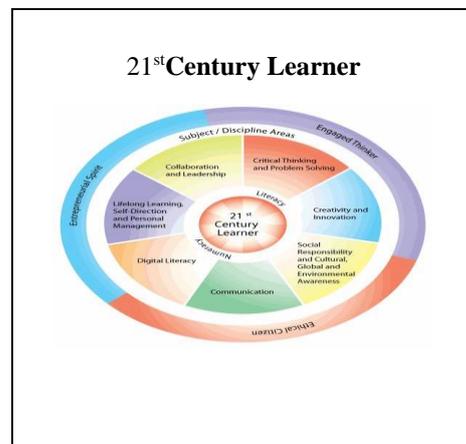**Figure 4**: enGauge 21st Century Skills

Figure 5: 21st Century Learner

In addition to the two main groups, there are a wide variety of 21st century skills, such as those identified by OECD in 2005: a range of tooling skills, exchange information skills, relationship skills and professional work skills. Bellanca & Brandt (2010) reported a group of National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and American's Promise, specifying cognitive Intellectual and practice Skills, both personal and social skills, including other qualities like responsibility and ability for integrative learning (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2007).

5. Specific Skills by Countries

Interestingly, most new skills for the 21st century are mainly identified by North American and European countries. Other countries like Singapore and Malaysia emphasize specific skills on their own: Singapore focuses on critical and inventive thinking, information and communication skills, civic literacy, and cross-cultural skills (see Figure 6); and Malaysia signifies lifelong learning, communication, leadership, teamwork, critical thinking and management skills (see Figure 7).

Figure 6: 21stCentury Competencies and Desired Student Outcomes (Singapore MOE)
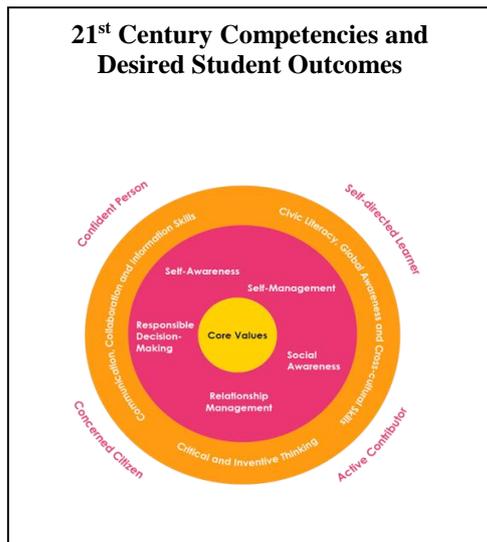
Figure 7: Learning Outcomes/ Malaysia Outcomes (Malaysia MOE)
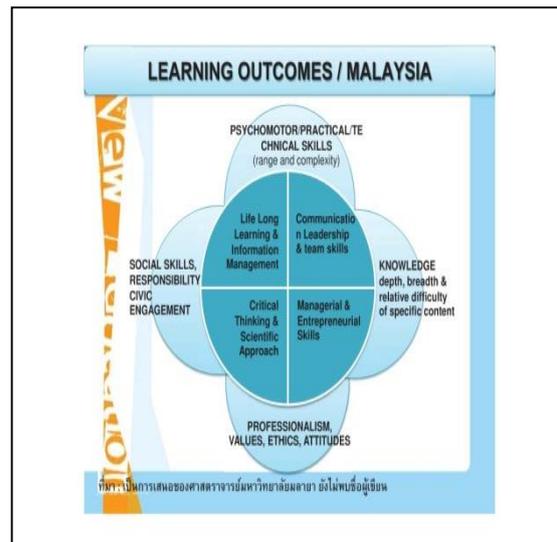
6. Twenty-First Century Survival Skills

Professor Wagner of Harvard University identified in 2008 seven skills in the 21st century: (1) critical thinking, (2) collaboration, (3) adaptation, (4) initiative, (5) communication, (6) access to information and data analysis, and (7) inquisition, as shown in Figures 8 and 9.

Figure 8: Survival Skills   **Figure 9:** 7 Cs" Skills of 21st Century Learning

Seven Survival Skills	"7 Cs" Skills of 21st Century Learning

To the author, Trilling & Fadel (2009) summed up well 7 Cs to be easy to remember: Critical Thinking, Creativity, Collaboration, Cross-cultural, Communications, Computing and Career.

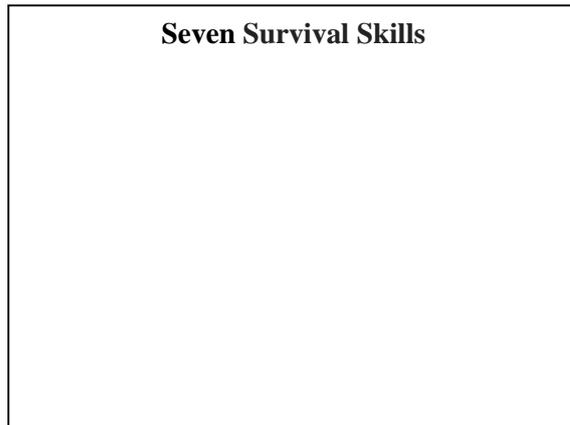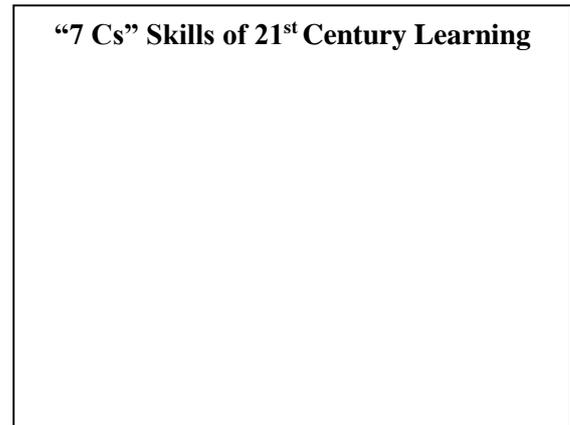It is interesting to look at the 21st skills in the personal, industrial, and cultural perspectives as shown below.

Personal

The identified 21st learning and skills are from the western world and they serve like products people *may personally wish to buy*, especially in working with new technologies in communication, trading and manufacturing. People need to develop skills to use new products or change them into new models by new technology.

Industrial

Learning and keeping up with the 21st century is considered a modern norm. This will allow us to learn and develop our skills to keep up with new products that change ways of work and life in the new business contexts in the new industrial age.

Figure 10: New Generation: Buyers or Manufacturers

Buyers	Manufacturer
New Generation: Buyers or Manufacturers	
1. Learn new technology 2. Can keep up with new products 3. Learn new innovations 4. Communicate and collaborate internationally 5. Learn and develop yourself 6. Ready for change 7. Change new products continuously	1. Overlook new technology possible 2. Create a new product yourself 3. Develop socially consistent innovation 4. Focus on strand and collaborate to develop 5. Know yourself and develop to be yourself 6. Changeable 7. Always design new products to market.
Use new items	Create new things

That is why we should not just stick being a buyer, but we have to move on to being a smart buyer, and we need our learners to create their own new products, know themselves, make changes and design new products for the new market.

In a competitive society that constantly creates new quality products for the global market, it is imperative that we build our children or learners with quality and consciousness to develop Thai society to cope well with the world and new culture well, including learning to change and constantly strive to create new things for society. This can be done through education to make the young generation smart and productive buyers, as shown in Figure 11.

Figure 11: Education for Smart Buying and Creative Production

Education for smart buying and creative production
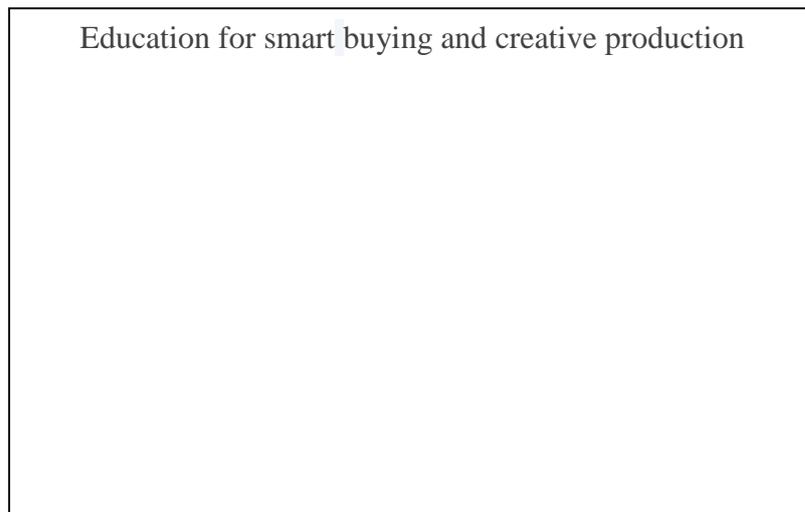
Cultural

In order for our learners to be smart with buying and creating new things, and keep up with changes, it is imperative that we change our own learner's culture, give practical values in a way that leads to new values and characteristics, especially thinking, production, and quality upgrading. The author considered changing culture for Thai learners as the new generation from being only a recipient / believer to be an innovator and questioner, as shown in Figure 12.

Figure 12: Need to Change Culture

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                        Need to Change Culture                         │
│  ┌─────────────────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────────────────┐  │
│  │  Thai children in a culture of │     │  Thai children in the culture │  │
│  │     acceptance / belief      │     │    of making/ asking        │  │
│  │            ⬇                 │     │            ⬇                 │  │
│  │   Believe in Self            │     │  • Think critically          │  │
│  │  • Lack of confidence.       │     │  • Be confident in oneself   │  │
│  │  • Do not seek information   │     │  • Seek knowledge            │  │
│  │  • Lack of enthusiasm        │     │  • Acquire knowledge         │  │
│  │  • Follow traditional track  │     │    enthusiastically          │  │
│  │  • Be a consumer             │  ⟹  │  • Think creatively          │  │
│  │  • Do anything but pass      │     │  • Be a manufacturer         │  │
│  │    through                   │     │  • Focus on excellence       │  │
│  │  • Be impatient; not hard-   │     │  • Be patient, hard-working  │  │
│  │    working                   │     │  • Work as a team.           │  │
│  │  • Work alone                │     │  • Have social               │  │
│  │  • Do not think of the public.│     │    responsibility            │  │
│  │  • Survive for only oneself  │     │  • Respect society           │  │
│  │  • Lack moral ethics         │     │  • Have morality             │  │
│  │  • Not interested in peaceful │     │  • Have Thai identity        │  │
│  │    means                     │     │                              │  │
│  │  • Lack Thai identity        │     │                              │  │
│  └─────────────────────────────┘     └─────────────────────────────┘  │
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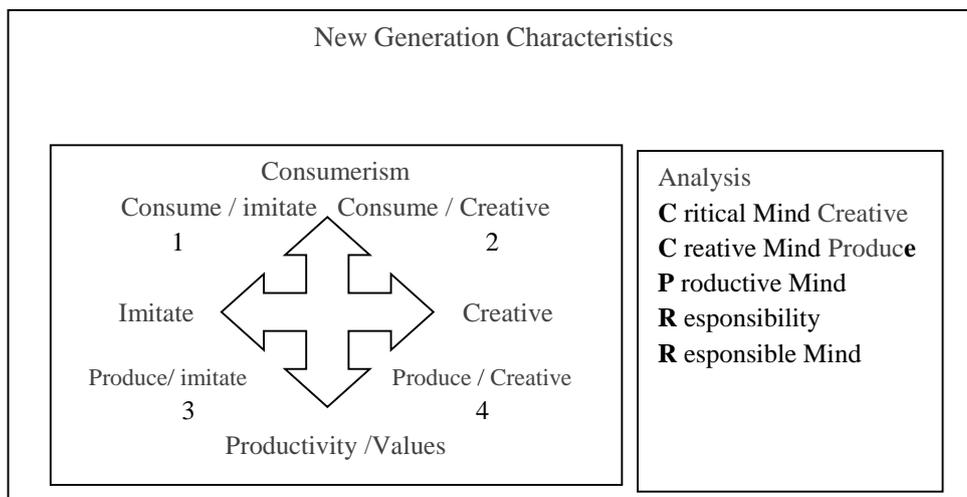
7. New Generation Feature: CCPR Model

The researcher considered a new model called CCPR model with critical thinking, creative thinking, productive capacity, sense of responsibility, for development of children or learners in Thailand, as shown in Figure 13.
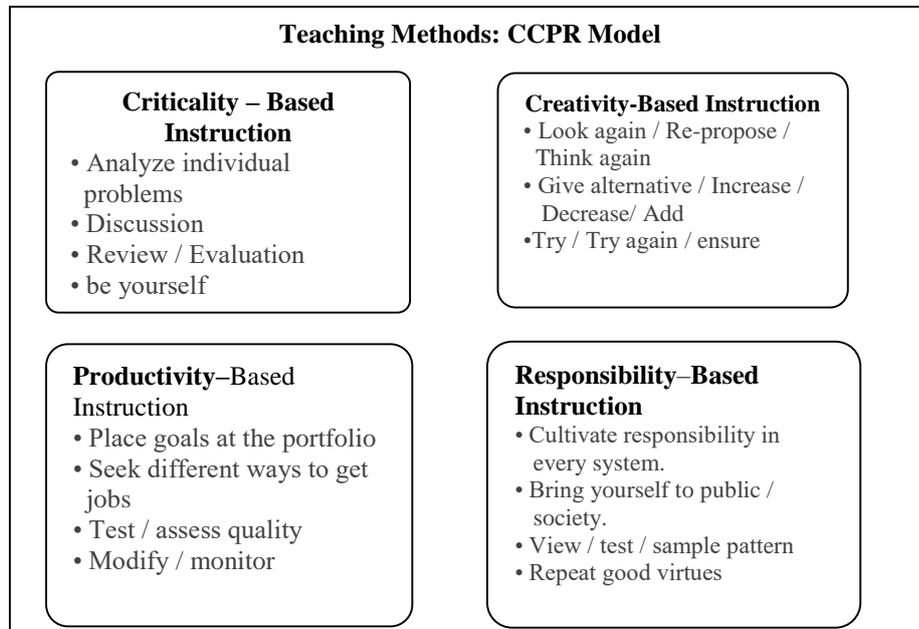
Figure 13: New Generation Characteristics

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                  New Generation Characteristics                       │
│  ┌───────────────────────────────────┐   ┌─────────────────────────┐ │
│  │            Consumerism             │   │  Analysis               │ │
│  │  Consume / imitate  Consume / Creative │   │  C ritical Mind Creative │ │
│  │        1                    2      │   │  C reative Mind Produce  │ │
│  │           ⬆                        │   │  P roductive Mind        │ │
│  │  Imitate  ⬅ ⬌ ➡  Creative          │   │  R esponsibility         │ │
│  │           ⬇                        │   │  R esponsible Mind       │ │
│  │  Produce/ imitate  Produce / Creative │   │                         │ │
│  │        3                    4      │   │                         │ │
│  │        Productivity /Values        │   │                         │ │
│  └───────────────────────────────────┘   └─────────────────────────┘ │
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CCPR Model Teaching Process

To achieve CCPR qualifications, we need to teach learners how to innovate and think analytically. Practice in analytical thinking requires support for creativity to produce something new with training for responsibility development, as shown in Figure 14.
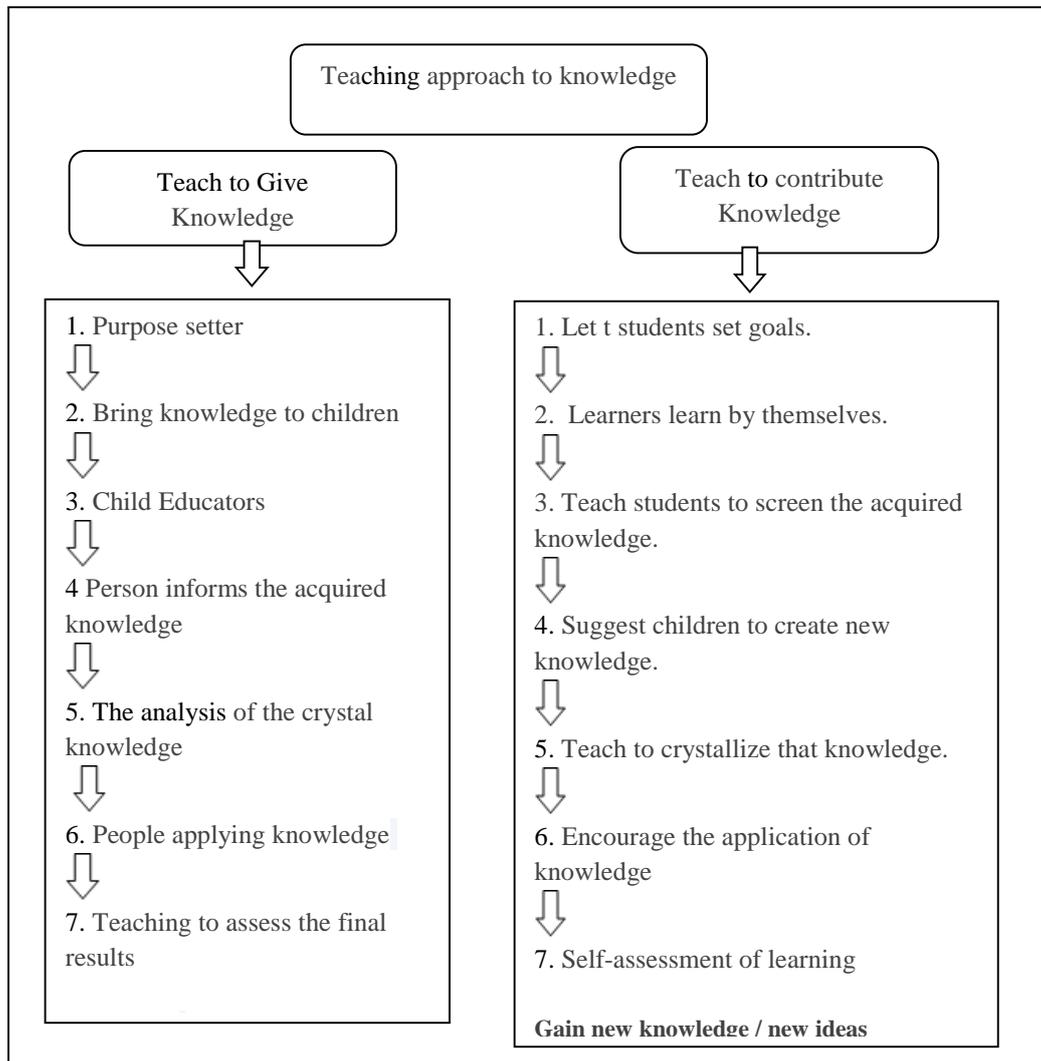
Figure 14: Teaching Methods: CCPR Model

Teaching Methods: CCPR Model

Criticality – Based Instruction
• Analyze individual problems
• Discussion
• Review / Evaluation
• be yourself

Creativity-Based Instruction
• Look again / Re-propose / Think again
• Give alternative / Increase / Decrease/ Add
•Try / Try again / ensure

Productivity–Based Instruction
• Place goals at the portfolio
• Seek different ways to get jobs
• Test / assess quality
• Modify / monitor

Responsibility–Based Instruction
• Cultivate responsibility in every system.
• Bring yourself to public / society.
• View / test / sample pattern
• Repeat good virtues

8. New Teacher Role: Teaching Approach to Knowledge

The new role imposed on teachers requires three new stages: (1) changing the old teaching role, (2) taking the new role, and (3) letting students talk.

1）Changing the old teaching role

Teachers are to leave their traditional teaching role in prescribing or spoon feeding knowledge to children or learners. They need to understand that the traditional method of imparting knowledge to learners will not be able to motivate or inspire learners to seek knowledge independently. Teachers are to provide support or assistance for learners by means of facilitating learning for the latter to explore in the areas of interest, partly as guided by the curriculum or the learning program.

Figure 15: Teaching Approach to Knowledge


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                    ┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
                    │   Teaching approach to knowledge     │
                    └─────────────────────────────────────┘

        ┌──────────────────┐              ┌──────────────────┐
        │  Teach to Give   │              │ Teach to contribute │
        │    Knowledge     │              │     Knowledge     │
        └──────────────────┘              └──────────────────┘
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1. Purpose setter

2. Bring knowledge to children

3. Child Educators

4 Person informs the acquired knowledge

5. The analysis of the crystal knowledge

6. People applying knowledge

7. Teaching to assess the final results

1. Let t students set goals.

2. Learners learn by themselves.

3. Teach students to screen the acquired knowledge.

4. Suggest children to create new knowledge.

5. Teach to crystallize that knowledge.

6. Encourage the application of knowledge

7. Self-assessment of learning

Gain new knowledge / new ideas

2) Taking the new role

Teachers are to guide and encourage children to set own goals and find their own sources of knowledge. Children should be advised to choose and think for themselves,construct their own knowledge, clarify gained knowledge, use processed knowledge and evaluate the reconstructed knowledge in order to take practical and sensible action upon what has been learned, as shown in Figure 16.

Figure 16: Methodology: Learners

Methodology: Learners		
Process of teaching in a conducive way (Facilitator)	**Student role**	**Teacher role**
1. Set goals to get with learners	1. Set goals	1. Encourage learners to think about learning
2. To get planning in seeking knowledge and encouraging learners to educate themselves	2. Seek knowledge	2. Recommended knowledge sources for children to find knowledge
3. Sharing data screening	3. Select / knowledge	3. Encourage learners and coach

4. Additional things for students to create their own knowledge	4. Create new knowledge	4. Encourage students to construct experimental accounts of knowledge
5. Encourage learners to crystallize acquired knowledge	5. In conclusion, what I have learned or crystallized in knowledge	5. Encourage learners to impart knowledge, ask questions and evaluate
6. Teach students to apply knowledge	6. Apply knowledge	6. Emphasize use of knowledge and see the methods used to encourage learners to evaluate knowledge and practice
7. Encourage learners to assess acquired knowledge.	7. Assess acquired knowledge	7. Encourage students to assess the knowledge acquired or practice setting criteria

3) Letting students talk

In the whole learning process, teachers have to close their mouth (stop talking) to give time for learners to open their mouth or talk/ express themselves. Children should be supported to manage their learning, set goals and pursue their own learning for knowledge acquisition. Teachers need to learn new methods to assess students' learning outcomes. See Figure 17.

Figure 17: Role of Learner: Open Mouth of Student, Close Mouth of Teacher
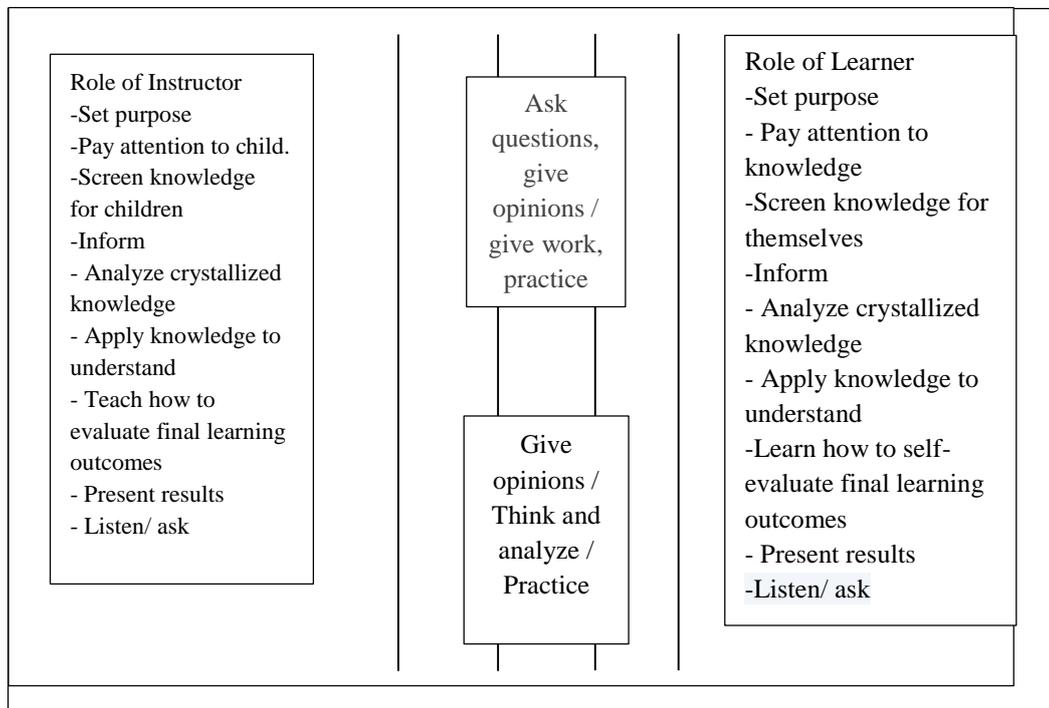
As the overall picture, we need learners to be able to acquire knowledge and analyze knowledge by themselves. They should be empowered for knowledge analysis and self-assessment to make possible their sustainable learning in the long run. They are to become self-directed learners to meet with principles underlying the path to excellence in Thai education.

9. Standards of Excellence

The author would like to report standards of excellence by examples in this section.

1) Examples of Excellent People

The examples on new activities were shown in *one school project, one innovation per year* at Romchat Foundation of Chao Khun Thongchai, Wat Traimit College. This was to promote quality of education by having a number of best practice projects as good examples. There were nine examples of excellent teaching at preparatory schools for administrators to use as examples:

1. Knowledge of subjects taught
2. Professional teaching, self-learning
3. Teaching ability
4. Evaluation processes that can classify students
5. Considering differences among learners
6. Morality and ethics teaching
7. Ability to use technology
8. Collaboration, communication, human relations
9. Personality, physical and mental readiness

The one-school-one-project scheme can yield innovation with a set of quality criteria as follows:

1. Academic Values: Thinking Process and Development, Outcomes and Impacts
2. Benefits of Innovation: Professional Importance and Application
3. Characteristics of Work: Outstanding Novelty
4. Collaborative contribution: diversity of stakeholders
5. Presentation: Techniques to present information and evidence

School administrators can take advantage of developing innovative operations by using the criteria shown above.

3) Excellent Teaching

The lessons from follow-ups, support and evaluation used in the project in promotion of innovation in Primary Learning of Romchat Foundation can be used for application in schools as follows:

1. Stakeholders: Important people, parents and participation in teaching and learning activities
2. Local wisdom: Local scholars and practitioners of knowledge or practice in the nearby community
3. Environment/ company/ community: Value of learning from close things and environment
4. Craft activities: Trust and belief in projects and activities
5. Booklet
6. Computer technology: Breaking through limitations
7. Learning power: Hidden in students.

4) 4 x 4 Model of Excellence

Excellence is an important direction of quality in various dimensions of learners, teaching, management and environment, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Model of Excellence

Goals \ dimension	Learning	Thinking	Doing	Being Honest
Learners	High achievements are capable of being complementary	Analytical, creative, intellectual solution	self-learning	Discipline, honesty, public mind.
Teach	have knowledge and methods of teaching	Have ability to think and teach thinking.	Analyze curriculum development, learning evaluation,	Kanlayanamit or camaraderie emphasizes good learners
Administrators,	academic leaders to promote good teaching	Encourages good thinking	Good teaching supplement	An enterprising role model
Environment	A community of learning and faith?	Has to promote thinking	Activities to promote thinking and collaboration.	Caring for people around

5) Excellent Organization

Excellence organization deals with organizational characteristics and the excellent school model as shown in the box under (1) below and Figure 18.

(1) Organizational Characteristics

Pillar 1 Project Management
Pillar 2 Knowledge Management
Pillar 3 Process Management
Pillar 4 Change Management
Pillar 5 Human Management

It should be noted that organizational excelllence carries five concepts or pillars to be developed for efficiency of quality education implementation.

(2) Excellent School

The excellence school model is illustrated in Figure 18 below.

Figure 18: Excellent School
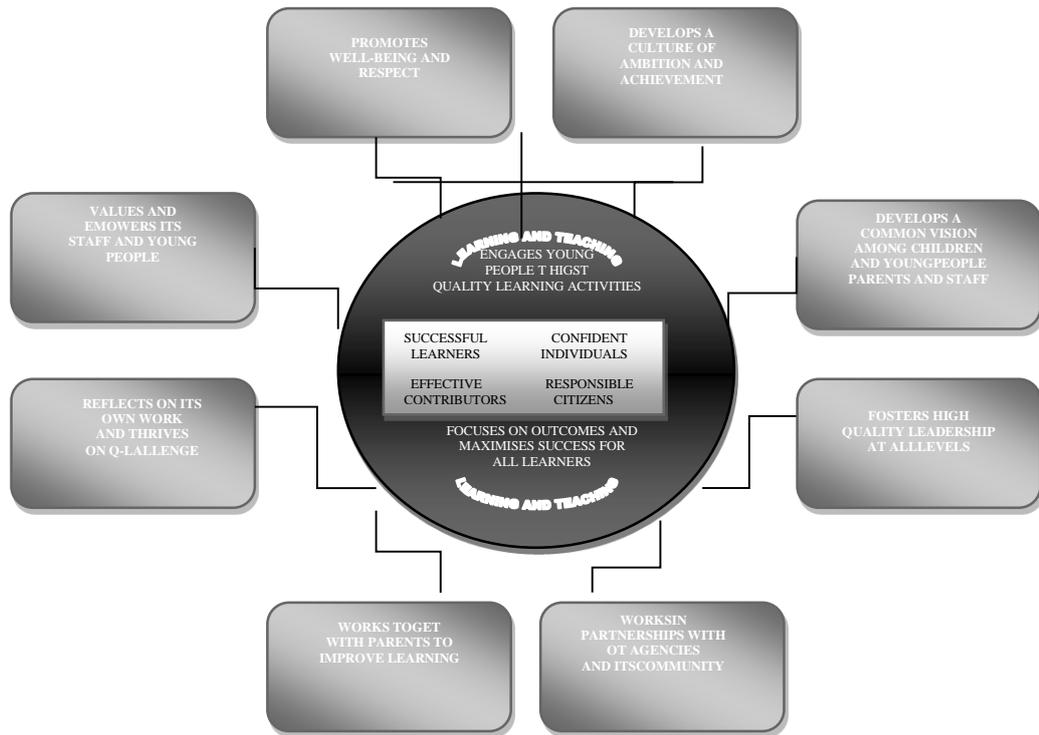
6) Process of Excellence

The process of excellence is in two patterns: (1) Pattern 1 in Participatory Style, and (2) Pattern 2 in Preparation for Change, as shown in Figures 19 and 20.

Figure 19: Pattern 1 of Process of Excellence in Participatory Style
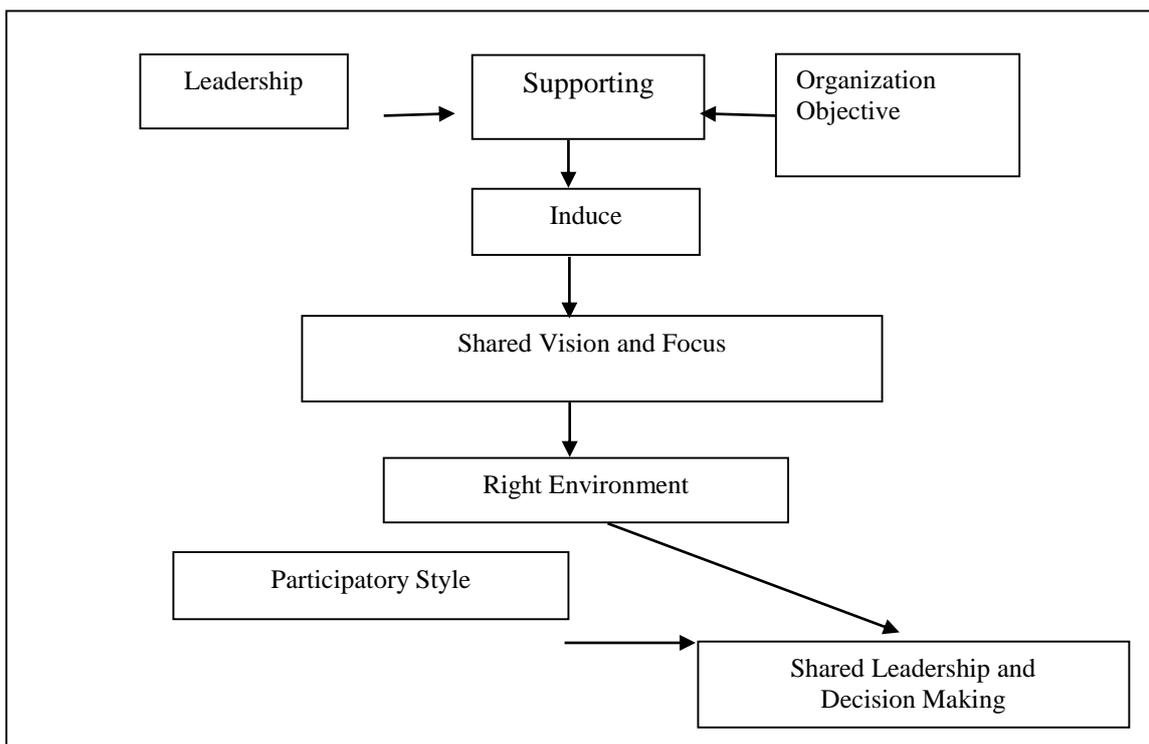
Figure 20: Pattern 2 of Process of Excellence in Preparation for Change

1. Leaders Correcting Vision and Mission
2. Leaders Motivating Employees
3. Effectively Communicating
4. Empowering Employees
5. Encouraging Teamwork
6. Preparing for Change

Source: Neuman, S. & *Its.* "Roles of Empowerment in Uplifting an Organization's Excellences in Less Development Countries (LDC)" Retrieved from the Internet, September 2019)

7) Leadership in Teaching Excellence

Leadership in teaching has seven main domains:

Domain I: Fostering a Collaborative Culture to Support Educator Development and Student Learning

Domain II: Accessing and Using Research to Improve Practice and Student Learning

Domain III: Promoting Professional Learning for Continuous Improvement

Domain IV: Facilitating Improvements in Instruction and Student Learning

Domain V: Promoting Use of Assessments and Data for School and District Improvement

Domain VI: Improving Outreach and Collaboration with Families and Community

Domain VII: Advocating for Student Learning and Profession

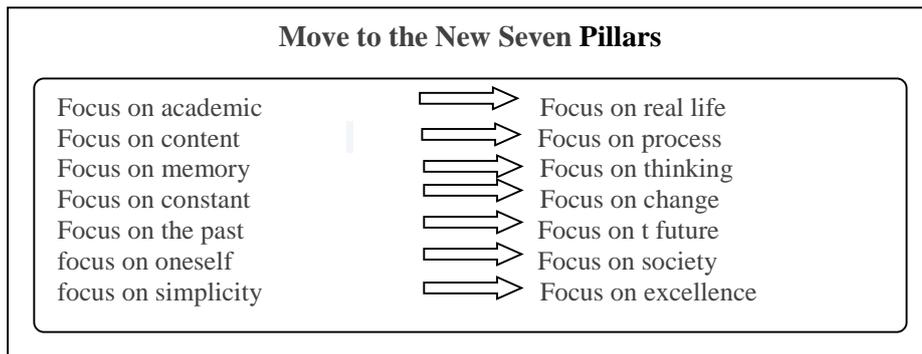## 10. Strategies to Improve the Quality of Education

The author has put forward a synthesis of thoughts and understanding into seven strategies for intended excellence. Teachers need to motivate and encourage learner autonomy with a variety of learning-facilitation methods and alternative modes of classroom management. It is also important for teachers to collaborate with schools administrators for efficiency in quality education upgrading in four perspectives of *KIBA*: *K* for *Knowledge* in new management, up-to-date knowledge, and professional advancement; *I* stands for *Ideal* in having smart people to mobilize others to come up with work in action: *A* for *Action* to be taken for good results in education in the 21st century.

Summary of 7 strategies
Dreaming / Visioning
Inspiring / Encouraging
Best Practicing / Doing
Diversifying / Differentiating
Empowering / Developing
Coaching / Mentoring
Networking / Cooperating

11. Recommendation: Move to the New Seven Pillars

In this paper, the author analyzed and synthesized the highlights of the 21st century that have impacts on quality education and resulted in various models, strategies, pillars in guidance of adaptation for the ever changing contexts of education at all levels. The author has called attention to Thai educators and teachers to the application of seven pillars or in his own term in Thai as "Satasita" or seven stone tablets. He has cautioned teachers and school administrators to avoid actions that deviate from good practices that benefit learners, as shown in Figure 21.

Figure 21: Caution on a Step forward from Seven Pillars

Move to the New Seven Pillars

Focus on academic	⇒ Focus on real life
Focus on content	⇒ Focus on process
Focus on memory	⇒ Focus on thinking
Focus on constant	⇒ Focus on change
Focus on the past	⇒ Focus on t future
focus on oneself	⇒ Focus on society
focus on simplicity	⇒ Focus on excellence

To the author, it is high time for those authorities concerned in education administration to depart from the focus on content and rote memorization and then empower students with learning autonomy at all levels to assist and support them to go through the 21st century with confidence and needed abilities/ skills to contribute well to the society they belong.

11. The Author

The author Paitoon Sinlarat, Ph.D., is a renowned professor and educator in Thailand in the areas of educational administration and educational theory. He has been well-recognized for his project work on Thai graduates' desirable characteristics, contribution to Thailand Qualification Framework in Thai higher education, and supervision for curriculum standards of teaching certification under Kurusapa or the Teachers' Council of Thailand.

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