

## ABSTRACT

This research investigated indigenous learning as a part of the Thai culture. The purpose of the study was twofold: to analyse the nature of learning and skill transferring of the villagers in rural communities in Thailand; and to analyse the variables underlying learning which included the motivation, supporting factors, ethical values, expenses and problems in professional skill transfer.

This was a qualitative study. The sample consisted of 159 villagers in rural communities from 6 provinces; 3 in the North, namely, Chiangrai, Payao and Uttradit; 3 in the Northeast, namely, Roi-et, Ubonratchathani and Nongkai. The subjects were selected from those experienced in 53 skills, which could be clustered in 10 professional groups as follows: Thai architecture and arts, carpenters - musical instrument makers, heavy - semiheavy handicraft, light handicraft, hand weaving and clothwork, musicians -singers - entertainers, healers, literature - rituals, foods - nutritions, and others. The non-structured interview and systematic observation were applied in the data collection.

The findings were as follows:-

1. **Pattern of Learning.** The indigenous learning and the professional skill transferring could be grouped into 5 categories: (1) the village occupational skills had been handed down for long periods of time, (2) certain occupational skills were inherited from the ancestors to the next generations of

the family members, (3) the professional skills were learned from the experienced persons by the learner as an apprenticeship, as a resident at a Buddhist monastery, as a group activity, as a participant in training sessions given by a resource person, (4) motivated by childhood experience and advised at an initial stage by an experienced person, (5) the learning occurred incidentally, e.g. through a dream, superstitions, etc.

2. Motivation. The following 10 motivators were identified: (1) community environment, (2) supports on the part of respected persons, (3) personal interest and self motivation, (4) economic reasons, (5) witnessing the values, (6) valuable expending of spare time, (7) promotion by government officials, (8) sex oriented occupation, (9) calling the attention and (10) unexpected enthusiasm.

3. Supporting Factors. The following factors supported the continued learning to take place: (1) environment influence, (2) economic reasons, (3) personal interest, (4) personal pride, (5) advancement in the practice, (6) ability to adapt and apply, (7) extensive application, (8) support by respected/experienced person (s), and (9) group activities.

4. Ethical values. The following professional ethical values were emphasized on the part of the trainees: (1) being a good citizen living under the Buddhist religious codes, (2) being truthful and honest to their profession, (3) being gentle and grateful to the benefactors, (4) being efficient in the maintenance of the training equipment and (5) following the specific rules and regulations of certain profession, e.g.,

refraining from drinking alcoholic beverages.

5. Expenses. The expenses incurred from the learning activities included the following categories: (1) no expense was paid when the transfer of the skills was among the family members and community members, (2) a "traditional dedication fee" was required for certain skills, (3) bartering between labour and access to attend the professional training, (4) expenses specified by the trainer in terms of the "community business".

6. Problems in the Transfer of Occupational Skills. The problems included: (1) the lack of interested person in specific periods of time, (2) the lack of raw materials due to the deforestation, (3) hazards to one's health and (4) low prices on the products or low wages.

Recommendations for Further Improvements. It was strongly recommended that relevant agencies put more emphases on the conservation and promotion of skilled professions in rural areas. It should be readily determined which occupational skills to be conserved and promoted, and how to do so.

Recommendations for Further Studies. Higher education institutions should conduct more studies on the cultures of the rural communities, in their attempt to efficiently integrate the new innovations with the indigenous knowledge.