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## 1. Little History

### School for Life Chiang Mai

The School for Life was founded in Northern Thailand in 2003. It accepts children from difficult backgrounds. Aids orphans marked the beginning but by now, other children have joined: orphans who have survived the Tsunami; children, whose parents have died or disappeared on the run; and children, who have escaped situations of brutality and abuse. Around 150 kids have found their way to the School for Life as of February 2008.

The School for Life is located on the Suan Suoi Fha Sai (clear skies over beautiful garden) Farm in an attractive natural setting deep inside a royal forest in the Doi Saket Mountains, about 45 minutes from Chiang Mai und 4 kilometers from Pongkum Village. The farm has been dedicated to the development of ecological farming.

The School for Life is not a short-term project but needs to be established in a sustainable way.

- The first priority is for the children to regain happiness. They grow into a strong community, similar to an extended family. Visitors describe this community using expressions such as “love and care for others”, “trust in one’s own strength”, “self confidence”, “passion”, “peacefulness”, “culturally rooted”, and “open mindedness”.

- The School for Life wants to secure the existence and the well-being of the children entrusted to its case, to give them a new home and to offer them plenty perspectives for their lives.
- The School for Life wants to support children in a way that enables them to catch up and get to the top, starting from apposition of disadvantage. Thus the concept is not poor education for poor kids but an education of high standard and learnings as adventure.
- A goal of the School for Life is education towards entrepreneurial spirit and towards ecological and social responsibility. Children and youths are thus preparing for situations later in life in which they will have to break out of the cycle of poverty and create their own employment rather than chasing jobs that are not sufficiently available. This should not imply that they will join a rapidly expanding consumption bubble but are rather educated towards an intelligent modesty with the goal of high living standards using little resources.
- The School for Life is not a spaceship. It is down to earth and includes people from surrounding villages, creates employment, and combines community focused learning and idea development.

### **Hanseatic (former Beluga) School for Life in Phang Nga**

Right after the Tsunami in December 2004 a cry for help reached the School for Life in Chiang Mai from Ban Namkem, a village north of Khao Lak that was widely destroyed. A team of the School for Life

started their work with surviving children and adults "under the tree". The first step was the development of a new, close-held community. Many conversations with survivors were held, in order to identify the outline of the development project and to decide on the next steps.

This is how it became clear that another School for Life had to be founded. The Chancellor of Germany recommend the "School for Life under the tree" in a press conference, and a German agency which was put in place by the German Government introduced Mr. Niels Stolberg, owner of Beluga Shipping Company in Bremen, to the team in Ban Namkem. On February 10<sup>th</sup> 2005, Mr. and Mrs. Stolberg flew to Thailand to see the project. Two days later they decided to underwrite the entire "Beluga School for Life in Phang Nga" including the purchase of the land, the construction and a guarantee for the running costs for ten years. Since the Beluga Shipping Company ran into insolvency, from 2011 on new sponsors from Hamburg and Bremen became responsible for the further well-being of the school under the new name 'Hanseatic School for Life'.

The Hanseatic School for Life focuses on the education and support of

- Tsunami orphans and survivors;
- Children without relatives or with relatives below the poverty line;
- Children who where forced into child-labor;
- Children without access to formal education.

[www.hanseaticschoolforlife.com](http://www.hanseaticschoolforlife.com)

## **2. At First Sight**

Whoever wants to apply knowledge creatively has to gain it sufficiently beforehand. Hence subjects and subject interrelations are both extensively and intensively studied. International curricula may be applied, but whenever appropriate with reference to real-life problems, in order to assess possibilities of application not in simulated, but in economically, socially and ecologically meaningful projects.

Think globally, act locally: the Open Learning Village is connected with the world, works for international understanding, prepares both for national and world citizenship, yet maintains a local profile: Thailand is reflected in the school curriculum as well as in daily life, with its cultural heritage and its questions concerning non-destructive modernization.

Sympathy and understanding for global concerns and the work of those international organizations which embrace such goals, a culture of entrepreneurship, the treatment of locally and regionally important developments such as the nature of tourism or ecologically responsible industrialization: in short, this is the School for Life to prepare talented, entrepreneurially-oriented young people for socially and ecologically responsible democratic leadership. To quote Confucius, it is far better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.

### **3. Characteristics**

In the international discussion about schooling, certain unsolved problems come up again and again which have gone unanswered since the pedagogical reform movement in the beginning of last century. The quantitative extension of public education in many countries during the 60's and 80's has undeniably brought about a certain amount of success, but at the same time led to a large-scale spreading of qualitative shortcomings, such as high dropout levels, rigid forms of teaching, the poor relation between some curricula and reality, and an examination system blown up out of all proportion. The School for Life wants to make use of its particular profile to search for solutions to some of these problems, and point out ways to overcome them.

#### **3.1 National, international and intercultural education**

Intercultural education means educating for international understanding right at one's own doorstep. School for Life will be a place where children of different nations, religions, and socio-cultural origins can learn to live together in an atmosphere of tolerance and solidarity. Intercultural education means on the one hand making sense of your own culture, finding your identity in your own culture -

to understand culture not as something from a museum, but a living force and source of new impulses without ripping out the old moorings. On the other hand, intercultural education includes the ability of looking beyond your own horizons to comprehend that we live in *one* world together, and desire to accept each other in peace and mutual freedom.

In 1974 the 18<sup>th</sup> meeting of the UNESCO General Conference passed its "Recommendation for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education Relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms through the Teaching of Ethical and Humanistic Values". The School for Life intends to make its particular mark in the implementation of these recommendations, and to share its experience with other interested schools as well.

In her preface to the 1986 edition of the Curriculum "World Concerns and the United Nations", developed by the United Nations, Adelaide Kernochan writes: "[Today] society is becoming more and more internationally, consequently the international dimensions of education are becoming increasingly important. As stressed in the resolutions and studies of the United Nations and UNESCO

- Students need to be aware of world developments and their effects on people's lives;
- International education involves not only knowledge but also attitudes, values and behavior and therefore should be integral to all aspects of the school experience;
- Learning about UN aims, concerns and activities can help young people to understand and participate in the growing world community."

Among the basic concepts fundamental to this curriculum are "world community" and "international education". Just as for the United Nations the term "world community" explicitly does *not* mean a kind of world government or administration, similarly "international education" does *not* imply interfering with local or national education. Both concepts must be understood as an invitation "to understand major world problems and the related aims and actions of the United Nations family of organizations" (from the 'Introduction' to the curriculum).

The Development Forum (Vol. XVI, No. 2, March 1986) of the United Nations reported on the development of the so-called Life-Situational Approach in the context of preschool and intercultural education in different countries, and pointed out the transferability of such ideas to the concept of international understanding promoted by UNESCO: the ideas and techniques inaugurated here can be translated and developed for international education at any level in any subject. By focusing on universal experiences, students develop empathy and a sense of the oneness of humankind.

Appreciating and learning from diversity is basic to international education, no matter what the topic. Community experience can help students to understand the new internationalism - a world in which all can contribute in their own ways, where 'we' (not we/they) work together to better the community as a whole."

### **3.2 Discovery learning and individualized teaching**

Some schools can be heard from far off: the teacher loudly speaks phrases, the whole class answers as one. Old-fashioned schools of this kind are to a large degree products of the colonial era, their classroom teaching methods still reflecting the spirit of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Teachers concentrate on covering each small portion of the fixed curriculum, and try not only to tame the horde of young lions in the class, but also bring them all to do the same thing at the same time. The style of mechanical learning employed is the most unsuitable conceivable for making sense of interrelationships, retaining what one has learned (even after the next exam), and applying knowledge gained. This is where a disastrous vicious circle of dequalification must be broken: insufficiently trained teachers behave like slaves to a detailed prescribed curriculum and force their students to reduce the great diversity of learning and experience down to the learning of textbooks by heart. When this mechanical system, which clearly contradicts the fundamental discoveries of modern learning theories, is then further underpinned by frequent tests and exams, one could even maintain that such a school is in the position of actually mutilating the qualifying potential of the next generation. Good test results achieved within this mechanism reveal very little about the



ability to retain what one has learned, or creatively apply it in any given real situation.

Frontal class teaching will hopefully be a seldom occurrence in the School for Life. Instead, relying on the knowledge gained in modern learning theory, a researching, discovering, active kind of learning is favored. Learning will take place individually or in small teams, and the biography and learning background of every child will be taken into account. In contrast to repetitive learning which takes place within parameters of false security (where problem presentation, solution route, and solution itself are always already known beforehand), here the learning processes are of a much more open nature. Naturally there will still be some 'right' and 'wrong' answers. But in real-life situations there are often a number of different options which have to be compared and considered before making a decision. In any case, learning in connection with entrepreneurship also means learning how to think strategically while dealing with uncertainties, practicing to take calculated risks.

There is a veritable arsenal of teaching methods and forms of pedagogical organization that serve these goals: teaching in small groups, learning and acting in projects, open or informal education, orienting the time frame to the task at hand and the current project (and not the other way around), team teaching, mixed-aged groups and cross-generational learning (where it makes sense to do so). Classrooms can be transformed into learning workshops.

At the same time, the limits of traditional school spaces will be dissolved: all the students will work with laptops and personal computers, and be able to communicate directly with teachers and other students electronically. Everyone will have access to libraries all over the world. In this interactive learning development, the concept of "classroom" will surpass the traditional classroom. In developing their projects, students will also be able to make use of multimedia designs, computer assisted drafting, the information highway, and graphic and desktop publishing tools.

In this regard it is important to correctly evaluate the instrumental role played by electronic media: Such tools are an enormous help but not

an end in itself. Real experience is always more important than virtual reality.

### **3.3 Education for innovative entrepreneurship**

#### **3.3.1 Entrepreneurship: criterion for educational reform**

In many countries the relationship between the educational system and the employment system is badly out of balance. The European myth fed by its privileged past, that the educational system would prepare qualified workers and the employment system subsequently offer the appropriate jobs, has turned out to be just as deceptive a belief as the hope, for example, which university graduates harbor in developing countries, that they will automatically receive jobs in the administration of large companies or in the civil service. In view of ever keener competition on the world market, education will increasingly only then mean better jobs when people learn to land on their own feet and to create jobs appropriate to world market conditions. Among other things this presupposes that professional pedagogues - hitherto used to an almost lifelong secure march through pedagogical institutions, and usually defensive by nature - also learn this lesson for themselves and act as appropriate role models. It is not enough here to limit oneself to advancing qualified employees, as if to imply that employer qualities such as innovative marketable ideas simply fall from heaven. Instead, it is necessary to promote an education for entrepreneurial behavior, an education for economy from below which begins at an early age and perceives entrepreneurial activity less as a personal peculiarity, and more as a basic qualification of the *citoyen*.

With this in mind, educational processes, subjects, and institutions can become counter-productive problems in themselves: the processes, as long as they adhere to a type of learning which barely accounts for the uncertainties of learning in real situations; the subject matter, as long as they ignore and suppress key problems of life under difficult conditions; the institutions, as long as they tend to represent the opposite of an entrepreneurial model in regard to structure and organization. "The weakness of our education system", said I. Patil, Director of the Institute of Management Studies of Bombay

University, "is that it does not prepare young graduates for self-employment and business entrepreneurship. It encourages the students to follow the tradition of job seeking."

Hernando de Soto, the Peruvian economist whose research work on the importance of the informal economic sector has attracted worldwide attention and in the meantime led to practical political measures in a growing number of developing countries, argues that relevant portions of economic income are produced in the informal sector, and that in order to release economic potential, legal barriers must be removed (dismantling administrative obstacles in founding companies and awarding property titles), and a decisive change made in the education system. The entire structure and program of colonial-style schools counteract the entrepreneurial potential of the majority of the population. As it is, one could argue with de Soto that aspiring countries on the development threshold can just bear this sort of education system, because the learning opportunities of the economic environment are large enough that graduates can complete their actual apprenticeship out in the world. Aware of this chance, they don't run much of a risk of becoming permanent youths at some pedagogical institution. De Soto's vision of converting schools and universities into business enterprises and making entrepreneurship the decisive criterion for educational reform is finding increasing acceptance.

The School for Life will serve to create a culture of entrepreneurship with its program (the curriculum) as well as with its organization and structure (the setting). Entrepreneurship is understood here as a fundamental force in the socially and ecologically responsible formation of the world: *ethics pay*.

The enterprising School for Life will be trying to promote from childhood on is a visionary who recognizes a problem, develops an entrepreneurial idea arising from it, and tests and implements that idea on the market. The School for Life will support children, adolescents, and involved adults in further developing entrepreneurial ideas. It is a resource for the generation of such ideas - the plan is to realize projects locally with local partners, hence contributing to community development. It would certainly be desirable when students who have

graduated from the school take their ideas with them as spin-offs to be implemented elsewhere.

The few countries that have recently made entrepreneurship a matter of educational policy usually begin at the university level. In the USA many professorships for Entrepreneurship have been set up, and business schools - foremost Babson College - are now offering Entrepreneurship programs. In Europe, such initiatives are represented by facilities such as the *Centre des Entrepreneurs der Ecole Supérieur de Commerce* in Lyon, the British Durham University Business School, or the *Laboratory for Entrepreneurship at the Free University of Berlin*.

### **3.3.2 Innovative entrepreneurship**

A good idea is the best venture capital. And: small is more efficient. Here lie the chances of entrepreneurs from below, the chance for the small fry against the big fish, to take over a chunk of territory. New small businesses create new jobs. Respect is due to those who can create his or her own place of work; even more recognition is earned by those who go further and also create jobs for others. Creating jobs is not the norm, but rather the exception. Innovative entrepreneurship education focuses on those entrepreneurs who develop and realize ideas for improving the quality of life, who invent a meaningful service or a more intelligent product.

In analyzing biographies of entrepreneurs it is striking to note that the great majority of people who risk the big jump into entrepreneurial business were already possessed by certain ideas ever since their childhood, and so developed a craze as well as the power of deep reflection, with the addition of imagination and tenacity to implement these small visions. Most of them made their first entrepreneurial experience in a microcosm, doing business on a small scale, witnessing a market response to their ideas and feeling strong personal gratification throughout. The power of reflection means the process of repeatedly dealing with an idea, "fiddling" with it, refining it, evaluating the experience and reactions of others, responding to an urge to design and develop. According to Peter Goebel, who has studied the biographies of numerous young entrepreneurs, reflection

of this sort can be experienced as a kind of intoxication, making work deeply enjoyable. Idea formations emerge, whose inner logic is researched with increasing exactness, until implementation becomes a calculable risk. Mavericks are needed, children and young people who feel a strong impulse to act creatively and independently, and who are not prepared to be neutralized by pedagogical occupational therapy.

The analysis of entrepreneurial biographies also makes clear that many had trouble in school as children, experiencing difficulties with the regimentation of their desire for independent thinking, and bothered by constant interruptions to their urge to follow their own ideas. Such people often had to struggle against adverse circumstances in order to stick to their own designs and their implementation. Pedagogues in traditional schools as an early hindrance to entrepreneurship?

Entrepreneurial qualifications are not to be equated with management qualifications. The training of managers aims at creating dependent employees who can rationally implement certain prescribed goals. A manager, no matter how good he may be as an organizer, is not yet an entrepreneur who opens up new horizons. A capable businessman will consider such problems as environmental pollution, chemicals in food products, and the situation in developing countries, and take these issues into account in decision-making. He will attempt to deal with social problem areas and trends, as they are often better recognized by outsiders and non-conformists. New ideas shift the point of view of reality, and often enough creative persons are thought to be crazy. A young person who recognizes social problems, confronts them and wants to do something practicable about the situation, is to some extent comparable to an artist. Just as in art, where innovative performance not unseldom demands a certain obsession with an idea, and like an artist, who wants to project his own style to the world, an entrepreneur with a new idea, product, or sales form must often withstand a phase of social rejection. Again and again one hears about such chapters in the personal biographies of great artists and writers as well as famous entrepreneurs of the first generation. This phase, often bringing with it personal sacrifices, daring experiments and the pitying smiles of the establishment, develops into a stimulus and sense of risk in the life of an artist or entrepreneur. Without such

uncertain beginnings, when new ideas are developed and promoted despite obstacles, demanding much in the way of courage and stamina in the face of odds, later success is generally not forthcoming. The quality of the entrepreneurial idea is of decisive importance here. Whether one can become successful on the market or just keep above water, hence resorting to elbow-shoving and the use of many little swindles and tricks, depends largely on the quality of the concept offered in the first place.

The figure of the entrepreneur in scholarly literature, even in the literature of economics, is strangely ignored. Even Joseph Schumpeter, the theoretician of entrepreneurial behavior, says very little about the necessary qualifications, and instead studies the connection between business cycles and the increased appearance of innovative entrepreneurs. Nevertheless the respective literature includes a few illuminating facts. One of the most apt descriptions talks about the discovery of what is already available. To discover what is already there means that it is not uncommon for successful business founders to return to ideas which have long been known, but which can be transferred in some way to a new context, in new combinations, or to a new area. The lay-person's idea that it is always great inventions that lead to new successful business enterprises is to the most part a wrong one. Schumpeter made a difference between inventions and innovations. The great inventions are often not marketable for a long time, have many small defects, and thus easily fail in the first attempt because they are technically immature; other inventions are not recognized as to their potential importance, or at least not accepted at first by consumers. An example from the recent past is the telefax. This invention has been around for a long time, yet in the past few years it has been introduced worldwide with enormous success by completely different companies than those who invented and originally tried to market the technology.

We are talking about the new ordering of existing knowledge, to rubbing this knowledge against the grain, or the transfer of familiar ideas to completely new areas of application. This is a field in which the whole educational system need not consider as strange territory. To recognize specific skills and talents and promote them accordingly,

to understand and accept individual characteristics of a growing person, has long been the concern of pedagogical endeavors.

The innovative entrepreneurship education of the School for Life intends to work with future and currently budding entrepreneurs from the student body and neighborhood. Business Administration does not stand in the forefront, but the development of ideas and visions, including their realistic implementation.

### **3.4 Education for intelligent modesty**

Normally the business will have bottom line in which being considered from cost and profit of business operation. In order to educate students to be the entrepreneurs in the future, it is necessary to consider the environment, resources, and the happiness of the individual and society which is not necessary be money of material. This happiness is not derived from consuming but is derived from precepts, concentration, and wisdom. This happiness will emphasize in efficient production to reduce the waste and to save resources. The profit or material return will not be the main issue but the strong community that supporting each other will be the main issue for peacefulness of the society.

The aim is: discovering the quality of intelligent modesty. The market does not have to mean that needs must always be elaborately stimulated and that we must become slaves of an ever more relentless spiral of consumption. The market offers a chance to make enlightened and economical use of scarce resources.

When teen magazines spend most of their time informing readers what's "in" and what's "out," when teachers do not draw their students' attention to the topic of fashionable obsolescence, when parents capitulate before their children's fixation on computer games, then it is time for what Buddhism calls happiness - a process of creating awareness that allows adults and their children to realize that quality of life does not come about through the accumulation of more and more high-tech products, but rather, for example, when people overcome their speechlessness, rediscover their neighborhoods, express their feelings, or become artistically and entrepreneurially

active. Entrepreneurs as artists who contribute to the enrichment of life do not create mountains of garbage or drive the production of products through the roof, but devote themselves to non-destructive areas.

Entrepreneurs in the spirit of intelligent modesty become inventors and supporters of products and services that put a stop to overproduction and the squandering of resources, and so ensuring that quality of life is increased rather than reduced.

If the actions of the western countries were more strongly influenced by such intelligent approaches, then the people of the newly industrializing countries, still marked by the after-effects of colonialism, would find it easier to rid themselves of the final remnants of the inferiority complex that drives them into a spiral of consumption and fixation on the western style of life. Asian cultures have enough resources of their own to develop a distinctive quality of life sufficiently special and attractive that entrepreneurial initiatives of the future could draw on cultural diversity in the tertiary sector as well in the quaternary (one need think only of philosophy and religion) and serve to promote diversity at the same time. This opens a way forward to futures that could be more fascinating than the previous guiding principles of the type "mine is bigger than yours" or "I want one of those too." Intelligent modesty requires education, comprehensive understanding of the world, the aim of undertaking one's own life, a search for the self, and cultivating curiosity about trips to the center of the world.

Entrepreneurs who submit to the insight of the finitude of natural resources are not divorced from the market but well in advance of it when they concentrate on the development of high quality understood in such a way. In the process they can place their faith in the dialectic of the enlightenment, in the growing unease of customers who still believe in the dangers of environmental exploitation, who are at least interested in the re-use of packaging, and who desire and can be provided with information about where to find the best of all products and be satisfied with it for the rest of their lives.



The cul-de-sac from which we must escape is familiar: even with higher consumption there will still be fewer and fewer jobs because increasingly efficient machines are taking on more and more human work. Needed are entrepreneurial initiatives in other areas, initiatives by artists, creative scholars, philosophers, and non-conformists. They have to replace the dummies that are not only shy of competition but also colorless in their ideas about how we can reshape the world so that it does not become a junkyard of civilizations.

### **3.5 Community education**

The community orientation, the opening of learning venues to the social environment, the interpretation of learning as participation in local development, the connection between learning and community development all act as bridges between the situation approach and community education.

Community education involves a holistic approach which supports the learning in, with and for the community. It counts on self-reliance, mobilizes the power of communities and focuses them on sustainable development, on the solution of social, cultural, technological, economic and ecological problems. All the social and all the age groups of the population can be involved. That is why community education overcomes the separatism of "hyphen-pedagogies", when the project allows it; it is more than just adult education or vocational training. It works in an integrating way.

The key problems and situations of the people in the community are the starting point of the learning processes. As key themes, many of these problems and situations have more than just a local meaning, they also contain supra-regionally relevant parts. The search for local alternative forms of energy can be a contribution to preventing global climatic changes. Many local problems (with their global aspects) cannot be solved without the supporting approach or community education. This is true for family planning just as much as dealing with our natural resources in a responsible way.

Community education is never just education, but always organization and action as well. Thus the application of acquired knowledge and

abilities in complex real life situations becomes an integral part of the learning process. Not only is the subject the point of concentration, but also the situation that should be dealt with and improved. That is why community education never just aims at the qualification of people, but also at a constructive dealing with the reality in which these people are living.

Community education is an answer to specific weaknesses of institutions and curricula in the formal education sector. Learning as participation in sustained development does not need any artificial motivation. It is easier to put new insights into reality. Academic knowledge is used for concrete problems and not taught in an alienated form. Community Schools are referring to local needs with their curriculum, they reconstruct the relationship to the neighborhood and lead children and adolescents at an early point and more intensively than traditional schools to social fields of action.

Community education contributes to an opening of educational institutions to social action fields without being fixed to educational institutions. Here it is accepted that important social learning processes are taken beyond the walls of educational institutions.

Community education thus means interventional learning in the *polis*, and interprets pupils as socially, economically, ecologically, and politically active members of the community. Such education ascribes to the point of view expressed at the UNO 1992 in Rio, that necessary sustainable development can best be attained when problem solutions are implemented at a local level and carried out by many people. Impulses are generated at the local level as well, which call for the participation in the solution of global problems. Community education means empowerment, and is dedicated to the idea of participation, in which both learners and teachers are subjects of local conditions and development; the acquisition of new knowledge takes place within an authentic process of experience. To make these processes easier, pedagogical institutions will be opened and networked with learning venues and resources within the community: community schools are in expression of this intention. One can distinguish between more pragmatic and more decisive versions of the community education approach - they range from an inexpensive multiple usage of

previously purely school-dedicated buildings to combining community education with community business. If one ascribes to the principles of the *Treaty on Environmental Education for Sustainable Societies and Global Responsibility* as it was passed at the Environmental Summit Meeting of UNO in Rio, then sustainable human development cannot be achieved without working in conjunction with the economy, environmental ecology, and community education.

A particular goal of the School for Life's community education approach is to explore how the community school can itself become an open learning community and, at the same time, become a focal point for enabling, supporting and connecting other learning communities within a larger learning system. Ever since the Jomtien Conference in 1990, UNESCO has tried to promote community schools worldwide. However it had to come to the sobering conclusion that, in no small number of cases, there was a misunderstanding about what exactly a community school is. At any rate it is not simply a conventional school which has been built and is supported by the community. Rather, community schools which have earned the right to the name develop with the following characteristics:

- They integrate school and adult education: day school and adult school do not only share the same space, but work together conceptually as well. The schools are public schools (often with an open, project-oriented form of teaching) and especially offer additional courses and activities in the afternoon and evening for certain age groups or mixed age groups. Such offers are directed towards children, adolescents, families, and neighbors.
- They thus make their resources (classrooms, workshops, kitchen, assembly, sport facilities) available to their new clientèle. These schools are used multi-functionally: as school, adult education venue, recreational facility, advice bureau, and base for self-help.
- They are networked with the municipality or rural district, develop satellites, and work together with public facilities, companies, and groups of all kinds. They increasingly react to

incidents, problems, and topics arising from the social environment, and develop a local profile on issues.

- They work against various forms of segregation: the segregation of old and young, natives and foreigners, handicapped and non-handicapped, between school insiders and outsiders.
- Aside from teachers and adult educators and lay pedagogues, people from the neighborhood with special knowledge and skills work at the school.

Community schools are in the position to do much in the way of reducing the alienating experiences of children and adolescents regarding the institution of school. This also applies to families and neighbors, especially in multicultural school districts. Community schools are considered to be an important part of social and infrastructural development, since they support neighborly relationships and promote self-help. They can develop close social networks and stimulate and promote the formation of a school community. Real-life problems are not kept out of some hidden curriculum, but rather confronted and dealt with. Cross-generational experiences are promoted, and isolation and loneliness counteracted with participation in joint projects. The pupils and adults participating in designing the program increasingly experience that the school and neighborhood are involved with *their* concerns.

The School for Life is by nature an Open Learning Village, consisting of an ensemble of different learning venues. Consider the relationship of the whole school, the Centers, and the communities involved in the network: they participate in projects with each other and their environments in a constant creative relationship.

### **3.6 Value education**

The School for Life assumes a consensus concerning basic values of a democratically organized community. Children and young people can claim the right to handle situations with increasing autonomy and competence; at the same time they are challenged to show solidarity with others or act with ecological responsibility.

The School for Life can be considered as a *polis* in the sense borrowed from ancient Greece: a small-scale model of a democratic state. The pupils increasingly take over functions and responsibilities and share these with the adults. Life in the Open Learning Community offers many chances of bringing a strong sense of self and an equally strong sense of community into a healthy relationship with each other, and preparing decisions by means of a democratic process of consensus building. Democracy does not exclude leadership - on the contrary, democracy depends on good leadership. Business enterprises also need strong leadership and the loyalty of their employees, but it is to the advantage of any business to keep up a meaningful dialog with its teams. The leading international boarding schools, founded by such personalities as Kurt Hahn, have long recognized the pedagogical opportunities offered by communal life. There are elected offices and duties, school parliaments and school speakers. Politics is learned by assuming responsibility in the community.

The pupils will live separately according to sex, but not according to ethnic or cultural heritage. Tolerance and respect is thus a highly valued virtue. Social responsibility is practiced, for instance, by work in some social or technical service such as a rescue service, the school fire department, technical relief organization, social services or environmental conservation service.

The members of the Open Learning Village will orient themselves on social virtues represented by universal ethics that can be understood by people of various social and cultural heritage. Among such universal truths are for instance values such as respect for others, the innate worth of every human being, truthfulness, respect for nature, fairness, the readiness and ability to help, consideration and attention of others, willingness to work and achieve, a modest bearing, the ability to abstain and aspire to a certain intelligent asceticism, peaceable behavior, solidarity with the weak, perseverance, and the ability, as Kurt Hahn puts it, to learn to assert yourself for something you think is right "in spite of discomforts, dangers, boredom, momentary impulses, or stress, in spite of the scorn from others, in spite of general skepticism."

The School for Life will support children, adolescents, and adults to practice their own religion and learn more about it in religious classes. The experience of one's own religion can lay the foundations for respect and tolerance of the religious convictions of others.

#### **4. The Family Concept**

Serving in the fight against poverty, Schools for Life take on children from deprived backgrounds. This often means not only economic hardship, but also – to take Thailand as an example – stressful and often traumatic events: child labor, child prostitution, sexual abuse, the alcoholism or drug addiction of family members, violence. Particularly serious is the loss of parents through death due to disease, accidents, disasters or military conflict, or through inaccessibility - for example due to the long-term imprisonment of parents, rejection (such as when a second husband throws the children of the first husband out of the house) or despair, when a single mother with no social safety net or support just can't survive with children. The School for Life in Southern Thailand was set up in the aftermath of the tsunami disaster, many children having previously experienced burdens which the catastrophe of the tsunami exceeded to an extreme degree.

Given this initial situation, three aims are of particular importance. Firstly, to recognize the children's rights to experience happiness and loving kindness, and to support them in developing new confidence and hope. Secondly, to provide a therapeutic framework that allows the gradual processing of the events of the past. And thirdly, to encourage the children not to bear the flag of trauma for the rest of their lives, but to turn their biographical scrapyards into gold, in the very broadest sense.

Children who attend the School for Life are offered a combination of "family building" and "peer education". The children live with families in houses on the campus, each with one or two mentors, in single-sex, mixed-age groups. The time between late afternoon (after lessons and projects are over) and early morning is spent in the families, who are also responsible for activities for the weekend, especially on Sundays, as well as making plans for holiday periods.

This is supported by the promotion of "peer education", learning and living in mixed-age groups, and the concept of Guardian Angels. These are older children, chosen by younger ones, who look after a group of three to five small children, and who share in the responsibility for their welfare. The inspiration for this feature was the observation that older children, especially boys, began to form groups which lacked empathy and solidarity with the younger children. Guardian Angels need training and supervision, for example in training camps or Guardian Angel conferences, and can also be voted out of their posts.

With a Children's Parliament, a President and Cabinet Members, Class- and Project speakers, Guardian Angels and Mediators, the development of a Republic of Children depends on both the success of the balance between the acceptance of youth culture and the acceptance of the supporting role of adults, and the threshold at which each child can turn to a trusted person if something goes wrong and the rights of the child are in danger of being compromised.

Transparency, supervision and the principle of "many eyes" also apply with regard to the prevention of abuse, violence, discrimination or racism. Children need loving attention. They need closeness without the transgression of boundaries.

A School for Life with children who are "at risk" combines the rebuilding of a reliable family life with "community building", with the development of a community of solidarity, one for living and learning, in which all children and adults are included. In UNESCO terms, each School for Life is an Open Learning Village.

## **5. Kindergarten**

200 years after Friedrich Froebel, the founder of the kindergarten idea, the Life-Situational Approach has developed a concept which combines positive elements of the traditional kindergarten with modern pedagogical and developmental-psychological insights. The kindergarten will emphasize and promote the creativity, curiosity, and

motivation of the children. It will allow the children to be children without babying them. It will promote and encourage them, not through mechanical drills, but by helping them in their own discoveries of their inner and outer worlds. The following characteristics of its pedagogical concept are the most important:

- *Learning in real-life situations:* Children learn how to cope with situations here and now, not some hypothetical situation in the distant future, not adult situations. And coping does not only mean surviving in situations, but also being able to grasp them as alterable and oneself as effective.
- *The connection between social and factual learning:* this works against alienated learning. Away from separating initial mathematical operations from social contexts, away from promoting a kind of speech that has nothing to do with own experience, away from learning that is devoid of sense. The primacy of social learning applies. Factual learning is important, but is to be integrated into the process of social learning and whenever possible with reference to social contexts. The children acquire knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to understand and create real-life situations. Atomized, tailored learning which does not lead to comprehensible meaningful connections is avoided.
- *Children take part in creating situations in which they are involved, and in the life within and outside the kindergarten.* They cooperate in selecting and planning activities; not everything is simply arranged for them by the kindergarten teacher. They are encouraged to influence situations and change them. Self initiative and responsibility are promoted,
- *The children experience the sense of norms in real-life situations.* They do not receive lectures on norms, but are given the opportunity of making sense of them in context, and to negotiate their activity in them correspondingly.
- *The kindergarten teachers secure a promotion of basic qualifications appropriate to the stage of development,* taking



into account the individual characteristics of each child and their different levels of development.

- *The kindergarten teachers promote the diversity of the children's' expressive possibilities.* They encourage activity involving all the senses, diverse forms of movement alternating with quiet and thoughtfulness, free play as well as creative and artistic activity, the expression of feelings and emotional intelligence.
- *Children have a right to increasingly understand the world,* themselves, and their social environment. They gradually become acquainted with their own culture and learn to respect the cultures of others, step by step they become more familiar with the world of the spirit, tradition, and religion.
- *The children live and learn in mixed age groups as much as possible.* Three-year-olds often accept more from five-year-olds than from adults, and older children can develop real empathy for the needs of younger children. Outside in real life, everything is learned among people of mixed ages. On the other hand the mixing of age groups is no dogma - there can also be situations in which peer groups want to be among themselves.
- *The kindergarten teacher assumes a partner-like, impulse-giving role with regard to the children.* She is curious and encourages curiosity, full of initiative and promotes the same in the children, and learns along with them. She plans the pedagogical events openly, with input from the children. There are no fixed planning models - a specific design of activities no longer acts as corset to the normal kindergarten day.
- *Learning for life situations also means learning in life situations.* Hence fields of activity outside of the kindergarten will be integrated, so that the kindergarten truly becomes a part of the social network.
- *The kindergarten teacher remains in close dialog with parents and families.* The parents are not just onlookers, but rather

personal authorities on the situations of their children. They take part in the kindergarten whenever they want to. In order to do this, it is important that the kindergarten be flexible with parents with regard to time and organization.

- *Children of different ethnic background grow up together.* Integration does not mean giving up your own origins and culture. On the contrary, it means respect for each other as the key for international understanding and mutual cultural enrichment.

The Life-Situational Approach, internationally in demand because of its sensitivity to each culture, requires high pedagogical qualifications and a corresponding education and additional training of kindergarten teachers capable of working with the concept. The Institut für den Situationsansatz der Internationalen Akademie Berlin ("Institute for the Life-Situational Approach of the International Academy" in Berlin), which authentically advocates this approach, has offered to take over the supervision of such kindergartens, assure quality standards, and provide a certified training of the situation approach for interested institutions and persons in Asia.

## 6. Schooling and Deschooling

The decision to found the School for Life as a "Private Social Welfare School" – and thus to define it as part of the formal education system – is primarily based on the wish to leave the road open to nationally-recognized qualifications and further and higher education institutes. A radical alternative which would waive the possibility of recognized qualifications was out of the question because it would mean that the marginalization of the children and young people would become educationally set in stone. In principle, the long-term goal of making Schools for Life into elite institutions for the poor is to enable children of these origins a way into governments, successful entrepreneurship, science and research. Certainly not all of them, but the many talented and motivated ones. Using the image of a long-distance race, the children start the School for Life much further back, so they need to run a much longer distance and to be better than the children from

more privileged families who start with social and economic benefits. In essence, this means academic excellence. But is that enough? Definitely not.

The old-style school which also dominates in Thailand requires paradoxical interventions that aim to deschool, to open up schools, to enable learning that engages with real life and situational challenges. Paulo Freire speaks of generative themes, of learning being guided by key situations, of supporting marginalized people to enter into history – this is impossible to do within an academic, subject-structured curriculum. One can and must teach the subjects whilst at the same time building bridges – again and again – to real-life problems and solutions.

### **6.1 The one curriculum or the other**

In terms of curriculum, there are two opposing systems of reference: one is a curriculum structured into subjects, the other a curriculum structured according to generative themes. In the case of the School for Life, the national curriculum represents the one side, while the other side is represented by a curriculum which is being developed on location, based on key issues and contents defined by the generative themes of the Centers of Excellence.

Bridges between the subjects and real-life problems can be built more easily if the school develops a preference for discovery-based, action-oriented learning and the subjects are understood not only as stocks of systematically structured and arranged knowledge, but also as a kind of quarry. During a workshop on curriculum development, a Nicaraguan teacher developed a fitting image for this: all the knowledge is gathered up into a mountain. When she and her children need something, they knock at a large door that leads inside the mountain, wait until the door opens, take the knowledge they need and then quickly close the door again. In other words, if there is a problem connected to the Mekong River, this is a good reason to tap into the necessary knowledge, but there is no need to make the children learn all the tributaries of the Mekong by heart.

In contrast to purely academic schools, the School for Life is primarily concerned with the matter of learning in the classroom to cope with

**real** problems rather than artificial problems. The trick is to create challenging realities, settings that are challenging and yet manageable, where there is no other option for the students than to learn – on their own accord – because the problem makes sense to them.

## **6.2 Learning in projects**

The project as a pedagogical method was developed by John Dewey and William Heard Kilpatrick and is still relevant today. Although there may be some doubt as to the historical accuracy of recounts of Kilpatrick's typhoid project, in its essence it is still an excellent example. It concerns an incident in a rural American school, from which two children from a farm were missing because of typhoid fever. The class wondered why diseases occurred so frequently on this farm, and sent the class representative to the farmers to ask if they could inspect the farm to find out the causes of the typhoid fever. The farmer agreed, and the class began to collect information on typhoid fever and its causes. Translation: they took pieces of knowledge from relevant subjects and, still dissatisfied, questioned those people from whom they hoped to gain useful information, wrote to a university in the hope of finding out everything about flies (which transfer typhoid bacteria). They acted, over the course of the project, like the Nicaraguan teacher envisaged, and as a result of their research they were able to form hypotheses about the cause of typhoid fever on the farm: it could be polluted water, contaminated milk, or the flies.

Armed with these hypotheses, the class went to the farm and reviewed the conditions. It couldn't be the milk, because there weren't any cows. There was running water. But there was a lot of garbage lying around open, the windows to the kitchen were open and had no protection against flies, and there were clouds of flies traveling freely from garbage to food and back.

The knowledge as to the cause of typhoid on the farm was followed up by action: the students measured the window, asked the store about the price of wire mesh and calculated how much would be required. They built a model of a closed trash container and a fly trap for the window. They wrote a report for the farmer with detailed recommendations about what could be done in order to prevent

typhoid fever in the future. They visited the farmer, presented their report and recommended him to act accordingly. The farmer thanked him and promised to implement all of the recommendations. Since then, no more cases of typhoid fever were reported on the farm.

In the Dewey / Kilpatrick sense, something becomes a project if it stems from a real problem and contributes to its solution. From the perspective of School for Life, a project is not something that is done solely for didactic purposes. A project is not designed just to illustrate the material of the curriculum.

With projects, we can run into surprises. Interventions in reality don't run in straight lines or according to plan from A to B. No, what happens is an almost never-ending story of learning, with surprising turns: in the School for Life there is a small swimming pool and the problem of keeping the water clean. In the first chapter of the story, filter pumps were used, but these gobbled so much electricity that they were removed again. In the second chapter, Günter Faltn's favorite theory – that of the "natural swimming pool" – was applied: a swarm of little black rice field fish and some water plants were put into the pool and everyone stood back to watch what happened: the water became crystal clear, because unlike gold fish, the rice field fish don't make the water dirty, but rather eat the organic particles that are floating about. So that is what happened: the fish multiplied, the water was clean, and the children could bathe – in small numbers – in it.

In the third chapter of the story, the number of fish started to decrease. Little green water snakes could be observed, squirming around among the fish and eating them whenever hungry. In the fourth chapter, after many discussions with the children, larger fish were introduced into the pool, based on the philosophy of "rather cloudy water and fish to eat than a pool full of little green snakes."

In chapter five, a cobra family settled down near the edge of the pool, with a particularly aggressive Cobra mother. The number of fish decreased once again, and even approach the pool was risky. In the sixth chapter, a small earthquake caused cracks in the pool wall, the water ran out, and for a while the pool was empty and neither fish nor Cobras were to be seen.

In the seventh chapter – inspired by a biology lesson – the pool was repaired and an attempt was made to clean the water with microbiological agents. Fish were put in once again, in order to be introduced later in the canteen. The number of dogs on the farm had now increased so much that the snakes had decamped to further away, and fish could grow and multiply. It was then that the oxygen problems appeared: you could see them in the early morning with their mouths stuck half out of the water, gasping for air. So a sprinkler system was built, and the fish lived happily ever after - or rather the learning experience did, as most of the fish end up in the wok.

So the difference between the typhoid project and the project of how to clean the pool is that the prevailing circumstances are not always as expected, but that nevertheless – or perhaps even because of this – a lot can be learned. It may be that the objectives change over the course of the project - from swimming to rearing fish, for example - or that alternate routes need to be taken.

### **6.3 When children do research - mind mapping**

These alternate routes shouldn't be understood as aberrations, but rather as opportunities. It is all about ensuring that the curiosity of the children does not meet with barricades. It is about the discovery, and - in the Humboldtian sense – the assimilation of the world, about developing a curriculum with the children, so-called "Mind Mapping". Curricular maps are drawn up with stations for particular learning interests. Since the project "How can we clean the pool" doesn't take up eight hours a day, there are plenty of opportunities for this.

And thus, questions arise that ask to be addressed through research and experimentation, such as: can fish sleep? Why don't they sink? Don't they breathe? Why do fish float in water, but not stones or wood? Why does a stone sink more slowly in oil than in water? Why can birds and butterflies fly? Do they sometimes crash? Airplanes fly too - how? Why do they sometimes crash, why don't they glide down to the ground if they have wings? How do rockets fly? And when fish get hungry, what do they eat? How do they have babies? Do they lay

eggs, like birds? Don't the eggs float away? Why don't people lay eggs? What is an egg, actually? If we don't eat the fish, but we sell them, where and for how much? Why only 20 Baht for a fish and not 200? Money is so easy to get, you just put a card into a machine and press a few buttons... And so on.

Mind mapping means agreeing with the children, based on the maps which represent the learning interests they expressed, on priorities and paths, because experimental investigation with an intimate relationship between theory and practice takes time and requires didactic imagination and preparation. When preschool children at the John F. Kennedy School in Berlin asked their teacher Nancy Hoenisch how rain is formed, she took a pot with water and put it on the stove; when the water boiled and steam rose, she took an aluminum tray, put on some ice cubes and held the tray over the steam. Now the children could see how droplets of water formed on the underneath of the tray and fell down, and Nancy could explain to them how rain occurs.

This brings with a problem into focus that requires much training to resolve. There is talk of inadequately trained teachers in Thailand (and elsewhere), who are used to standing passively at the front of the class and lecturing rather than promoting exploratory, experimental learning. But you can't enable an understanding of a swim bladder and gills without dissecting a fish, and you can't explain the recoil principle of a rocket if you don't build one yourself. On the outskirts of Jakarta, there is a now-famous School of Nature, where the entire Indonesian curriculum is taught on a field with only a few shelters for rainy weather. To explain the reaction principle of a rocket to the children, the teacher took an air pump and jammed it into the opening of a plastic bottle. The kids then pumped until the bottle shot up dozens of meters into the sky with a loud bang. Or the example of floating and sinking: the children drew a measuring scale onto a small board, attached a rubber band to the top and lined it up with the zero line. Then they attached a stone to the end of the rubber band and lined up glasses full of various liquids. The children noticed that when the stone was dropped into the various liquids, it fell to different depths, which is strange and requires an explanation.

A teacher is a good teacher if he or she succeeds in enlivening even

the national curriculum, constantly referring it to the children's explorations and expeditions, large and small, and using it like a quarry: a treasury of knowledge which, regardless of which subject it comes from, helps to enlighten and shape our environment.

#### **6.4 Dynamizing the day**

With museum-like structures – lessons in 45- or 50-minute intervals, with fixed timetables, sitting quietly in the classroom – this is hard to do. There are other possible rhythms, ones that are stretched over the entire day. A pilot study led by Professors Dietrich Benner and Joerg Ramseger at the full-time elementary school in Munster-Gievenbeck, Germany, demonstrates how child-friendly rhythms can be combined with the school day and old patterns can be given up: the children can play in the morning as well, and systematic and situational learning can occur alternately.

In the case of the School for Life, a rhythm sometimes forms within the sequence of teaching and center-oriented project learning: lesson – project – lesson – project, for example, or a lesson unit in which theme-oriented, interdisciplinary learning takes place through team teaching, alternating with an intense phase of the project. Team teaching in block periods about, for example, "fire and fire prevention" or "over-fishing in the Andaman Sea" requires careful preparation and research, both of which children can already be involved in.

Basically, the whole day is there to be used. The rough division into morning classes and afternoon projects and mini-enterprises is no longer relevant, this is the most unimaginative way of shaping the school day. Even the old relict of same-age class groups can be replaced with theme- and project-based groupings which disregard age.

#### **6.5 Getting out of the classroom**

Something else is important: the escape from the classroom, those good-for-nothing places where the frontal teaching situation is so tempting. In the School for Life, the Centers of Excellence are



constantly changing, providing constant temptations to leave the school and the classroom and to make the entire campus into an arena of learning. Institutions such as the laundry, and its problem with organic detergent, or the campus as a territory for snakes, and how to drive them away. There can be wandering classrooms, or ones that pitch their tent at times in the theater, at other times under trees or on the beach. This mobility keeps everyone awake, but there is no rule that says that a class can't sometimes spend a day in a quiet corner of the campus for the purposes of pursuing matters of philosophical depth.

The concept of a School for Life is not dependent on the classroom, but rather on places for meeting, learning and living, like little home harbors for the members of a class who have something in common for some while. The Green School in Bali is one of Avant-garde here, and shows that the "classroom" doesn't need to look like a classroom, but can be an adventurous bamboo structure with cave-like depths.

When the School for Life began, there was a great deal of approval on the national level in Thailand, from the Education Commission to the Ministry of Education, of the concept to leave the classroom behind. This position was later contradicted by the provincial education administration, which insisted on the construction of classrooms, in line (as always) with the standard regulations. But the compulsion to follow convention acts as a reason for movement: even if there have to be classrooms, they will only be used when it really makes sense. The more productively the teachers use the situation approach, the more learning opportunities they will discover beyond the classroom.

## **6.6 From kindergarten to university**

The School for Life has the chance to develop a unified educational approach from kindergarten to university, based on the principles of the situation approach and avoiding ruptures between the steps on the educational path.

The buildup is gradual, beginning with the kindergarten and primary school (grades 1-6), followed by the Junior High School (grades 7-9) and Senior High School (grades 10 - 12). The Ubon Ratchathane

University has developed a program of "Entrepreneurship" which allows a Bachelor and a Master's degree – the latter is possible if parallel to their studies, the student establishes a company that meets not only economic but also social and environmental criteria.

With the prerequisite of bilingualism (which in turn is only possible when the communication takes place bilingually from kindergarten onwards, and 'native speakers' assume a major role), it might be possible in the distant future to offer the alternative of a double qualification: the national exams after the 12<sup>th</sup> grade and the International Baccalaureate. This qualification, nowadays recognized globally, would require the establishment of a two-year IB college. Thus, the graduates of the School for Life would be well-equipped not only nationally, but also as a 'global players'.

Another option is to expand vocational education for those who aren't interested in or suited to a high school degree on the basis of their learning history. Here, it is important not to simply borrow conventional models of vocational training, which would leave the students no better off than if they received the Thai vocational education – a rather weary enterprise marked more by poor quality than by innovation.

The alternative ideal route for innovative thinkers of any provenance, therefore, is the startup: the founding of one's own company with the School for Life as point of departure. If the idea is sophisticated, the "entrepreneurial design" carefully considered and the orchestration of the components right, this can represent the most sustainable way of breaking the cycle of poverty.

## **7. Learning Through Life**

### **7.1 Centers of Excellence**

The Centers of Excellence (see 8) are the decisive and unique answer to three problem areas in education: first, the rigidity of a subject-oriented curriculum with its lack of interdisciplinary connections and its insufficiently problem-related approach to the acquisition of

knowledge; second, the weak connection between theory and practice found in many schools and universities; third, the resulting inability to transfer what has been learned to a changing and diverse reality.

Topographically, the Open Learning Village is clustered around the school and the Centers, which in fact are thematically oriented *resource centers* with special libraries, media, workshops, laboratories, work rooms, exhibition display cabinets - all material equipment which can serve a productive, entrepreneurial kind of learning and resulting practical activities.

Increasingly high demands will be made on the thoughtful powers of contemplation, creativity, incentive spirit, the ability to puzzle things out and experiment, as well as the overall perseverance of the students. The individual Centers are each dedicated to a specific curriculum, in which the necessary basic knowledge and methodical procedures are acquired; the "electives" are based on this "compulsory" foundation of the school.

Entrepreneurially skilled and pedagogically experienced adults will be available to assist and support the students in each Center. The teachers will disseminate their special knowledge in interdisciplinary contexts. One of the most important, impulse-giving roles will be played by the presence of national and international personalities - masters of their field and guests, who will work with particularly gifted and highly motivated students in various workshops: such workshops can be considered as forges both for high quality and new ideas.

It is not a matter of course, but rather an honor, for a student to work in a Center of Excellence. Age will play only a secondary role - mixed age groups will certainly participate together on certain projects. Of primary importance is talent, knowledge, commitment, and the ability to accept a challenge and preserve it. This is education of the best, without regard to nationality, skin color, or social background.

## **7.2 Curriculum development**

The international discussion about school curriculum and its further development refers to, among other things, the following shortcomings and weaknesses:

- The curriculum is geared too one-sidedly to academic subjects and the scientific disciplines underlying them, risking a loss of connection with reality.
- The style of repetitive study and learning material by heart is not suited to promoting the transfer of knowledge or encouraging the skill of applying what has been learned to complex real situations. One studies for the next exam, not in order to act competently in a real-life situation.
- A networked, interdisciplinary mode of thought is hampered by the fixation on subjects with their own inherent logic. The segmentation of learning material into small units hinders the ability of recognizing interconnections and relationships. The sheer amount of subject matter makes concentration on fundamentals even harder.
- The development of the school curriculum takes too little account of social developments and requirements; time is not taken to make well-researched situation analyses, and too few studies examine the kinds of situations in which graduates must later be qualified to work.

No one will deny that the history of the curriculum which has culminated in its present, internationally widespread structure contains a great deal which makes sense, and that a goodly amount of expertise has been gathered on the subject. Nevertheless the question remains how one can preserve some important advantages of current subject structure and yet considerably reduce the serious problems touched upon here.

In view of the solution of such questions, we should consider the internationally much discussed alternative draft proposal of Shaul B. Robinsohn on the structural concept of the curriculum and the

resulting situational approach. The concept is based on a three-step program:

- 1) Identification and analysis of situations and situation areas in which school graduates can act in the future.
- 2) Determination of qualifications which enable persons to act in an autonomous, competent, socially and ecologically responsible manner in such situations.
- 3) Development of curriculum elements which promote such qualifications.

### **7.3 The Life-Situational Approach**

The Life-Situational Approach extends this concept by three important components:

- Learning is oriented towards real-life situations. "Learning through life" means that learning processes should be encouraged in such real-life situations as much as possible. In this case, learning takes place not so much within parameters of a didactically arranged pretense of security (where problem presentation, solution route, and solution itself are already known beforehand), but rather in the openness of complex reality. It is an experience-oriented, inquisitive, experimenting, discovering type of learning in which theory and practice, reflection and action are all intimately interconnected with each other.
- Children have a right to learn material in context, to relate social with factual learning, and not be helplessly subjected to merely reduced and tailored forms of knowledge, but rather be encouraged to understand and explain the social contexts of meaningful activity. Paraphrasing an idea from the philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Freiherr von Leibniz (17<sup>th</sup> century), this aims at dismantling the classical separation between the Humaniora and the Realia - between philosophical and scientific areas of knowledge - in order to increase a more holistic understanding of natural contexts.

- Children have a right to take part in designing situations in which they learn and act. They want to be challenged in their strengths, and not spoon-fed with pedagogical tranquilizers of occupational therapy. They have a right to be children and regarded as such (but not subjected to infantile treatment). Those who desire to help children on their way should do so with awareness of their individual development and chances of growth.
- To be empowered in real-life situations does not only mean possessing the necessary survival techniques, but also includes enhancing personal strength and the ability to entertain radical or different thoughts; it can also even mean the unhindered development of a craze or passion, the encouragement of wild play, or deep involvement in the arts, or expressions of feelings and bodily senses, movement and consciousness.
- Norms will not be mechanically deduced and taught, but dealt with in concrete situations and made more transparent. The context of normative behavior is to be explained over and over again, to counteract the split between ‘moral’ and ‘technically instrumental competence’.
- Educators and teachers do not behave as if giving orders from the command post, but rather as partners and impulse-givers: asking, curious, sensitive, also learning. An open, situation-dependent planning replaces the usual rigid ritual.
- As with their children, the parents also take on a more central role in what is happening. To the extent that they can be present and want to be involved, they act as participants and active experts. Parents can offer a great variety of competent skills in key situations. They help build bridges to the community.
- The Life-Situational Approach reacts sensitively to minorities, opposes segregation, favors the integration of handicapped persons, invites interaction with other strangers, and values cultural variety in one world.

- The Life-Situational Approach is always a form of community education, aims to open up pedagogical institutions and remove walls that block our view. It counteracts the exclusion of childhood and youth from real-life activity, interprets learning as an integral part of community development, depends on the cooperation of professional pedagogues and competent members of the entire community, and taps learning venues within the community.

With the Life-Situational Approach and the structural concept of the curriculum, a decisive step is attempted to make reality (to the extent it contains facts relevant to the issue) the immediate reference point for the development of educational processes and subject matter. This approach draws on sources of knowledge - academic as well as experience-based - and focuses them on real-life situations with their concomitant problem areas. The curriculum is hence organized according to key topics, problems, and situations and not according to subjects or departments. It does not follow the structure of any academic discipline, but rather instrumentalizes relevant methods and subject matters in order to explain and manage the situation. The life-situation approach corresponds here with forms of learning which are, for instance, common in modern enterprises for obvious reasons.

The *Development Forum* of the United Nations has published a report on the life-situation approach with the title "For Third World countries, Life-Situational Approach makes more sense" (Vol. XVI, No.6). The paper reports on kindergartens and schools in European, Asian and Latin American countries which work with this approach. In this report we find: "Probably the greatest difference between academic schools and community schools (kindergarten or productive) is that the first is an institution and the second a dynamic process. The gathering together of concerned groups, learning about experience, finding resources and sometimes a little seed money, the participation of parents, students and community at all stages, identifying life-situations and turning them into curriculum-elements, dealing with the situations, recording and evaluating the work undertaken, planning further projects for production and development, the growing solidarity of the community as people find they can act

effectively together - all these are part of the community learning process. One cannot overestimate the importance of this work. These kindergartens and schools have shown that education can encourage creativity, self-reliance and constructive community action - that through an imaginative and practical combination of life-situations and fact-based learning the three R's can be taught without drilling, stress or overtaxing the students. This is only the beginning. What these groups have done should inspire changes in static, irrelevant and beleaguered systems of formal academic schooling, wherever they are."

How does the School for Life plan to deal productively with the tension between organizing one curriculum according to subjects and another by key topics? How should the transfer of knowledge gained be best promoted, and the relationship between theory and practice made dynamically effective?

The main venues of these transfers will be the Centers of Excellence, where information is gathered from the store of subject knowledge and put into an interdisciplinary, comprehensive context. The subject material itself is not invalidated - only its elements put together in a more effective manner, with reference to questions which can be solved in real life. One can picture the relationship between subject or topic versus problem-oriented curricula like this: information or bits of knowledge are taken from the store of subject material and transferred to a curriculum that is designed in an applicable manner according to the theme of the respective Center of Excellence. The Centers will not be limited to stocking knowledge of the purely academic sort, but must also be able to have access to experience-based wisdom of the people, for instance the Thai cultural tradition.

The topical or situation/problem oriented curricula of the Centers of Excellence consequently are fed with information from appropriate parts of the subject-oriented curriculum. The actual realization of this important transfer belongs to the prerequisites of professionally implementing real projects.

## **8. The Seven Centers of Excellence**



## 8.1 Center for Body & Soul

There is no question that people who desire to contribute to world change and let specific utopias become reality must be persons possessing both leadership qualities and team spirit, who live authentically and are able to anticipate and help create change, and who clearly demonstrate a high regard for quality and effectiveness. Building one's personality means empowerment, a strong sense of self identity, the ability to engage in balanced communication, to forego role-playing, to remain tolerant of ambiguity, while being capable of empathy and solidarity.

Body and soul belong together. Viewed in cultural anthropology terms, the body's entire range of expression has a great deal to do with cultural discourse, as well as with the person's emotional state. The body and the soul are continually interacting, and due to this fact the Center for Body & Soul attempts to take a holistic approach.

Psychology, medicine, and physical education intermix here. It is a health center for the body and soul, and its program benefits not only students and teaching staff, but can also serve to act as a form of training module for educating other groups of people as well. This Center emphasizes the human factor, demonstrates that people can discover their own potential and make valuable contributions. The Center is meant to help make new opportunities available, and means education for self-reliance and hence the overcoming of psychological blocks which obstruct the natural realization of one's own creativity and initiative.

As part of sport didactics offered at the Center, one has the chance of especially learning Asian sports, as well as engaging in sport activities which take advantage of the geographical possibilities - Outward Bound activities and being exposed to the natural elements of the seashore with wind, waves, and the entire underwater world. The medical part of the Center emphasizes the body, its nutrition and health. The psychological part will concentrate on promoting the personality and personal psychological hygiene and prophylactics, on developing the ability to both avoid and dissolve negative stress, on achieving a balance between strain and meditation, between activity

and reflection. Human nature is indivisible, and the program to promote body and soul in an integrated manner is a natural response to this insight.

## **8.2 Center for Cultural Heritage and Development**

The prospect of being able to travel only with suitcases from Louis Vuitton, to wear Lacoste shirts or Benetton sweaters, a Rolex on the arm, using perfumes from Lagerfeld or Joop, of having our CD software from Philips and the hardware from Sony, many children growing up, convinced that Rambo is better than the Ramayana and mango juice worse than Sprite - the whole prospect of the world's glorious diversity shrinking down to the dullness of some insipid idea cooked up in the brains of a few managers of vast corporations, and this insipidness then puffed up to huge proportions by slick advertising the world over, is a gloomy prospect indeed.

The opposing thesis, which underlies the concept of this Center as well, is that difference is beautiful. The more contrast there is, the more pointedly cultural heritage and economic activity are brought into relation with each other, the richer the chances for both. The Afro-Brazilians in and around Salvador Bahia, with groups like *Olodum*, are currently developing one of the most interesting alternatives to the worldwide production of dull and stupidly repetitive Rockpop music, since their art is an expression of an independent social-cultural movement, just like the music of Puerto Rico in the 60's or of the South African Townships today.

Markets can be diverse, and they will diversify all the more, the more cultures continue to develop along their own contours, and not just ride the dead-end train to folklore or "tourist art". Developing the differences can open new markets, deviating from the unimaginative "me too" response can bring about an economic upswing, cultural contrast and economy can augment each other as long as one works under the assumption that every culture contains elements which are felt to be enriching to members of another culture.

The Center for Cultural Heritage and Development ascribes to a dynamic concept of culture. It draws considerably from the Thai

cultural heritage, searching for deeper understanding and access; it aims to convey impulses and work together with Thai and international artists, with the collaboration of students who learn through participation to release their own creative powers in stimulating further development.

The intention is to work on productions in the fields of music, dance, theater, painting, fine arts, and fashion, in which tradition and avant-garde, the culture of Thailand and other cultures of the world can meet and find a new kind of artistic expression. The school pupils are integrated in a plan involving all age groups, and have the opportunity to learn from true masters of the art or trade, not only abstractly and generally, but in specific artistic projects.

### **8.3 Center for Technology & Ecology**

Both the standards and resource consumption of industrialized countries are far too high: the age of modesty is called for now. The fresh wind of the world market will do the job. But the developing countries also cannot afford to simply go along with the misuse and wasteful destruction of our planet's resources.

It is necessary to discover the quality of intelligent modesty. The days of uncontrolled wastefulness of our natural resources are counted. The market concept does not necessarily mean that ever new needs must be enticed from us, making us slaves to an increasingly rapid-spinning spiral of consumption. The market also holds the chance of an enlightened and economical handling of scarce resources.

High-quality, simple, mature, durable products are needed. What is wanted is the maximum quality for *the* pair of pants, *the* washing machine, *the* light bulb, *the* television set. The most modern knowledge is necessary to find the simplest solution, not to promote the constant production of high-tech garbage. It is not the changing outer appearance, but the core of the product that is important. The accumulation of high-tech isn't what feeds our quality of life, but high quality itself. We need equipment of highly developed simplicity, which lasts a long time - preferably a lifetime - equipment built to be inexpensively maintained and easily repaired. Whoever buys less, can

also do with less income. Intelligent modesty means preferring to purchase one high-class product rather than numerous second-class products right after another, to be free of craving for something "new" at ever shorter intervals, only because the product's facade is "out" and a new one has been deemed "in". An example would be the car, simple and yet highly developed in its basic conception, which could run without fossil energy fuel, and have spare parts designed for reuse, parts which could easily be replaced and overhauled at long intervals. Without the consumer insistence on continually new car models with slightly modified marginal extras, the horrific vision of great auto graveyards of scrap metal would finally fade.

Future entrepreneurs, whose education School for Life will promote, could be active on the market of diversity and good sense as role models. On the way towards a leaner economy, they could draw from their individual cultures to discover, invent, and promote those products and services which counteract overproduction and the unnecessary consumption of resources, so that the quality of life as a whole is not reduced but rather improved.

If the activity of future entrepreneurs is characterized more strongly by this sort of astuteness, the people of developing countries, still marked by the after-effects of colonialism, could more easily shrug off the rest of that inferiority complex which drives them into the consumption spiral and sometimes into a regular fixation about imitating western style. The non-Western cultures contain enough potential to develop their own kind of attractive life style, so that future entrepreneurial initiative could draw on and serve the third sector as well as the fourth (think only of philosophy and religion). New perspectives then emerge which could be a good deal more fascinating than former guiding principles such as "mine is bigger than yours" or "I want one too". Intelligent modesty requires education, a comprehensive understanding of the world, the aim of taking life in one's own hands, to find oneself, and to journey with curiosity towards the center of one's own soul.

Entrepreneurs who accept that our planet's natural resources are limited are not out of the market, but ahead of the market, if they concentrate on the development of high quality in the above sense.

They can count on the growing uneasiness of customers who still believe that products need to be replaced, but at least are interested in recycling the packaging and can and want to be both informed about where they can acquire the best product and be satisfied with it a life long if possible.

We know the dead-end we are in, and know we have to find a way out of it: despite ever increasing consumption, there will be fewer and fewer jobs, since improved machines continue to take over former human tasks. There is demand for entrepreneurial initiatives in other areas, initiatives on the part of artists, imaginative scientists, philosophers and maverick thinkers. Such people will have to replace managers who not only avoid competition, but also can only provide mousy-gray visions of how the world might function so as not to end up as a civilized junkyard. There is a demand for the *citoyen* as entrepreneur and artist.

The Center for Technology & Ecology subscribes to the thesis that technology and ecology can be effectively combined. The Center concerns itself with ideas and first steps, considers small-scale examples, attempts to provide students with possibilities regarding the direction in which thought and action can take. The Center does not want to be Silicon Valley, but perhaps a kind of playground, in which occasional surprising designs and ideas might emerge. Competitions similar to the German program "*Jugend forscht*" (Youth Does Research) - illustrate that young people are capable of astonishingly original and marketable technological solutions of ecological problems when one takes them seriously as researchers and challenges them accordingly.

#### **8.4 Center for Culture Sensitive Tourism**

Diversity is beautiful, uniform homogeneity is not. The world is still rich in regional cultures; people travel to different countries not because they are looking for the same thing all the time, but exactly because they want to see and experience something completely different.

But they are increasingly disappointed. Instead of authentic encounters, happenings, and adventures they more often experience artificially staged productions, are kept prisoners of their hotel, participate in carefully shielded outings, are exposed to tourist-oriented marketplaces and stores, feel themselves surrounded by money-hungry barracudas, and generally experience the human qualities of hospitality and cordiality, attention and friendship only in brief happy moments off the trodden path.

The ethnic touch of hotels often begins and ends with the "native design" of the hotel entrance and lobby. The hotel management considers uncontrolled excursions, which could interrupt the boredom of the swimming pool and fitness rooms, rather economically risky. Group tourism has to face the undeniable reality that individual encounters are problematic to organize, special wishes of curious travelers do not fit into the plan, and that travel organizations often simply lack imagination. Tourism is frequently staged far away from the truly interesting situations and opportunities of the country.

Tourism *can* contribute to the destruction of regional cultures. We maintain, however, that properly handled tourism can support and promote regional cultures and contribute to their development, that an individualized, authentic tourism can act as culturally enriching and serve ethnic understanding, that it can provide great pleasure as well as be the economically better concept to make intelligent friends and partners out of the previous opposing "dumb tourist" and broad mass of "natives".

The Center teaches students how to organize culture sensitive tourism, while simultaneously taking care of guests. It shows the way into a most interesting reality. It allows its guests to do their own research which can lead to unexpected discoveries and experiences.

On the one hand the Center is a program which brings guests together with people of the local and regional area, and allows them to personally enjoy their hospitality. On the other hand it provides guests who are looking for social and cultural contrasts with expeditions and projects concerning various regional realities.

What are the common characteristics of such plans, and what are the attendant circumstances? All the projects have a playful and enjoyable character. The ‘scholarly concept’ of the Center is founded on elements of action research, discovery learning, and sensual experience. It does not assume expert knowledge, but only a healthy common sense, curiosity, and the joy of discovery. The research carried out by the guests makes sense, and is not intended as occupational therapy, and most of the projects are result-oriented for both the guests and the children. No guest must have the feeling of only standing around in the role of the goose who lays the golden eggs. The projects are variable in length. They can be long-term (in which case individual guests participate for a while, then leave) or as short-term as a single day.

These projects are dramatically designed according to a varied scheme, with climax, action, and relaxation phases. One of its essential aspects is that native people and guests get to know each other, and that guests make contacts among each other as well.

The guests can document the results of these activities themselves if they so desire. A guest library will be set up, so that the progress of the various projects can be followed and reconstructed for new guests who join in later, or for those guests who might return and who want to check up on what has been done in their absence. The activities will be reported on locally and internationally: on the local level, the native people experience the results of the projects (which could act as stimulus in the relationship between cultural heritage and modernization).

The students act as trace-seekers, the developer of paths into an interesting reality. They take care of the guests during their research activities and learn by direct participation. In doing so they also learn how to work with the guests in an articulate, culturally competent and imaginative manner.

The curriculum of this Center deals with general knowledge concerning tourism and management, as well as specific historical, religious, cultural, artistic, architectural, geographical, biological, and ecological knowledge of the region. Culturally authentic tourism as

practiced here in a small-scale model also makes good sense. Tourists are no dumb animals in this model, but intelligent partners.

### **8.5 Center for International Communication**

This Center deals with printed and audio-visual media. The goal is to avoid having students slip into a passive role as media consumers, but rather to allow them to work with the media in an increasingly active, creative, and professional manner. On the one hand the Center will deal with the development and sale of printed materials, for instance a journal which for the most part is to be researched, written, edited, and marketed by students. The models here are journalist schools which professionalize their students not only by imparting theory, but also by participating in the daily practice of real-life journalism.

Another emphasis will be the mastery of communication within worldwide data networks, the ability to access a vast store of information via modern communication means, and then to evaluate them, design interactions, and contribute own messages into the information flow.

A third emphasis will concern film and television, and the acquisition of skills in producing small and larger video productions, and the development of features which, if good enough, might even be marketed. How does one make a good documentary, or a lively video clip, what must be especially attended to in casting, how does one make a treatment or a screen play? In the best of cases such topics correspond with key topics in the curriculum, so that recourse can be taken to curricular knowledge and transfer processes thus promoted. One could interpret these Centers (as well as the others) as dramaturgical figures, which provide connections and personify and enliven the often somewhat dryer school subject matter.

### **8.6 Center for Nutrition & Health**

This learning area includes a restaurant, a bakery and facilities for food processing. The center works closed with the Center for Organic Farming. The children learn to produce healthy food for reasonable prices and to prepare them so tastefully that Junk Food won't have a



chance. The practice will be enriched with theory. Knowledge of food science will be as important for intelligent cooks as biological or biochemical knowledge is. Good knowledge of chemistry is required in order to decrypt the content of "Ingredients" on the backside of the packaging of food. And mathematical knowledge is necessary to reveal the swindle for customers, e.g. when a fully blown up sealed package contains more air than chips.

The center works as an invisible restaurant management school. The students learn to cook very well Thai and international dishes, to provide friendly service, to calculate, to advertise, and to maintain standards of quality. How do they prepare a multi-course meal successfully? How can the students communicate with guests from abroad? Guests are invited from time to time to participate and get to know the richness of Indonesian cuisine.

There are already pre-experiences: In the eighties, "Hapag Kalinga" was founded in Manila, a restaurant in the upper middle class with dishes from different regions in the Philippines. Under assistance from adults children were managing the "Hapag Kalinga". The schooling was about learning what to buy on the produce market in order to get good products for reasonable prices, to cook very tasty food, to serve friendly, to calculate, to advertise and to keep the quality. The guests – from President Aquino to the walk-ins – admired the professionalism and the charm of the children. In the restaurant in the School for Life guests can not only observe the cooking of the children but also contribute with recipes from their home countries.

## **8.7 Center for Organic Farming**

In East Thailand, in the province of Isan, there is a well known village with the name "Asoke". A highly developed Buddhist community lives there following His Majesty the King's concept for organic farming and successfully practices "sufficiency economy" almost without needing any additional funds. When visiting the village the particular aesthetic is striking. Around the houses only growing vegetables can be seen, dense, healthy looking and penetrated with flowers. The flowers are special: with their scent they keep away insects which would be feeding off the vegetables otherwise. The

ground is particularly good as the villagers are experts in decomposing. The area which is used for decomposing doesn't smell and is free of flies.

Recently those villagers were asked to reform a large compound close to Ubon Ratchathanee University which was an area covered with short grass. Within a few weeks they managed to produce so much organic vegetables that the students and staff are now supplied with it in the canteen.

The motto is: Away from ornamental grass, flowers and bushes to the utilization of every free area for organic farming! "Sufficiency Economy" means to practice farming for self-production following the motto of John Button: "Healing the earth with ecological solutions".

The Center will serve experimental research in possibilities for organic farming. Studies on growing agricultural products without using chemicals can be conducted here. Useful and damaging insects in agriculture can be a topic, or the process of reintroducing threatened types of butterflies and birds back into the area can be covered. The campus and its surrounding farmland is a learning-intensive setting that combines ecology and economy – besides creating consuming products, the goal is also to sell the products, to find niches in the marketplace in an environment still dominated by chemically-dependant agricultural businesses.

## **9. Think Tank and Master Workshops**

From time to time the School for Life will organize a Think Tank, a place for the development of unusual approaches and ideas, a place for nurturing sudden impulses and contemplating their possibilities, a place for inventive dialog between scientists, artists, entrepreneurs, and maverick thinkers. Internationally known personalities, leaders in their fields, will be invited here - to forge ideas together. The discourse serves to transmit and analyze key regional and global questions and invent future solutions.

The members of the Think Tank will be invited to give Master Workshops to particularly gifted and motivated students, working together with the Centers. This could involve, for instance, the composition of music for a CD, or working up ethical standards for genetic technology, meditation or philosophical studies, insights into the research of biospheres, drawing up architectural drafts for building with bamboo or handling problems in processing pineapple stalks to textile products. The experts can suggest a topic to which they themselves are eager to devote their attention, and which incites student interest, challenging them without overtaxing their capabilities, and which can correspond in some way to the curricula of the Centers or at least create a productive dialectic with them.

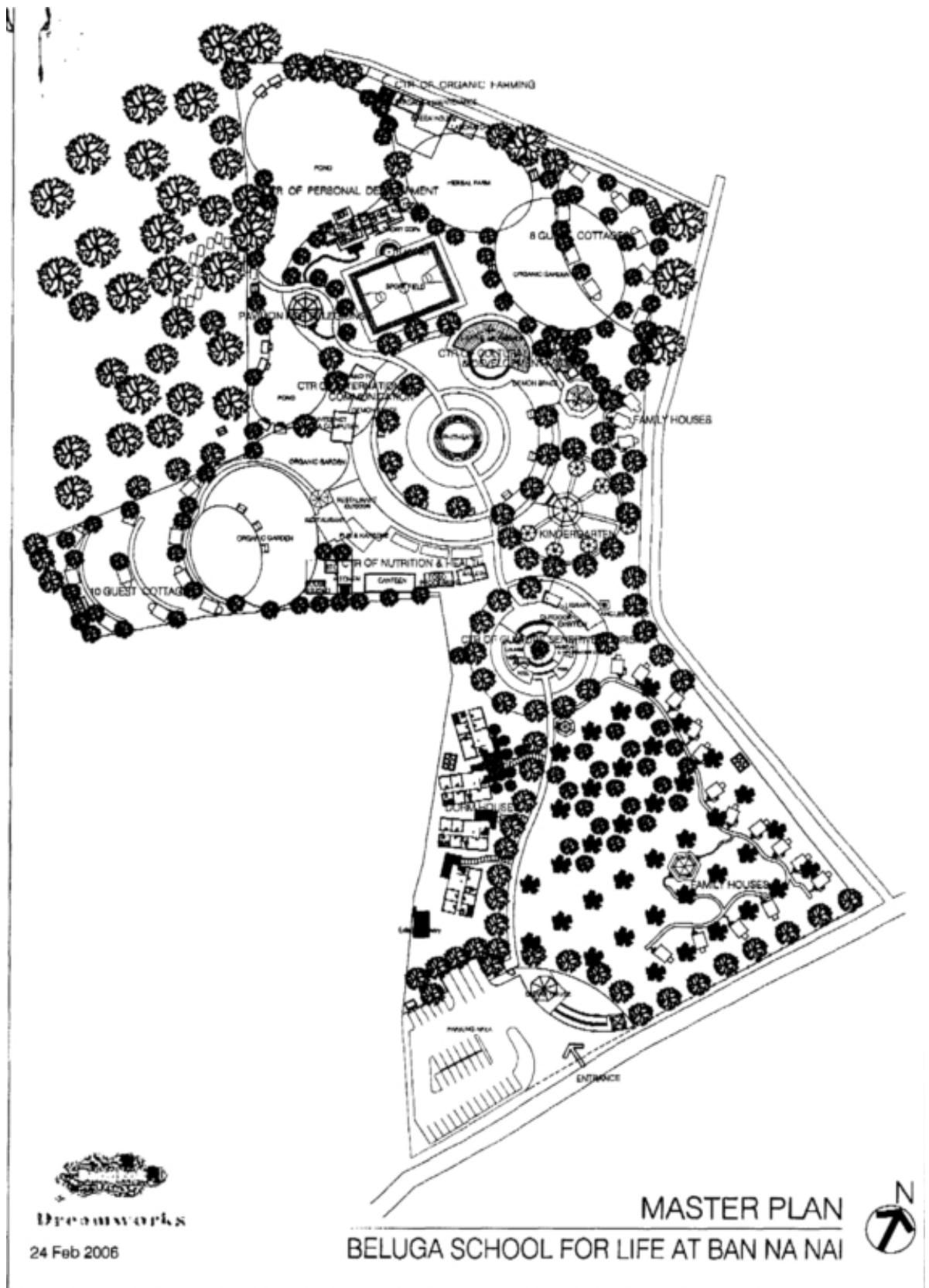
## **10. The Setting**

When the concept of a School for Life was to be realized for the first time in Bali in the second half of the nineties, at that time under the name of "National and International School Bali – NISBA", and in partnership with Bradley Gardner ("Begawan Giri") the commissioned architect Kwan Yew was urged to refrain from building anything that might look like a school, but rather to build an Open Learning Village. The realization of the project on 16 acres of land was slowed down by the Asian financial crisis in 1997, but the ideas of the Open Learning Village remained and became the basis of the master plan for the School for Life.

### **10.1 Open Learning Village**

If you didn't see the sign at the entrance of the campus in Southern Thailand which says "School for Life", it wouldn't be obvious that it is (amongst other things) a school. It is a village with a number of areas: family houses, dormitories, Centers of Excellence, accommodation for guests, a restaurant, cafeteria, theater, sports facilities, the pavilion of religions, a school wing hidden behind the theater, but not one of the box-shaped conventional school buildings, and behind a plantation of rubber trees, the houses of the community, mainly those adults who survived the tsunami and moved onto the campus.

Many of the organizations are like optical illusions: the canteen is a canteen, the bakery is a bakery, but both are also places where learning takes place in the Center for Health & Nutrition. The guest bungalows, restaurant and reception area serve the guests and at the same time are the learning site of the Center for Culture Sensitive Tourism. With its theater, the Center for Cultural Heritage has a particularly dramatic character, as do all the Centers of Excellence. It would be foolish to design the Centers as classroom-like spaces. For teachers of the School for Life, the composition of the Open Learning Village acts as a daily invitation to free themselves from bondage to the curriculum and to use the learning opportunities of the village.



## 10.2 The Masterplan of the village

## 11. Teachers

### 11.1 Teachers & community development

One of the most decisive teacher training reforms of recent history took place in Turkey during the 40's, with the setting up of village institutes. At that time the illiteracy rate in Turkey figured around 85%, agriculture was very backward and produced only poor harvests. The village institutes were facilities for community development and training centers, whose students came from the surrounding villages and also returned there after their studies. They became teachers and community developers in the course of a spartan, strenuous, but highly productive training program which gave them an abundance of agricultural and craft trade skills, and technical and medical knowledge in both theory and practice. Every village institute functioned as a company and was self-supporting. The teachers trained there moved to the villages, founded schools according to the same model, and sparked regional development. Many of them became pedagogical reformers of top quality. Even though the movement was broken off as a result of a change in government, it has left many cultural traces of good work.

The village institute movement can be understood as a logical answer to the *déformation professionnelle* of the teaching profession; instead of the teacher with white collar consciousness, now a teacher who can combine reflection with action: instead of teachers fleeing the land for the cities (a problem in postcolonial developing countries) a teacher who considers teaching in the rural community to mean participation in the development process; instead of a subject-bound lecturing teacher, one who works on projects with pupils and employs different kinds of knowledge in the process.

For the pedagogues Ismail Hakki Tonguç and Education Minister Hasan Ali Yüce, the initiators of the village institute movement, teachers are community developers; for Shaul B. Robinsohn teachers are teachers. "All teachers are teachers" means that there is a common basis in all teaching professions, recommending an integration of teacher training in which educational theory and curricular as well as pedagogically relevant social aspects join with a more "clinical"

training (in the sense of a theoretical reflected practice and practice-oriented theory).

Professional biographies show that teachers are generally characterized by a more defensive than offensive personal history, and only in exceptional cases could be called risk-takers. Their consciousness of being *employees* of the state is rather a counter-productive model for students who want to grow up within a culture of entrepreneurship.

You can lead a horse to water but you cannot make him drink. For the school, what is important is selecting outstanding Thai and international teachers, highly qualified with regard to both expertise and pedagogical skills, who are eager to fully dedicate themselves to the whole project and in fact to no small degree bring along the basic qualifications for entrepreneurial behavior to the job themselves. These teachers do not only participate in an ongoing service training - the project itself is already continual advanced training. Whoever takes part here and contributes to developments, gains additional skills which cannot be acquired at any other teacher training facility.

## **11.2 Masters as teachers**

Personalities and masters of their fields - the conductor, composer, choreographer, architect, writer, painter, sculptor, dancer, physicist, philosopher, engineer, chemist, politician, economist, psychologist, athlete, journalist, entrepreneur - all of them are important teachers from life off campus, who can offer unique stimuli and greatly supplement the work of the permanent teaching staff.

These professionals are guests of the School for Life, who take pleasure in working together with talented young people of the school in special workshops with the goal of creating some common work or product, in short to leave their mark. The wide world comes to Thailand, taking something from the area and leaving something of value in return. The gift consists of knowledge and experience gained in other venues of the Global Village, and which can be of use here.

## 12. Guests

The role of guests has already been outlined in section 8.4. Not all, but a certain number of guests contribute to the important experience of receiving guests. This experience is reminiscent of one of the famous sentences attributed to Martin Luther: "If the world would end tomorrow, I still want to pay my debts today and plant an apple tree." In the early days of the School for Life in Chiang Mai, Jim – a member of the U.S. Navy – appeared, sad-faced because his Japanese girlfriend had run away from him. On a walk through one of the Akha villages, he saw a little boy with a bloated belly and in bad shape. It had recently become known that the boy suffered from Hirschsprung's disease, a terminal illness: a part of the bowel was no longer working and would lead to a process of self-poisoning if no operation was performed. Jim offered to lead a "rescue team" and take the child to the hospital, where Jim would finance the operation. The real difficulty was not in the operation, complicated enough though that is, but rather to overcome the bureaucracy involved due to the fact that the child had neither Thai citizenship nor could show any other identification documents such as a birth certificate. In the end though, the child was rescued, and Jim forgot his grief over the lost girlfriend.

The manager of a chocolate factory from Switzerland outed himself as a compost specialist who, along with the children, set to work on the difficult task of composting teak leaves. A young theatre director from Bavaria who had studied "Cats" in her native village, put on parts of the musical with the children. A retired English teacher fascinated the children with a dramatic and theatrical English lesson. A dentist and his wife carry out screenings with the children and want to come back next year.

Guests who plant apple trees and come back to see whether they have grown are very welcome in a School for Life.

Last and not least, they also help the School for Life to be able to generate revenue of an increasingly significant scale – on the road to a "self-sufficiency economy", as favored by Thailand's King.



Culture sensitive tourism and the School for Life are not at odds with one another, but rather form a synergy.

### **13. Partners**

The School for Life depends on national and international cooperation. This will consist of a process of mutual give and take. The school will function as a model, whose individual elements are transferable elsewhere. At the same time the school needs expert knowledge of other institutions and the knowledgeable support of responsible political government departments of the country.

#### **13.1 Thai communities**

The villages around are an important integral part of the Open Learning Village. The connection can grow out of working together on a specific project, through outsourcing or cooperation in taking care of guests. The goal of working together in this way is community development, all within a framework of awareness, respect, and creative promotion of the Thai cultural heritage as well as everyday customs. This is not a one-sided relationship. Just as the schools can convey important impulses with their Centers of Excellence, the members of the villages can also function as masters and teachers.

When selecting Community related project topics, the school depends on the participation of representatives from Thai society: they are the experts for priority question complexes, and are co-responsible as experts in evaluating and implementing project results.

The School for Life deals with local and regional key problems, and these are largely related to the tourist industry. This predominantly affects the regions of Phuket and Phang Nga, and is changing the area from day to day, exposing a long cultural tradition to an outright cultural invasion. One cannot simply define away the strained relationship between indigenous cultural heritage and modernization which can include cultural self-destruction. One *can* take up the idea and deal with it offensively, and work on reasonable solutions. The

School for Life will become more and more rooted in the region as an institution which will contribute to the further development of the region's cultural heritage and thus, in a liberal-minded spirit of tolerance, contribute to its cultural identity.

### **13.2 Thai authorities and advisors**

The Thai government, represented by its responsible ministries, especially by the Ministry of Education is a particularly important partner for the development and design of the school. The government will be requested to grant the school the necessary freedom for development, and at the same time is invited to stand by as consultant and promoter and, to the extent it seems sensible, to take up positive experiences of the school as models and be supportive in transferring these concepts to other pedagogical institutions.

Leading personalities of Thailand and the international world are invited to participate as consultants and active guests in the development of the school.

### **13.3 International partners**

The School for Life is a practicing prototype of international understanding and peaceful cooperation. At the same time it will be an example for educational reform, especially with regard to making the learning process dynamic and promoting a culture of entrepreneurship. The model can be of special interest to countries whose educational system encourages too little in the way of entrepreneurial skills. The question arises how conventional schools and even universities can make training in entrepreneurship, and the setting (the institution itself as entrepreneurial model) mutually compatible. The promotion of entrepreneurship by pedagogical institutions could become one of the most relevant themes in future developments of educational systems in many countries. Schools and universities help decide on the entrepreneurial potential of coming generations, by either promotion or neglect.

The services will include advice for the adaption of the modul under local circumstances, curriculum development, teacher training, and the guarantee of quality performance standards.

## **14. Transfer of innovation**

The School for Life will be a development workshop and the results can be fed nationally also into the international transfer of Innovation

### **14.1 Basic problems of school and three answers**

The School for Life can answer to three basic problems of the school.

#### ***First Problem: Distance to Life***

A centralized curriculum development with a rigid orientation towards subjects and a standardization through quizzes and exams leads to the fact that students are increasingly unable to apply academic knowledge to problems in real situations and solve those problems.

#### ***First answer: The Situational Approach***

The curriculum is oriented towards key situations and problems.

Scientific and empiric knowledge is focused on those problems in order to contribute to solutions.

This way, students learn to meet challenges of reality, solve real problems in a competent manner, and transfer the experiences that they gained in the process. Situations are understood as something that can be influenced and shaped. Learners become constructors of reality.

#### ***Second Problem: Museum-like Setting***

The scholastic setting mainly dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Learning in today's reality is different.

School, in its organization and learning methods, trails about 200 years behind modern developments of the learning environment.

UNESCO's 1990 call for 'Education for All' has led to quantitative spread of the 'museum of school', not to its reform.

***Second Answer: Centers of Excellence***

The setting of the School for Life is designed in a way that supports learning that is exploring, researching, problem-solving, and relates to reality.

Centers of Excellence that are oriented towards key topics become bases from where students can research, explore, develop, and act in a way that closely relates theory and practice.

School is no more ghetto, but an institution that combines learning and community development.

***Third Problem: Misjudgement of the Labour Market***

Most school- and university-graduates hope for the provision of jobs in the labour market.

They often chase jobs in vain instead of creating some themselves.

They are not equipped with entrepreneurial qualifications.

Many of their teachers are in fact economically incompetent and have anti-economic emotions.

***Third Answer: Entrepreneurship Education***

The goal: Educate pupils to develop their entrepreneurial spirit.

An innovative entrepreneur is a person without particular resources who develops and refines an entrepreneurial idea and carries it out on the marketplace.

His best capital is a good idea.

This entrepreneur acts socially and ecologically responsible.

The School for Life wants to create a setting for students to develop and attempt entrepreneurial ideas in a playful setting and without the pressure of having to secure one's existence.

## **14.2 School for Life as a model**

The School for Life as a model makes up the foundation for product-development, product-adaptation, and -dissemination.

The model serves the development of a transferable product. The operational manual and the related services will contain information regarding the following:

- Curriculum
- Learning methods
- Setting-design
- Construction and furnishing
- Teacher training
- Related laws
- Costs and financing

The services will include advice for the adaptation of the model under local circumstances, curriculum development, teacher training, and the guarantee of quality performance standards.