

MONTESSORI ASSOCIATION OF THAILAND

The Historical Review of AMI Montessori Education in Thailand

INTRODUCTION OF THE MONTESSORI APPROACH INTO THE GOVERNMENT EDUCATION SYSTEM OF THAILAND

The 10,000 small government schools in Basic education in Thailand suffer remoteness, lack of funding, conflict with the "step system" practice, problems with fiscal management and low morale and approximately 3%-5% of these schools did not pass the National Accreditation each year.

In 2000 the National Ministry of Education looked for ways to change this situation for the children of Thailand, through the Reform Act of 1999.

In 2000 Kannekar Butt and Chipot Rakngam studied the problems and offered Montessori Education as the solution. Through the next 3 years Thai educationalists began to look at Montessori in Thailand and Australia and presented displays, public forums and meetings to encourage a pilot program to begin.

In April 2004 the Pilot Project for The Development of the Child's Potential in Small Government School using the Montessori Approach started with Kannekar Butt, (AMI 3 to 6 Sydney Australia) appointed the Honorary Montessori Specialist (Project Field Director). The first public seminar by AMI Trainer, Shannon Helfrich in July 2004 attracted more than 250 educators of the Nakorn Pathom Region and surrounding areas.

Six schools in Nakorn Pathom Education Area 1 became the project with financial support of Kannekar & John Butt and KRB Pty Ltd Australia. Kannekar also sought and received advice and support from Montessorians in Australia from the AAAA and the USA including David Kahn and Shannon Helfrich. The Area 1 support team of local officials, administrators, principals and teachers remains today, as the backbone of support for Montessori in Thailand. More than one hundred exhibitions have been staged to promote Montessori in Thailand over the past decade.

The 25th International Montessori Congress in Sydney, Australia in 2005 welcomed 60 Montessorians and Karnjanaburi Technical College cultural personnel from Thailand. They showcased the pilot project and the culture of Thailand to the world delegates in the Expo display.

After the Congress, Mr. Andre Roberfroid the President of the Association Montessori Internationale, visited Thailand with John and Kannekar Butt who met Dr. Kasama Woravan and Dr. Chinnapat Bhumirat from the Ministry of Education to further consolidate the work.

Finally, in a 4 block format, through 2006-8, the first AMI 3 to 6 Diploma Course happened in Thailand. Co-Directors were Shannon Helfrich and Rita Zener and the course was coordinated/translated by Kannekar Butt. Financial support came from AMI schools in the US, Australian AMI Alumni Association the Thai Basic Education Commission for tuition fees for 75 students. Training was conducted at The National Institute for Development of Teachers, Educational Staff and Personnel (NIDTEP) 1 hour west of Bangkok.

By May 2007, the evidence of the children's progress in Nakorn Pathom Pilot schools attracted interest from all over Thailand. Over this period Kannekar Butt worked with 72 teachers from 56 schools to open 65 Montessori prepared environments for children aged 3-6 years old to develop quality and learning outcomes throughout Thailand and in particular, to the future, Korn Kaen Areas 2 and 3.

By June 2008, the Government approved and formalized cooperation. The Signing Ceremony took place on the 8th of August 2008 in the presence of Dr. Chinnapat Bhumirat Thailand and Andre Roberfroid of AMI. A Framework of Cooperation on Implementation of Montessori Education in Thailand, was signed by Dr. Kongsak Charoenruk the Director of NIDTEP on behalf of NIDTEP and Mrs Lynne Lawrence Executive Director Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) . This was witnessed by approximately 200 Thais and 2 Australian representatives of AMI Megan Tyne and Pamela Nunn.

Both parties committed to seeing more children in Thailand have access to Montessori education and recognized that the cornerstone of achieving this goal is the provision of high quality Montessori AMI teacher training.

175 school administrators gained an overview of Montessori information from the first AMI Administrator Orientation to Quality Montessori Implementation in July 2008.

In April 2009 -10, the second AMI Thai 3 to 6 AMI Course with 96 students was held with Co-directors Rita Zener and Ulla Wekifeldt. Elina Rautasalo assisted in the course as an auxiliary trainer.

A third course with Elina Rautasalo as the Director of Training began in 2011 with 204 students. This course is being held at Ming Mounng Pararam Temple, Phon near Korn Kaen in the central north east of Thailand and will be completed in 2012.

Dr. Chinnapat Bhumirat - Secretary General of Basic Education requested 200 students for this course, because the benefits to the children and teachers has impressed him.

In 2011 Kannekar and the Australian Thai Montessori Supporters (ATM's) met with the AMI executive at the MAF Refresher, Sydney and there after presented AMI

with a 5 year plan involving the future development of AMI courses in all areas from birth to age 12 .

Through the years Australians have supported Kannekar and John Butt in their work in Thailand by encouraging Thai teachers to know more about Montessori education so as to become students of Montessori and attend AMI courses. Australians supported Thai nationals to visit AMI in the Netherlands and Australia, to attend the 25th AMI World Congress Sydney 2005 and the Australian AMI Refresher 2009 plus hosted delegations to visit Montessori schools in Sydney. The formation of the Montessori Association of Thailand (MAT) and support of the first MAT Conference at the Rose Gardens including a presentation to the Royal family in 2010 has been in part due to the Australian AMI members interest and ongoing support to Kannekar and her work in Thailand.

Under the umbrella of the Montessori Australia Foundation (MAF) the ATM's actively assist MAT and it's President, Kannekar Butt, to provide Thailand with support and mentoring for the 3 to 6 courses, and the development of the 6 to 12 plans for Thailand.

By 2010 the main focus of the ATM's became AMI training in Assistants to Infancy in Thailand. This has been undertaken in the form of workshops and presentations of the needs of the child of this age.

The promotion and set up of demonstration under 3 environments, to show future students what can be achieved, is part of the preparation for the planned 2013 AMI training in Assistants to Infancy in Thailand.

Over the past decade more than 200 schools in different areas of Thailand have been visited to encourage more knowledge of Montessori education and build relationships. Thousands of school visitors have come from both government and private sectors, from all over the country to look at how Montessori works in the environments.

Some of the ATM team attended past EsF gatherings in Italy and Spain and have also supported AMI's EsF type work in other countries.

The Montessori Association of Thailand (MAT) and the ATM's are seeking contributions and partnership from both GO and NGO bodies in Thailand such as Ministry of Education, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Health, Thai Health Local Councils, and also in Australia with Montessori Australian Foundation, Montessori Children's Foundation, and the Australia Thailand Institute.

We are seeking Educateurs Sans Frontieres from around the world, to support and consolidate the future continuing growth of Montessori Education in Thailand.