Chapter X
Interactions among Thai Culture, ICT, and IT Ethics

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ABSTRACT

Information is important to humans because without information, no task can be performed. Therefore, information and communication technology (ICT) was invented and implemented to serve the needs of people. This facility has both positive and negative impacts on Thai society. However, it is generally the information technology ethics of the user that determines the direction of use of the technology. This chapter presents the relations among Thai culture, ICT, and IT ethics, in which all impacts are considered and described. The discussion in this chapter indicates that there are various factors related to development of IT ethics, but the one main factor is family background. Thus, in order to increase the IT ethics of users in an ICT world, the proposed solution in this chapter is to create a strong family and instruct children in their religion. Although this method is long-term, the outcome is worth the wait.

INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technology (ICT) is a technology whose main activity to make information accessible to communities using computer networks. ICT has experienced rapid growth and has become part of the human lifestyle all over the world, including Thailand. Since information is very important to people in many ways, computer scientists are trying to invent techniques to improve information transfer methodology to the point where people around the world can obtain information easily and quickly without boundaries. Consequently, most daily activities rely on ICT-based machines that perform quickly and perfectly.

Although computer scientists constantly are developing new technologies for ICT use, the results of using these technologies are still in the hands of people who use them. It is true that everything has two sides, as does ICT. If ICT is applied to rights, or legal activities, the outcome can be expected to be positive to society; otherwise, its results may be negative.

Considering the fact that people are components of society and every society has a unique culture, one finds that culture in each society is what binds its members together. One significant

part of the human culture is ethics. Although people in different communities have different cultures, what remains rather constant in each culture is that there is an ethical system that protects human rights.

As mentioned previously, human activities rely on information, but how the information is used depends on the IT ethics of the user. Since people have many chances to receive various kinds of information, some information may motivate users to violate their IT ethics in order to gain the highest benefits for themselves without being concerned with the negative outcome of these activities.

Thai culture and ethics have influenced Thai living styles for centuries, long before ICT was implemented. People carry on with their lives in accordance with what they have been taught by their ancestors. After ICT was implemented, Thai people had access to knowledge and information that were different from what they had been taught; this information is useful for their businesses and/or their lives. Moreover, ICT allows people to work anywhere, anytime, and whenever they want. Thus, the lifestyle of some Thais has started to change according to the information and convenience they have obtained through ICT.

The consequence of the changing life style of the Thai people may alter the ethics that they inherited from the past. Since Thai culture typically shows a significant connection with nature and since most activities belonging to Thai culture are related to religion, there is a possibility that the IT ethics of Thai people at the present time are influenced both by Thai culture and ICT. One might show this in a mathematical formula. If LE represents the level of IT ethics of a person, ETC is the effects of Thai culture, $EICT$ is the effects of using ICT, and e is a small effect from environment, then the model of Thai IT Ethics can be formulated as $E = R(ETC, EICT, e)$, where $R()$ represents relation, which can be either function or nonfunction among parameters.

This chapter will focus on the impact of ICT on the IT ethics of the Thai people and their culture. Additionally, a solution to improve Thai IT Ethics in the cyberworld is suggested.

BACKGROUND

According to the Webster's dictionary, the word *culture* means the act of developing intellectual and moral facilities, especially through education, and it also can mean the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon a person's capacity to learn and transmit knowledge to succeeding generations. Therefore, if the behavior of people in a society changes, it definitely will change the culture of that society.

Moor (1985) defines the meaning of computer ethics as follows: "Computer ethics identifies and analyzes the impacts of information technology upon human values like health, wealth, opportunity, freedom, democracy, knowledge, privacy, security, self-fulfillment, and so on." Considering the current roles of ICT, one finds that it has been implemented in every corner of human life. Although the original aim of developing ICT was for information transfer among organizations, this technology has been developed to support mankind in every activity everywhere. For example, people can communicate anywhere because of the development of mobile technology; people can exchange information because of the existing Internet. The ability to transfer and exchange information has enabled business units to improve their strength and increase their competitiveness.

Although ICT has been implemented all over the world, most people on the Internet expect that other users will use the Internet under the same rules of ethics. Unfortunately, the consequences of using ICT are in the hands of the user. Thus, ICT usage can be classified both legal and illegal,

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