

An Analytical Study of Phrakrusangworasitthichote's Educational Administration for Educational Equity among Highlander Youths

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ABSTRACT

Educational Equity is one of the major global obstacles in delaying the achievement of UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Like many other countries, Thailand has struggled to successfully bring all of its children into the educational system in an equitable way. While the government cannot render enough quality education services to underprivileged children, Phrapariyattidhamma School can help fill this gap. This study aimed: (1) to survey the status of educational administration at Wat Ban Khun Buddhist School, in Hod district, Chiang Mai Province and (2) to analyze the educational administration for educational equity of the school principal-Phrakrusangworasitthichote. The school is recognized as the leading Buddhist Scripture School in the Northern region rendering equitable basic education and Pāli study to underprivileged highland students since 2003. All students are treated fairly and inclusively. With competent teachers and conducive learning environment, the school has achieved the highest number of students who passed Pāli examination in Chiang Mai. The res

applied a qualitative method and on-site investigation as research design. The research instrument was in-depth interview with 5 key informants utilizing the POSDCoRB theory as the analysis framework for 7 administration aspects, which included Planning, Organizing, Staffing, Directing, Coordination, Reporting and Budgeting. The results suggested that it is essential for school leaders to have a clear understanding and right approaches to cope with inequality in education and ability to orchestrate the staff, villagers, and local authorities to be voluntarily involved in the process of strengthening educational equity.

Keywords: Educational Equity, Educational Administration, Highlander Youths, POSDCoRB, SDGs.

Introduction

In September 2015, the United Nations and 193 countries have adopted a new agenda called the Sustainable Development Goals, often called SDGs or global goals, which comprise 17 goals incorporated with 169 targets to be achieved by 2030 (Shachs, 2015)). Among the 17 goals, the SDG4-Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life long learning for all- encompasses seven targets that deal with quality and equality for different phases of education (Unterhalter, 2019). This specific goal plays an important role in catalyzing the achievement of other development goals (Leydon, 2018).

While global community is moving toward Inclusive Education (IE) which is the effective ways to achieve education for all, many children worldwide are unable to gain access to quality education (Whitburn and Plows, 2017). According to the UNESCO, 263 million children globally aged between 6-17 are out of school (UNESCO, 2016). According to this global education goal, world governments have responsibility to deliver universal accomplishment of primary and secondary education by 2030. But unfortunately, this has proven to be a very difficult task especially for underdeveloped countries. This problem falls under the category of 'Educational Equity' and it is one of the major global challenges dealing with the achievement of SDGs (Tang, 2015). Thailand, like other countries, has struggled to successfully bring all of its children into the educational system in an equitable way.

Oftentimes, Thai citizens in remote areas and minority groups, such as hill tribe children, are not offered equal opportunity or access to quality primary and secondary education due to their poverty. Hill tribe people, as known as highlanders, reside in the remote-highland area which spans across twenty provinces located mostly in the Northern part of Thailand. The hill tribes in Thailand include: Karen, Meo, Lahu, Yao, Akha, H'tin, Lisu, Lau and Khamu (Chob Kacha-Ananda, 1997). Chiang Mai has the highest number of hill tribe population with the estimate population of 190,795 (Fujioka, 2002). Highlanders comprise around 2% of the overall Thai population, which currently sits at around 66 million (National Statistical Office, 2020). But despite their low percentage of the whole, highlanders still play an important role in the nation's successful implementation of the SDGs. However, as it stands, highlanders are the most underprivileged group in the country, due mainly to poverty and lack of education.

The Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) reveals that it has over 9 million students in its system and about half of them leave school during the middle of their education journey due to financial difficulties (Wipatayotin, 2018)). Like many other schools throughout Thailand, in Hod District, many students could not afford to continue their education after finished lower-secondary level (Matthayom 3).

Wat Ban Khun Buddhist School is the only Phrapariyattidhamma School in Hod and Omkoi District. Many highlander youths in this area, including neighboring communities, have been lacking of opportunity to continue their upper-secondary education. The school was founded by Phrakrusangworasitthichot in 2003 and has been rendering educational services for ethnic minorities ever since in both lower and upper-secondary level (Matthayom 1-6). School officials aim to develop highlander youths academically and ethically. The school utilizes student-centered learning concepts that provide quality education in academics and Buddhist wisdom while raising awareness to preserve cultural diversity and local tradition. In addition, Phrakrusangworasitthichot, the abbot of Wat Ban Khun and the principal of Wat Ban Khun Buddhist School, successfully brings villagers and local authorities to be involved in community and educational development.

Data from Office of Office of Phrapariyattidhamma School Educational Service Area Five reveals that, in 2016, the total number of students in upper-level in Hod District are 60, 16 of them (26%) are students of Wat Ban Khun Buddhist School (Office of Phrapariyattidhamma School Educational Service Area Five, 2016). Currently, there are 175 active novice students studying at Wat Ban Khun Buddhist School. The majority of these novices come from the Karen, Lahu and Hmong tribes.

Although there is wide array of areas where of the concept of equity in education has been studied and described, there are only sporadic researches done in trying to promote educational equity for highlander youths or ethnic minorities. Building an equitable quality education system for highland's youths to align with the country's goal for sustainable development is unquestionably a challenging task. However, over the years, Phrakrusangworasitthichote's administration has shown that it has made substantial steps towards promoting educational equity for highlander youths in the North of Thailand. The ultimate ambition of this research is to study all the ways that this ambitious aim has been achieved and how it continues to be successful. Research findings and knowledge gained can

shed some light to advance the research on educational equity both in Thailand and international academic sphere.

Research Objectives

The research objectives of this study are 1) to survey the status of educational administration for educational equity at Wat Ban Khun Buddhist School and 2) to analyze the educational administration for educational equity by Phrakrusangworasitthichote at Wat Ban Khun Buddhist School.

Research Methodology

This is a qualitative study. The two main purposes of this research were to survey the status of educational administration for educational equity at Wat Ban Khun Buddhist School and to study how Phrakrusangworasitthichote, as the school principal, implements and embodies the educational equity principle.

The POSDCoRB model was chosen because it provided a proper framework by which the educational administration can be analyzed and assessed. The functions of POSDCoRB correspond with the fundamental analysis, the development, and the implementation of educational equity along with the development and implementation procedure of equity in education.

The study was conducted at Wat Ban Khun Buddhist School, Hod District in Chiang Mai Province. The researcher created a set of interview questions as a tool to collect data from 5 key informants includes the principal of Wat Ban Khun Buddhist School (1), the vice-principal (1), and senior teachers (3). The researcher spent 2 months for on-site investigation and made appointments to interview all key informants. Conversations were recorded. All relevant data were collected for later analysis.

Results of the study

The presentation of this research findings is divided into 2 parts consisting of the following: (1) The educational status and achievements of Wat Ban Khun Buddhist School; (2) Phrakrusangworasitthichote's educational administration for educational equity according to the POSDCoRB analysis framework. The findings are presented as follows

(1) Regarding the status and achievements of Wat Ban Khun Buddhist School, the school aims to develop students to be well-versed in both worldly and the Dhamma knowledge. It focuses on teaching the students to have virtues and to apply their knowledge in daily practice to become good heirs of Buddhism. To accomplish this, it places importance on both the Dhamma-Vinaya and the *Pāli* language in addition to the common learning subjects. Wat Ban Khun Buddhist School also has the aims to develop students into good role models of morality and positive attitudes. This aim is reflected in their motto to strive to mold each student to become a “Scholar in the worldly knowledge, Sage in the Dhamma, Leader in creating goodness,” and an upholder of the “Viriyen dukkhamacceti”, which means “people who overcome suffering through perseverance”. Wat Ban Khun’s students are trained to become competent leaders in both behavior and proper Buddhist practice while continuing to carry on culture, traditions and local wisdom. This preservation of local culture can be seen through the school’s encouragement of parents and local communities to participate in the management and development of educational institutions.

To support and encourage this group of young people to receive the highest quality basic education, Phrakrusangworasitthichot has set guidelines and developed Wat Ban Khun Buddhist School on the basis of the Four Conducive Conditions as follows.

Buildings, places and environment: A good environment affects effective teaching and learning. This includes the materials, equipment and technology that are used to actualize the plan of the school. Therefore, the area of Wat Ban Khun, including each building, material and equipment, has been planned, selected and meticulously designed to be simple, economical, highly useful, and sustainable. It consists of the following buildings: a 3-building novice’s residence (capable of accommodating about 200 people), a dining hall, a meditation room, school building Group 1 (6 classrooms), school building Group 2 (6 classrooms), library, science lab, computer room, toilets, central administration office, meeting room, teacher’s office, and teacher’s accommodation. There is also a green zone full of gardens for the novices to learn about different plant species and to do recreational and leisure activities as well.

Food: The kitchen at Wat Ban Khun Temple prepare food for the novices, both breakfast and lunch, using various vegetables planted by the novices as ingredients for cooking, and seasonal fruits for meals. Eating utensils that novices use, such as bowls, plates, cutleries, cups, water jugs are made of stainless steel so that they are high quality, sanitary, durable and difficult to damage. Every novice will receive refreshing drinks once in the period

after school. If some novices enter the school, underweight or malnourished, they will receive special nutritional supervision to help keep them healthy and grow up normally. For the sake of unity, everyone must have meal together at the dining hall. Eating separately is prohibited.

People: Wat Ban Khun Buddhist School places strong emphasis on the selection and development of teachers continuously to ensure that they are competent enough to meet the school's standard. The school achieve this by recruiting professionally-licensed teachers that have prior teaching experiences and have graduated in the appropriate field for the subject they are teaching. In addition, the teachers must be good role models. This means they must not be involved with all sorts of self-destructive behavioural vices (*abayamukha*) and must also be able to teach and do various activities together with the monks and novices in an appropriate manner. The school will also take care of the accommodation and other benefits and necessities of the teachers.

Management and curriculum: Wat Ban Khun Buddhist School works under close supervision of both the Basic Education Commission and the Academic Curriculum and Affairs Committee. This can be observed from the management structure diagram. The school has integrated the curriculum structure of the core of basic education into its framework of development designed to meet the students' needs. In that structure, children are the center of learning. Students can learn to their full potential under the principle of "Excellent Discipline, *Pāli* Language and Morality" thus producing quality novices by focusing on the development of the following 5 dimensions: Physical and Emotional Health, Dhamma Education and *Pāli* Language, Thai and English Language Skills, Agriculture and Environment, and Educational Technology.

Throughout the abbot's long and arduous journey of development of the Wat Ban Khun Buddhist School, the organization has received many recognitions such as Outstanding award in "Construction and Renovation" temple of Chiang Mai Province (1994), The 2nd Outstanding Management Award for Phrapariyattidhamma School (*Pāli* division) by National Office of Buddhism (2017), Award of Phrapariyattidhamma School with highest number of students who passed *Pāli* examination in Chiang Mai Province by Chiang Mai Buddhist Association Foundation (2020).

The high score of B-NET and O-NET reports and the prestigious awards given to Wat Ban Khun Buddhist school provide testament to the fact that it has successfully created educational equity and a conducive learning environment, that produces high academic standard and attracts and fosters a skilled teaching staff.

(2) Regarding Phrakrusangworasitthichote's educational administration for educational equity according to the POSDCoRB analysis framework, the results are as follow: Planning involves staff involvement & ideas integration ; Organizing comprises simple organizational structure, clarification of responsibilities & community involvement ; Staffing covers qualified teachers with teaching license, fair benefits and effective evaluation system; Directing includes artful communication skill, optimistic attitude, routine meeting & participative management; Coordinating contains good facilitator skill & ability to utilize communities' resources; Reporting can be done through the channels of logbook, Line & in person; and Budgeting includes government funds, donation-based & cultivating economical attitude. The summary of POSDCoRB analysis is illustrated in Figure 1.1.

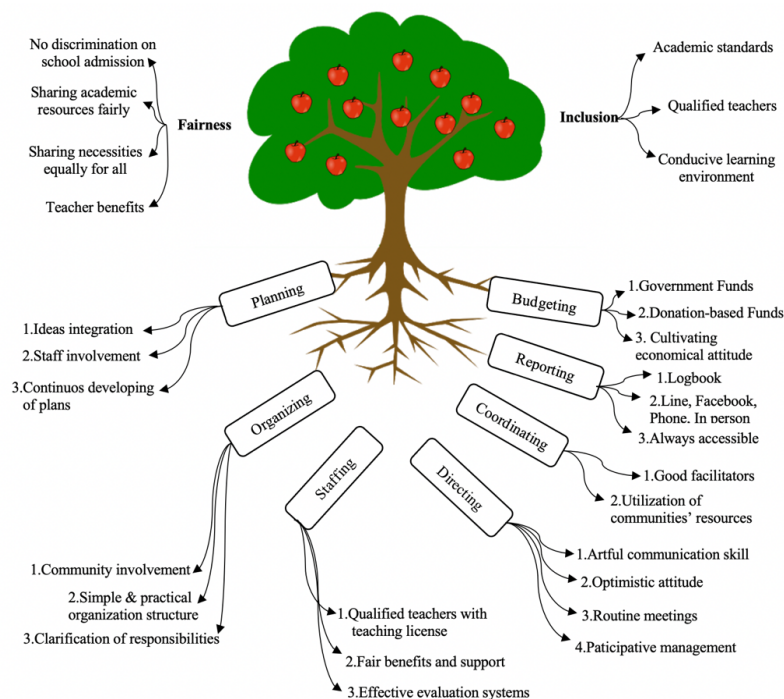


Figure 1.1 Phrakrusangworasitthichote's Educational Administration Tree

for Educational Equity utilizing POSDCoRB theory Designed by Narongchai (2021)

(Apple tree image retrieved from www.clker.com)

Discussion of the study

The discussion below is conducted based on the summary of POSDCoRB analysis shown in Figure 1.1 and the comparison to other research findings in the area of administration of educational equity.

Planning

The planning process is more resolute when school staff involved accept and value the significance of educational equity. Phrakrusangworasitthichote gives high priority in planning and providing clear strategies to his team members. At the beginning of each school term, developing an educational equity blueprint together is a 'must' agenda that requires 100% participation from all parties. Staff are encouraged to be involved in the goal setting, implementation, decision-making and evaluation process.

The planning process should also continue to develop and integrate ideas from all units of the school and community involved in the implementation and establishment of educational equity. Phrakrusangworasitthichote plays an important role in gathering valuable input from the school staff and the local community by acting as a catalyst and coordinator simultaneously. The meeting with teachers and community leaders is conducted regularly to keep people updated and active within the circle of development.

Organizing

Implementing educational equity should be a public agenda, not just an aim confined to the school itself. The process requires cooperation and involvement from all related parties. Wat Ban Khun Buddhist school exemplifies the fact that a school which has a strong bond with community and local authorities has high potential to be successful in organizing for educational equity.

The organizational structure to create and implement educational equity should be simple and practical. At Wat Ban Khun Buddhist school, Phrakrusangworasitthichote simplifies the structure of school management team by dividing it into 4 groups: Academic, Human Resources, General Management and Budgeting. The structure is simple and easy to monitor and direct. He meticulously selects the person in charge of each group and authorizes them to make decisions while still remaining under his supervision. In addition, a less complicate

administrative structure and low level of hierarchy helps to clarify each person's position, roles and responsibilities in the school.

Staffing

To render quality and equitable education, having a skillful and knowledgeable staff is vital. Phrakrusangworasitthichote always seeks to recruit high qualified teachers with prior teaching experience. All basic education teachers are required to have at least B.A. in a specific basic education subject in addition to a professional teaching license. *Pāli* language teachers must have earned at least *Pāli* level 6th certificate. Besides competent academic requirements, a basic level of morality and responsibility is also a prerequisite for staff at Wat Ban Khun Buddhist school.

Phrakrusangworasitthichote provides fair treatment for all staff, both monk and lay people. Everyone is treated in an appropriate way according to their roles. Benefits offered at Wat Ban Khun Buddhist School for its teachers are higher quality than other Phrapariyattidhamma Schools in the remote areas. Salaries and other benefits such as accommodation, meals, uniform, internet access and academic training program have a positive effect upon the long-term stay for both monk and lay teachers.

Directing

Since school administration is inseparably related to human interaction, effective directing of educational equity demands that the school principal maintains clear modes of communication and a good attitude in the field of human relations. Phrakrusangworasitthichote is open-minded and committed to participative decision making; he has an active and productive relationship with his staff and community. He is always accessible and has frequent interaction with his staff. Therefore, if anything happens, he can supervise and direct them promptly and properly.

The establishment of the Academic Curriculum and Affairs Committee, comprised of both monk and lay teachers, is an effective means of directing and syncing academic curriculum on basic education, *Pāli* language and Dhamma study. Academic standards produced by this sector provide clear criteria for the proper measurement of educational equity. This committee helps Phrakrusangworasitthichote shape a suitable academic curriculum for highland students. With the right curriculum, Phrakrusangworasitthichote can supply fair and proper assistance for those students who need the most academic support.

Coordinating

Phrakrusangworasitthichote has developed a well-coordinated platform for solving the problem low quality, inequitable education for highlander youths. Besides making merit on special occasions, villagers interact with the school more frequently to support their novices through activities such as offering food, doing dishes or various other types of labor that are needed around the temple and school. This creates a supportive learning environment at the school which yields a positive impact for novices in making progress in their education.

Phrakrusangworasitthichote has utilized the 'School Aid Representative' program as a means of creating a shared responsibility system amongst the temple, school and surrounding community. This program motivates each family in Ban Khun village to volunteer by sending one family member to provide labor services to the temple. Every Monday to Saturday, there are five representatives from the village rotating to serve the temple from 8.30 - 13.00 mainly doing the dishes after breakfast and lunch for over 150 novices. This service frees up the novices' time in order to make it back to class as quickly as possible. This program has created a sense of ownership among the villagers who participate in it. They are committed to facilitate and expedite the process of developing educational equity.

One aspect of coordinating educational equity involves accessing useful resources from the local community. Phrakrusangworasitthichote welcomes local authorities to share the school's facilities when organizing official events such as chanting for the King's family, meditation retreats, community meetings, seminars and trainings, etc. The school also serves as a local knowledge sharing and training center for the community to study Dhamma, learn and practice morality via training programs and conduct other educational related activities. This diversity of service greatly aids in the process of strengthening and continuously developing educational equity.

Reporting

The process of reporting on educational equity requires a strong commitment and coordinating efforts among school administrative staff. Phrakrusangworasitthichote implants such values through a practice of collecting daily reports from all teachers. He requires teachers to write a one-page report in a “log-book” (teacher’s workbook) on a daily basis in regards to what happened in and outside the class room. Each teacher must inform him of this information at the end of the day by sending picture of the report via Line application. His concerns include both academic progress and each student’s well-being. All issues on the report will be investigated by and responded to promptly by Phrakrusangworasitthichote.

The channels for reporting can be done in various forms depending on the school administrator’s preference. Phrakrusangworasitthichote is a very active and accessible person. Both monks and lay staff can contact him at any time via phone, Email, Line, Facebook or in person without a prior appointment. He is always willing to listen and give support to his subordinates. Therefore, he is continuously being informed and updated on all movements at the school.

Budgeting

It is an all-too-common issue among Phrapariyattidhamma school administrators that the government provides inadequate funds that arrive later than expected. To succeed in rendering effective, quality and equitable education, it is of great importance for the school to have the ability to reach out to a wide range of funding sources and implement a suitable financial management system.

In general, Phrapariyattidhamma schools receive financial aid from two main sources- the National Office of Buddhism and their personal donation base. The first source is reliable, but limited. The latter source is hopeful, but unpredictable. Therefore, fundraising is usually received from donations of lay followers who have faith in the abbot or the school principal.

Cultivating an economical attitude for students and staff is a helpful and crucial technique for reducing school expenses. At Wat Ban Khun Buddhist school, both teachers and students are trained to be frugal and mindful in consuming the school’s resources which include things such as food, water, electric, car and paper usage. Being able to differentiate between “Need” and “Want” (or “Use as you Need”) is one of the key principles taught by Phrakrusangworasitthichote. This mentality helps the school cut costs and have additional

budget to funnel towards other necessary payments like purchasing a few extra computers or fixing a broken school bus.

The study of Rangsai Pimchangthong reveals that the general administration problems found in many Pariyattidhamma schools are a lack of learning materials, financial support, and teachers in addition to having irrelevant curriculums and un conducive learning environments (Pimchangthong, 2005). Although Wat Ban Khun Buddhist School encounters similar challenges, the school is able to manage all serious issues effectively as proven by the numerous recognitions and awards it has received.

The Public Expenditure Tracking Survey by UNICEF reveals that the involvement of local communities and authorities is the crucial factor in rendering quality education for disadvantaged students (UNICEF, 2009). This study indeed endorses the right direction for handling educational equity for highlander youths. Phrakrusangworasitthichote proves this fact through his ability to effectively orchestrate cooperation among temple, school, villagers and authorities in support of educational equity for underprivileged students. One example of his efforts is his recruitment of qualified local individuals to be members of the Basic Education Commission to oversee policy-making and help with school's challenging issues.

According to the study of Wassana Jaroensorn, the most impactful factor in strengthening the success of promoting quality education is the investment on human development especially on finding and developing qualified teachers (Jaroensorn, 2012). Fortifying educational equity through having qualified teachers is also endorsed by the Quality Learning Foundation (Quality Learning Foundation, 2010). Phrakrusangworasitthichote always pays close attention in the recruitment of competent teachers to his school and provides fair benefits such as attractive salaries and free private accommodation. He also encourages all teachers to continue to develop academic knowledge and teaching skills whenever an opportunity to do so is available.

According to National Office of Buddhism's standard, Phrapariyattidhamma schools must provide at least 1 teacher per 20 students. Wat Ban Khun Buddhist School has 12 lay teachers for 175 students which translates to roughly a 14:1 student-teacher ratio. Such a ratio allows teachers to more effectively support students on the development of both their

academics and overall well-being. This setting helps reinforce educational equity for disadvantaged students.

However, for more benefits to its students, the school should increase the roles and responsibilities of school guidance counsellors as suggested in the study of Chakkaew and her team (Chakkaew et al., 2018). One such role would be to educate both parents and students on the benefit and importance of completing the required minimum education and pursuing higher education. In addition to this, school guidance counsellors should provide a career path for their students after graduation.

Conclusion

The two main purposes of this research were to survey the status of educational administration for educational equity at Wat Ban Khun Buddhist School and to study how Phrakrusangworasitthichote, as the school principal, implements and embodies the educational equity principle. The POSDCoRB model was chosen because it provided a proper framework by which the educational administration can be analyzed and assessed. The functions of POSDCoRB correspond with the fundamental analysis, the development, and the implementation of educational equity along with the development and implementation procedure of equity in education. A review of related literature was surveyed to provide the general underlying principles of educational administration and educational equity.

The study was conducted at Wat Ban Khun Buddhist School, Hod District in Chiang Mai Province. The school is known as a successful model Phrapariyattidhamma school in rendering Dhamma learning, *Pāli* language and basic education for highlander youths for over a decade. The school helps reduce the issue of inequitable education that is currently a wide-spread problem among highland children throughout the hilltop communities in Northern Thailand. As a result, it concludes that it is essential for school leaders to have a clear understanding and proper approaches to effectively deal with inequality in education and ability to orchestrate the staff, villagers, and local authorities to be voluntarily involved in the process of strengthening educational equity.

This article suggests that as long as rendering educational equity is not strongly perceived as an integral part of the nation's ultimate education development goals and the philosophy of educational equity is not well-established among top national leaders in education, schools will continue to remain subject to a deficit of necessary supports such as budgets and qualified teachers. If there is not a change in mentality, inequitable education

will persist in the country's education system especially within the Phrapariyattidhamma school system where most of their students are underprivileged.

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