



Teacher Training and Development in Thailand

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Abstract

This paper is focused on the transition of teacher education and professional development in Thailand, including both pre-service and in-service teachers. The transition of teacher education in Thailand can be divided into 4 eras: before the Teacher Act 1945, the dawn of the professional teacher (1946 - 1979), time for thought and effort (1980 - 1998), and golden age of teachers (1999 - present). Pre-service teacher training, key changes included a longer pre-service teacher education program (from a 4 to a 5 years), and a teacher certification system. A professional license may be acquired when finish the course and the assessment criteria is met. In-service teacher training has two main issues: first, to allow all teachers to access a thoroughly developed system. Secondly, various teacher professional development models that meet the needs of teachers with efficiency and effectiveness to enhance the performance of teachers through the development of needs to be used in a diversity of classroom situations.

Keywords: teacher education, teacher professional development

Introduction

The “teacher” is a key mechanism which drives the quality of education, standing at the forefront in the development of national potential and competitiveness in the international arena, especially in keeping pace with the changing world of the 21st century in terms of politics,

economy, society, science and technology.

The Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) stated that “the world’s teachers...have a crucial role to play” in helping to bring about “the extensive social changes” needed along the pathway towards a sustainable future. For teachers to play this

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role successfully they need a commitment to the principles of education for sustainability; without it, they may lack the skills, insights and desire to ensure that their students are provided with the opportunities to learn how to contribute to the ways that their communities are working to advance the transition to sustainability. Therefore, education for sustainability is embedded into the initial pre-service and continuing in-service education of teachers. (Fien, J. and Maclean, R., 2000: p.37) Similarly, the background paper prepared for the 1997 UNESCO, International Conference on Environment and Society: stressed that education for sustainability “must also be emphasized in pre-service and in-service programs of teacher training” (UNESCO-EPD, 1997, p.39). This paper is focused on the transition of teacher education and professional development in Thailand, including both pre-service and in-service teachers.

The transition of teacher education in Thailand

The development of teacher education in Thailand can be divided into 4 eras and 7 phases as follows: (Office of the Education Council, 2015: pp.14-16)

1st era: Before the Teacher Act 1945 was divided into 3 phases.

Phase 1: Informal teacher training (1857-1891) before established institutions of teachers training. It was not a clearly defined course and taught in the palace or at a temple. It stressed that teachers must possess “knowledge and morality” .

Phase 2: Teacher education for national reform (1892-1912). This phase began with the establishment of a teacher training school for preparing teachers in Bangkok and cities around Bangkok in accordance with an era of reform to development the country.

Phase 3: Teacher education and professional development for rural areas (1913-1945). This phase focused on producing teachers, especially, of agriculture in order to teach in rural areas. At this point, teachers were considered as leaders in the development of rural areas.

2nd era: The dawn of the professional teacher (1946-1979). The first Teacher’s Act was initiated in 1945. This era can be further divided into 2 phases.

Phase 4: Teacher education for modernization (1946-1973). This phase is considered to be the stage of modern teacher, using the curriculum and methods of Western teaching, with the aid of international experts. In 1949, Srinakharinwirot University was founded as

“a Higher Teacher Training School” by M.L. Pin Malakul, under the auspices of the Ministry of Education. Later, in 1953, it became the College of Education. After that, in 1974, the college was further developed to become Srinakharinwirot University by a Royal sign from his Majesty the King Rama 9. Furthermore, there was an announcement of the First National Education Plan in 1951.

Phase 5: Pursuit of the identity of Thai teacher education (1974 - 1979). This phase was an era of educational reform for life and society. There were independent thinkers who wanted to change the education model to express the uniqueness of Thai by accelerating the reform of primary education and empowering individuals to develop a model for primary education, in particular.

3rd era: Time for thought and effort (1980 - 1998). This time was a sparks for ideas and efforts to scale up the professional standards for teachers by licensing teacher. The Office of the Teacher Civil Service and Educational Personnel Commission (OTEPC) was founded as the central administration of the teachers which separated powers and responsibilities from the Teacher Council of Thailand under the Teacher Act of 1945.

In 1990, Teacher Council of Thailand

set a standard criteria for professional teachers that identified the key features required for professional teachers in four aspects: mastery, good teaching, moral ethics, and a commitment to development. After that, they strove to develop new criteria for teachers with 11 standards covering the same criteria that can be practiced, evaluated and developed to a new level of quality in terms of teachers and teacher ethics (adopted on 7 May 1996). Two years later, OTEPC resolved to use these levels to assess the performance and teacher development. It was in Phase 6 that professional development was considered as a necessary part of teacher education and in this era, teaching came to be seen as a noble profession.

4th era: Golden age of teachers (1999 - present) In this era, the 1999 National Education Act and Amendment (No. 2) of 2002 aimed to reform education with an emphasis on the achievement of children (child - center), providing educational management and contributing to the efficiency and quality of education. The revised curriculum and learning process combined with media and technology into educational process. One important factor was that there were the systems of teachers, lecturers and educational staffs were revised to meet the professional

standard of education as a noble profession. This was provided in Chapter 7 of the Act, a reform process of the whole system.

This era was considered as a Phase 7 of teacher development. There was an increased emphasis on professional teachers for pupils, and teachers for the quality of educational reforms. According to the 1999 National Education Act, which under the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, 1997, Section 81 of the legislation for education and teachers professional development.

In all phases of teacher education and professional development, it was noted that cultivating teachers during the reign of Rama 5 and 6 to educate teachers as ‘good teachers’, smart students were selected to study as teachers on scholarships. Student teachers had to stay at the dormitory during their study to train and develop the spirit of teachers. When the shortage of teachers emerged, it affected the focus on quantity that has resulted in teacher quality issues still prevalent today. Another problem for teachers was the emphasis of modern western concepts, both curriculum and instruction, with a corresponding abandonment the traditional philosophy of Thai. That made many sectors call for reforms to education. (Office of the Education Council, 2015: p.14- 16)

For this reason, in 2008, the curriculum addresses “Thai-ness” most comprehensively. The first principle underpinning the curriculum was “the ultimate aim is attainment of national unity; learning standards and goals are therefore set with a view to enabling the children and youths to acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes and morality to serve as a foundation for Thai-ness and universal values” . Similarly, Goal 5 in the curriculum is the “awareness of the need to preserve all aspects of Thai culture and Thai wisdom” (OBEC, 2008: p. 4- 5 cited in OECD/ UNESCO, 2016: p. 111). However, it could also be claimed that, given the emergence of strong, intra - regional (ASEAN) influences, teachers need to balance an emphasis on “Thai-ness”, with a need to create global citizens and the curriculum to provide teachers with guidance on achieving this balance. (OECD/UNESCO, 2016: p. 112)

Teacher training and development

Thailand recognized the crucial role that teachers play in student learning. Since the early 2000s, the country has implemented a number of reforms to raise the quality of the teaching profession. Key changes included a longer pre - service teacher education program (from a 4 to a 5 year program), and a teacher certification

system. Thailand's most recent reform agenda has called for additional improvements to the training, development and deployment of teachers. These reforms need to be pursued, with more sustained attention given to improve the pedagogical skills of teachers so that they can help meet Thailand's learning goals. The first priority for Thailand is the need to build a holistic professional development strategy that ensures that teachers and school leaders are prepared to effectively implement the basic education curriculum and assessment strategies and work towards system-wide educational reform goals. The curriculum review and revision process will inform this work, as will the development of new standards for teachers. The second priority for Thailand, was the need to reduce inequities across the educational system by attracting, retaining and supporting educators in schools serving students from disadvantaged backgrounds. (OECD/ UNESCO, 2016)

In this section, the presentation has been divided into two parts: pre-service teacher training and in-service teacher training, as follows:

1. Pre-service teacher training

Teacher preparation can be a powerful vehicle for educational reform, if pre-service education programs admit the

best candidates and prepare them to drive that reform forward. There are currently no specialized institutions for teachers, as there were in the past. The current status of a teaching institute, only the Faculties of Education in comprehensive universities, as well as pre-service teacher training based on their interests and the availability of faculty rather than teacher quantity and quality to meet the needs of the country. Moreover, pre-service programs lack minimum requirements for admission and they do not provide solid preparation in the basic education curriculum or other key areas. (OECD/UNESCO, 2016)

Currently, there are 113 universities/institutions for pre-service teacher training, classified as 71 public universities and autonomous public universities and 42 private universities. Such universities have a faculty, campus and college, distributed by region throughout the country, including 32 in Bangkok, 25 in the northern region, 42 in the central region, 45 in the northeastern region, 20 in the southern region, 6 in the eastern region, and 6 in the western region. (Office of the Education Council, 2015: p.16)

The established standards for Thailand's pre-service programs are the Standards of Knowledge from the Teacher Council of Thailand's Regulation on Professional Standards and Ethics. These

standards require that individuals seeking a teacher's license must have knowledge of typical foundation and pedagogical topics like curriculum development, educational measurement and evaluation, and classroom management. The standards are used for licensing and pre - service accreditation and they provide the basis for pre - service courses. (OECD/UNESCO, 2016: p.199)

Curricula for pre - service teacher, currently has 3 characteristics.

1) Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.), five - year program curriculum. Before the 1999 National Education Act, teacher training institutes offered a four - year program curriculum. With a view to improving teaching quality, Thailand extended the length of its teacher pre - service education program to five years in 2002. For five - year program curriculum, prospective teachers spend four years doing course work and one year doing practical work in schools. (Kantavonga, P., Nethanomsakb, T., and Luang - ungkoolc, N., 2012). The curricula provides students with learning and activities intended to form good teachers corresponding to the National Education Act and to the needs of society. When the assessment criteria are met, the student - teachers are qualified and can obtain a professional license. This

training course is a core course for pre - service teachers.

2) Teacher education undergraduate course (two - year course). Since the advent of Thailand's Second Decade of Education Reform in 2009, the government has consistently called for reforms to further improve training, attract a sufficient number of high - quality candidates to the profession, including individuals qualified in fields other than education, such as those who have received a Bachelor's degree in another subject, but wish to become a teacher. Admission to first year theory and practice for professional teachers includes teaching practice in schools after one year. A professional license may be acquired when the assessment criteria is met.

3) Master's degree in teaching (three - year course) provided for students with a Bachelor's degree in Education or a related field. Admission to a master's degree for two years and teaching practice in schools. A professional license may be acquired when the assessment criteria is met.

Projects to attract good and smart young people into the profession

For more than 10 years, Thailand has had a project designed specifically to prepare good teachers who are capable of teaching well. On December 8, 2009, the New Generation Teachers Project was

approved by the cabinet of the Ministry of Education with a budget of 4,235 million baht to produce 30,000 teachers during the academic years from 2009 - 2018. Moreover, in the next 10 years, there will be two hundred thousand teachers retiring and a huge effort is required to prepare the next generation of quality teachers. A pilot project in 2009 recruited 1,867 students through an interview in the Faculty of Education, who were prepared to study for a fifth year in 2010 with a guaranteed job, but no scholarship provided. The applicants for this project must have a grade point average throughout the course (GPAX) of not less than 3.00, with not less than 3.00 in major subjects and not less than 3.00 in teaching subjects. They have to work at assigned schools, depending on what three schools they chose respectively in the application form after graduation. If they fail to comply with the employment criteria, they will be fined. In 2011, the New Generation Teacher project continued; there were no scholarships granted, but a budget for scholarships and developing student potential were offered to each institution, as well as a guaranteed job. The course criteria and regulations for institutions participating in offering a five - year teacher course must be approved by the Office of Higher Education Commission and the

Office of National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (Public Organization) ONESQA. However, a problem with the New Generation project was revealed in 2012, specifically that the number of graduate students, approximately 2,300, were in excess of the 1,500 positions allocated by OBEC. As a result, many graduate students in the project in were left to float, with no positions available to them. In 2011, a change in government caused the halt of this project which later was replaced by the new project, the so - called “Professional Teacher.” (Yotimart, D. and Wongchai, A., 2013, pp. 5 - 6).

2. In - service teacher training

The positive and significant correlations between teacher quality and student achievement, as most important within - school factors explain performance, and between in - service training and student outcomes, are consistently borne out by research. (Caena, F., 2011) In order to support the capacity for building teachers in the face of system - wide education reform and life - long learning for sustainable development, require the establishment of a professional development strategy. Since Thailand’s Second Decade of Education Reform in 2009, the government has consistently called for reforms to further improve the training, development and

utilization of educational staff, including calls to support the continual self-development of teachers and to improve their performance evaluation.

The national curriculum, first implemented in 2001 and then revised in 2008, changed the expectations of teachers from top-down lecturers in a culture of rote learning to facilitators who are mindful of the unique aptitudes and abilities of individual students. As with their counterparts worldwide, Thai teachers are expected to teach 21st century skills, such as analytical thinking, creativity, problem solving and teamwork, and encourage learning outside of the classroom. They need to continuously evaluate the performances of their students using diverse assessment techniques, and provide remedial support to struggling learners (OBEC, 2013a cited in OECD/UNESCO, 2016: p.190). They must be knowledgeable about and use information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance learning, and be inclusive of students with special needs and those from different backgrounds. They are expected to prepare students for active participation in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) community and the competitive global marketplace, while also promoting Thai values and culture. (OECD/ UNESCO, 2016: p.190)

The professional development of teachers has two main issues: first, to allow all teachers to access a thoroughly developed system. Secondly, various teacher professional development models that meet the needs of teachers with efficiency and effectiveness to enhance the performance of teachers through the development of needs to be used in a diversity of classroom situations.

Today, the professional development system for teachers still has no direction, a lack of effective coordination management between teacher development institutes and organizations. Due to the fact that such institutions have no authority or power to synchronize the operation of teachers and other agencies and lacked leadership in terms of the direction and development policies for an overall picture of a professional development system for teachers. (Office of the Education Council, 2015: p.76)

The Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) is the major body for professional development, which has 4 characteristics in terms of development including: 1) providing scholarships for teachers to take a Master's degree, 2) workshops for both school administrators and teachers, 3) knowledge sharing activities, and 4) online training. The way to select

teachers for professional development is typically based on competency evaluation. The results of evaluation divided teachers into three groups: the master group, the medium group, and the basic group. The training activities were designed to suit the level of knowledge and competence of teachers, including factors such as the provision of postgraduate scholarships to the master teacher group. Some of the workshops were split between the master group and other groups as a reason to develop the master group in highly intensive development. To develop the master group as a leader in terms of conducting learning and sharing activities with the other groups, as well as creating a network for continuous learning. However, providing scholarships for postgraduate study and workshops with the continuous sharing of knowledge network activity was limited when compared with the number of teachers under OBEC. So, online training activities increase the opportunity to join in with a large number of teachers with several training courses (35 courses in 2010, 75 courses in 2011). (Office of the Education Council, 2015: p.78)

Office of the Education Council (OEC) summarized the development models for teacher as follows: (Office of the Education Council, 2015: p.79)

1. Attend seminars held by various organizations.
2. Study visits and training seminars in schools by inviting guest speakers.
3. Studying for a post-graduate degree.
4. Supervision
5. Conducting research in the classroom
6. Assignments to read books about the learning reform and related subjects.
7. Learning from practice and by circulating the task.
8. Team building for learning and practice.
9. Joint implementation projects from outside organizations into action in schools.
10. Support the work of teachers within school for academic work to promote and obtain accreditation awards from various organizations.

The conditions of teachers and educational personnel, as organized by various organizations, were found to have developed quite a lot. However, it was unclear how successful the evaluation and monitoring were and some curriculum and teacher training was found to be redundant. The majority of the training and development sessions take place in hotel conference

rooms. A lack of skills to match the actual conditions and needs and cannot change the behavior of the teachers and create a new paradigm of teaching and learning management.

School - Based Training (SBT)

In the past, the training programs for developing in - service teachers in Thailand were mainly organized by the central agencies, such as the supervisory units of the Ministry of Education. The training often took place in a central hall or a hotel in the city, which involved a high level of expenditure for teachers to be absent from schools. Most of this type of training uses lectures more than practice and lasts only 2 - 3 days, without any monitoring or evaluation of the training program. This type of training is a one - shot affair which has no continuity. Therefore, educational institutions are obliged to try to find a new method of in - service teacher training which is effective, sustainable and which should take place at school. (Labmala, S., 2002, Kaewdang, R., 2002 cited in Puntumasen, P., 2011: p 1)

This project had proceeded during the year 2002 to 2003. The objective was to develop models of SBT as well as to make teachers more appreciated and able to adopt the student - centered approach for their teaching and learning process. The

OEC has selected 10 teaching profession societies and associations and has provided them with financial support to conduct research and development on the SBT model during the second semester of the 2002 academic year. The synthesis of the 10 SBT models revealed that they all produced effective and satisfactory results. The trainers were able to help trainees change their beliefs about their practices. Trainees were enthusiastic about self - development and worked as a group to solve problems. The fact that the participatory process happened at school shows a new innovation of teacher development. The students have learned happily and enjoyed participating in various activities to seek and gain knowledge independently. Moreover, the SBT model only needs a small amount of money to use for necessary expenses. It is recommended to implement another pilot project with larger sample sizes in different parts of the country to confirm the results of this study. (Siribanpitak, P. and Pornsima, A., 2003 cited in Puntumasen, P., 2011:pp. 2 - 3) This is a continuation of project No 3, which took place between 2002 and 2004. The objective was to select 274 change - agent teachers to be provided with a subsidy of BT 25,000 per person to train their fellow teachers. Each change - agent

was required to train about 10 fellow teachers from the same school or nearby schools, during the second semester of the 2003 academic year. This project is still on-going. However, results have been obtained from the monitoring through site-visits and confirmed the results of project No 3. Moreover, it was also found the essential factors which make the SBT program successful, for example, the principal should recognize, support and facilitate all the training program, the teacher trainers themselves should be accepted and regarded as leaders in learning reform by their teacher networks. (Siribanpitak, P., Lohitwisas, S, Wongwanich, S, and Pornsima, A., 2004 cited in Puntumasen, P., 2011: p 3).

Teacher Channel

In 2010, the policy of Ministry of Education initiated the Teacher Channel policy, a project to develop quality teachers and develop a learning exchange center, and also the former Teacher Tutor policy which still continues on the site. (Yotimart, D., and Wongchai, A. 2013)

Teacher and Education Personal Enhancement based on Mission and Functional Area as Major. (TEPE online)

In 2016, the Office of Basic Education Commission (OBEC) initiated TEPE online to provide teachers under OBEC schools the

opportunity to enhance their ability in teaching and professional matters. This online training was based on indicators with a target number of teachers and education personnel to meet the development of 100,000 people across the country in the year 2016.

Professional Learning Community

The Professional Learning Community (PLC) is an innovative method for teacher professional development. It is related to the concept of collaborative continuing professional development, focusing on 1) ensuring that students learn, 2) a culture of collaboration, and 3) results. This project was supported by the Ministry of Education, launched in 2014, covering every region of Thailand and planned to expand to the PLC in the following year. An evaluation of this project found that it can enhance teacher performance and solve the teaching problems direct to their needs.

Conclusion

Thailand's education system stands at a crossroads. The country has made the transition from a largely agrarian, low-income society to an upper-middle income country and now faces the challenge of achieving sustainable growth in the face of a shrinking workforce and regional competition. A strong education system will

be critical to help Thailand respond to these challenges, move beyond middle-income status and achieve inclusive sustainable growth. (OECD/UNESCO, 2016)

Thailand has had long history of teacher professional development and is still trying to improve and develop strategies for enhancing teachers as key people in the process, and enhancing the quality of education. Uncovering both strengths and

weaknesses is the lesson for responsible organizations to learn. Most importantly, there should be a strong government policy to promote understanding and a right attitude of Thai society toward inclusive education. It is hoped that everyone would learn the right concepts and open their worldviews about inclusive education. This is what will lead to successful sustainable education and education for all.

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