

Policy intervention in Education

Literature review

Background of Education in Thailand

Under Thai education system children are required to enroll to school at the age of 6. There are nearly 20 million students in Thailand enrolled from early years to higher education encompassing both formal and non-formal education. (Ministry of Education)

Previously, The Thai Constitution of B.E. 2550 (2007) requires that government provide a minimum 12 years of basic education of quality, free of charge. However, the current education system has increased educational opportunities for all children nationwide through the launch of 15 years, free, quality education for all. Poor children and the disadvantaged receive particular attention. Under the new policy, government will provide free items including tuition fees, textbooks, learning materials, school uniforms, as well as other activities which promote quality improvements among students. However, randomized evaluations have confirmed that spending more on resources like textbooks (Glewwe, Kremer, and Moulin), flip charts, or additional teachers has no impact on children's test scores. (Ministry of Education). Meanwhile, improving on the quality of the education tend to have a positive impact on student's learning (Banerjee, Abhijit, Shawn Cole, Esther Duflo and Leigh Linden).

Thailand was success in increasing participation and expansion at all levels of education in Thailand. However, the quality issue across all levels of education which affect the competitiveness of Thai labor force and hence causing a serious threat to future of the country. Thailand has more or less stayed at the same place for the past decade. The country is lack of progress compare to other countries that were at the same level as Thailand have improved and moved ahead. (Kaewmala)

Thailand has been ranked poorly among the ten ASEAN countries for its education system in the recently released *Global Competitiveness Report 2013-2014* by the World Economic Forum. The study asked a representative sample in each nation: "How well does the educational system in your country meet the needs of a competitive economy?". Thailand was ranked 7th from 10 countries in ASEAN. Likewise, Thailand ranked just 50 out of 65 in the latest PISA test score 2009 (the latest list), placed right at the top of the poorest performers in the bottom 25 per cent. It is believed that the main reason of poor outcomes for Thai students is due to the lack of quality educators. (UNESCO Bangkok).

Some critic says that education in Thailand is "for some, but not for many," meaning that those with money could afford better education and others couldn't (Investvine). It is a true statement for Thai education system. Rich and middle income families who has money would send their kids to tutor school to study extra curricular as they are hoping that their kids could be able to enter in top rank high school or university. In each year, there are around 330,000 high school students (grade 10-12) go to tutor school or 30 % of total high school students in Thailand. There is around 1 billion baht (US\$31 million) per semester per year flows in tutor school franchise. Tutor School Franchise (Educational Franchise) in Thailand (Sanyakorn). Poor families that do not have enough money to send their kids for tutor their kids would loss the competitive compare to the kids who went to tutor school.

Government has put a lot of money to improve education system, 20% of overall government budget or 4% of GDP has injected for education. Thailand is among the top spenders on education more than Singapore and Japan spend relative to size. Yet, as we have seen, Thailand's results leave much to be desired (Kaewmala).

Teachers in Thailand

In Thai society, especially in the past, teachers enjoyed a high social status. Intelligent and well-behaved students became teachers by choice, entering the teaching career with passion and

high teaching spirit. However, social changes during the past decades have had a negative impact on teachers and the profession. The status of teachers is now deteriorating because the teacher's earnings have become too low, in comparison with those of other professions. It can be clearly observed that the salary of a Thai teacher is much less comparing with doctor's salary or an engineer's salary. Middle income family would prefer their kids to have a job which has a high return/salary, therefore, would have influence their kids to go for medical, engineer sectors, etc. Therefore few qualified people choose to enter into the profession. Those who do, often view teaching only as paid employment without dedication like their predecessor. (Pitiyanuwat)

A lower trend of teacher quantity indicates the reason why the figure of student per teacher ratio in Thailand is one of the highest among other countries in the region. Relatively high student per teacher ratio indicate lower capability a teacher can devote for their teaching as well as the monitoring of student's performance (ผลพิรุฬห์)

The concept of education quality

In studies of quality and equality issues in education, it is pointed out that there is as yet no consensus on the definition of the term "quality". More importantly, notions of quality change over time and are tied to societal values. For many people, "education quality" is defined by national examinations. In their role of measuring quality, they actually specify what it is that they want. Education systems set objectives and those objectives are then operationalised in the curriculum and teachers' guides. The mastery of the curriculum is measured by national examinations. Hence the best indicator of high quality education is a high score on the national examinations.

The evidence is clear that there are links between good education and a wide range of economic and social development benefits. Better school outcomes as reflected in student scores are related to higher income in later life. Empirical work has also demonstrated that high quality schooling improves national economic potential. Quality education is also perceived to have an impact on a country's economic growth. More specifically, a more educated society may translate into higher rates of innovation, higher overall productivity through firms' ability to introduce new and better production methods, and faster introduction of new technologies (Daniel N. Sifuna, Nobuhide Sawamura)

Motivation:

Government has spend a lot of money in improving education system but the policy does not help to students to achieve high quality learning. The policies promote school enrolment and increase school participation but do not improve test score for average student. Students are eager to learn but the teacher at school does not have enough time for every students as number of student in class per one teacher is almost 1:50 ratio in some schools which leave students who need help to lagged behind and end up learning nothing from school. Therefore, the increase in enrolment of children in school must be accompanied by improvement in quality of school that serves these children.

Description of Policy intervention:

I would recommend a policy of 1 year training program for students in the faculty of education to teach students in particular area in order to gain experience and be able to receive the feedback and comments from other teachers in particular school to help he/she improve her teaching skills before he/she enter to be a teacher. This is similar to the Doctor training in Thailand, to be able to graduate, doctor students have to work in real situation, real working environment at the hospital to practice what they have learned for the past years under the supervision of the doctors. It would give benefits to the students because they can practice their teaching styles, figure out some problem that they might faces to avoid the shock and able to handle the class well when

they start their real teaching with many children at school under the guidance and supervision of the senior teachers.

With the policy of 1 year training program, students from teacher college or university can choose to work in the field that they are majored in or preferable for them. For example, they would prefer to be kindergarten teachers. They could do training by working at kindergarten sector in particular grade.

For the case of the kindergarten students, i would recommend that trainee students to conduct a class after school to enhance children creativity and learning on Thai culture and the way to live happily in the society. For example, after school drawing class, dancing class, painting class, etc. With this after class program, it could also benefits to the parents who has to work until 5pm and has little free time at home to raise their kids. With this trainee, children would not waste their time waiting for their parents to pick them up. It could help children to learn more about the culture, learn to be creative and enjoy the time waiting for their parents.

For the case of elementary and high school students, i would recommend different style of class. Students have to be in the class during the class time and be able to observe the target weakest students who are lagged behind other students. And after the end of the last class, he/she have to help the students who are lagged behind by teaching on the topic that student does not understand. As well as, be able to observe students who have other problems besides studying and be able to give them advice to help them up. This is similar to the case of Finland, the quality of education is very high. In Finland, as numbers of students in class are small, teachers in each class could distinguished the students who are lagged behind other students, or students who have social problems easily and they would help them by teaching extra on the topic that students are lagged behind or give advice to the students to help them. This would create equality in school. Poor students who have problem with their math, sciences, etc. and do not have enough money to go for tutor could get a lot of benefits from this. Students who are lagged behind can follow up with other students in the class and the class can run smoothly as it is ensure that all students receive the same level of education and nobody are lagged behind. It could also help to decrease the over workloads of existing teachers as there is a trainee to help her dealing with students problems.

For the first year of intervention, i would suggest that the program should be done in public school in Bangkok. Because, many of teacher colleges are located in many areas of Bangkok, students could choose to work at the school close to their college or living place which could reduce their transportation cost. And it would be easy to observe the effectiveness of the program as we would need to adjust some people from ministry of education to look over the program and visit the trainee to see his/her performance at the school for the evaluation during the meeting. I would recommended the intervention to start with elementary level, since it would be easier to observe the outcome through the test score compare to the kindergarten students which is more difficult to observe the learning of children on creativity or culture learning. For this experiment, i choose students in grade 2-3 to be tested.

Research question:

As we focused on improving the quality of education, my research question is How might the intervention improve learning outcomes?

Hypothesis:

Null hypothesis: The policy intervention has no effect on improving learning outcome of Thai students.

Alternative hypothesis: The policy intervention has positive effect on improving learning outcome of Thai students.

Test score would be most relevant outcome variables to be tested.

Research design and Methodology:

I would use randomised experiment (RCE) to test the hypothesis for this proposal as it allows the greatest reliability and validity of statistical estimates of intervention effects. In this case, it will be randomised at school level where schools are randomly assigned to group A or B, students in grade 2 and 3 are randomly assigned into treatment and control group. Given this design, in each year, children in grade 2 in schools that received the program for grade 3 form the comparison group for children that receive the program for grade 3, and vice versa. Moreover, it has to be ensure that the estimate of the program effect would be not be biased downwards by ensure that the schools will not reassigned resources from one grade to the other in response to the program. I would collect primary data, student's test score from the school both pre-test score before the intervention and post-test score after.

$$Y_{igj}Post - Y_{igj}Pre = \gamma + \delta D_{jg} + \theta Y_{igj}Pre + \epsilon_{igj}Post$$

The equation estimated with OLS regress the change in student's test score (post-pre score) on the treatment status of a child's school grade, controlling for the pretest score of child i in grade g and school j where D_{jg} is a dummy equal to 1 if the school received the intervention in children grade g , and 0 otherwise.

Expected outcomes:

The outcome after implementing the policy is expected to be effective in improving learning outcomes. It would increase an average test score of all children in treatment schools and it would be cost effective as the government does not need to hire more full time teacher and pay just a sufficient salary for the trainee students as it is a compulsory in their course to do internship at the school for 1 year.

Potential challenges i might face in implementing this research is that this intervention would have to pass the ministry of education as the curriculum of students in education field has to be changed by adding 1 extra year for the training program to teach students in particular school. As well as the challenges in collecting the data when the program is first implemented in the first year. Also, the long run effect on education after the implement the intervention whether or not the changes generated by the intervention persist over time and last beyond the period of the intervention.

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