

CHAPTER III

THE EDUCATION CONDITION IN THAILAND

In this chapter, the author tells about the history of education in Thailand and also the system of education and the curriculum of education that exist in Thailand. The author also explains the current condition of education quality in Thailand.

A. The History of Education Existence in Thailand

The history of formal education originated in the temple schools (temple schools) which were only for boys. Then since the mid-16th century Thailand was changed by French Catholics which lasted until the 17th century, and then they fought off this way by strengthening their own cultural ideology. Unlike other countries in Southeast Asia and South Asia, especially in countries in the Indian subcontinent such as Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines who have improved education from previous countries such as colonialist countries during for centuries, but Thailand has never been colonized by any power, including education regulated and directed by the Thai state itself which has been completed slowly until it is supported by new impetus with the reappearance of diplomacy at the end of the 19th century. (Unknown, 2014)

In the first century AD, the Thai people had spread across Yunan, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar into various sub linguistic sects. Relatively few Thais in the region during that period, Tai occupied the area to the north of Southeast Asia, flanked by the kingdoms of Nan Zhao, Pyu, and Angkor. Around the 6th to the 9th centuries, fertile lowlands were inhabited by the Mon civilization known as Dvaravati. Unlike the neighboring kingdoms of Chenla and Angkor, Dvaravati remains a mysterious city civilization which was founded surrounded by a moat and a wall of land, Lopburi as a service of an important religious center and Nakhon Pathom which is close to the capital city of Bangkok. Although much is unknown in this world, the Dvaravati trade route has proven to be internal and external

which is important for the development of Thailand and leaves behind a wealth of Buddhist art which proves the great influence Indian culture and religion have had on the region.

In northern Thailand, the Buddha of Lopburi established a State with a city known as Haripunjaya in Lamphun, northern Thailand around the 9th century (Mon area which remained independent until the 13th century) Elsewhere in the north. The Tai Nation encouraged and established a country with their own city, especially in Chiang Saen, where one of the first strongest kingdoms in Thailand, Lan Na, was originally founded in the 12th century. The formation of Lan Na, Sukhothai and Phayao, three royal allies founded by contemporary leaders, is the beginning of Thai history as we know it. (Mukhlasin, 2014)

From a political perspective, Thailand is still preoccupied with the issue of separatism, especially in the south of Thailand, in addition to the complex problem between political factions. The Southern Thailand was one of the regions that was still in turmoil until early 2010. The Southern Thailand region covered three provinces, namely: Yala, Narathiwat, and Pattani, which the majority of their citizens are Muslim. These provinces in the Southern Thailand region were formerly independent Muslim sultans. At the end of 2009, the citizens of southern Thailand were estimated to number 1.8 million people or around 80 percent of the total population. Several parties, including international organizations, suggested that the Thai government could reduce the conflict in the region by balancing its military policies, that is, the government could respond to the attacks, but with caution. The response in the form of arrests and the fall of civilian casualties, will only increase local community support for the separatist group. The government is advised to provide education needs in southern Thailand, including designing a standard Malaysian language curriculum in elementary schools with the Malay language of Patani dialect. This is to fulfill the wishes of the Muslim community who want the Malaysian language to be the official language and the establishment of more Islamic-based schools. The Thai government was asked to provide opportunities for Muslim students who had graduated from high school, to continue their religious studies at public

universities and give them special courses to study other secular education programs.

Other efforts that can be done according to ICG, open joint research laboratories in the fields of science and language, between students from Islamic schools and students from public schools, to narrow the gap among Buddhist and Muslim youth. Number of attacks on teachers and schools carried out by separatist militant groups, disrupting the nets of education in several provinces Southern Thailand. Because of the attack, the government was forced to close 45 schools, the government said, could not guarantee the safety of students and teachers. More than 200 schools were burned and 77 teachers killed since separatist violence reheated in 2004 to 2009 and the school became a battleground.

During the new school year, students flock to school, including students in Southern Thailand, especially in Pattani region. The students prefer to attend private Islamic schools. Going to school in this region is risky, students are asked by teachers to be careful when going home at night. The students are asked to suspect anyone who is unknown. Hostilities and battles between soldiers and separatists often occur in schools. A number of schools have become battle sites. 72 teachers have been killed, since 2004, when violence escalated. Even in 2009 there were 38 schools burned down. Public schools are a symbol of Thai government power in the region. People who support the rebellion want schools burned down so that their children go to Islamic schools in mosques. There they will learn Malay and Islamic languages. This is what they want. Teachers are vulnerable to violence because they are easy targets. As a result, the violence led to thousands of teachers asking to move to other provinces. While education officials have difficulty finding work. Islamic religious schools in Southern Thailand were originally included as boarding schools, but by 1982 the government had replaced the boarding schools into private Islamic religious schools. The majority of these schools are in the four southern regions of Thailand, namely the provinces of Pattaya, Narathiwat, Yala and Setul. These areas are areas of

controversy and received attention by the ministry of education in Bangkok. (Unknown, 2014)

B. Education System in Thailand

The current Thai education system is based on education reform that is regulated according to the National Education Act of 1999. Significant changes in education reform lie in the implementation of a uniform policy, flexibility of the policy implementation, decentralization, quality assurance, training to improve teacher quality in all levels and resource mobilization. These important changes include: 1. Expansion of compulsory education through junior high school and free education through senior secondary education. 2. Reforming the curriculum for basic education, vocational education and higher education, which is based on community needs 3. Establishing an Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA), which is responsible for external quality control.

Thailand's education system applies 9 years of compulsory education, with 12 years of free education until completing high school education. Figure 1.1 shows the structure of education in Thailand which generally consists of 3 years of Anuban or kindergarten, 6 years of Prathom (primary school), 6 years of Mattayom (junior and senior high school), vocational education and higher education. Compulsory education in Thailand implements the requirement for children to start school at Prathom 1 or grade 1 elementary school starting at the age of 6 years. Although there is no obligation for children to join Anuban (TK) before entering elementary school, most parents send their children to enter kindergarten. (Dr. Ir. Yunardi, 2014)

1. Early Childhood Education and Basic Education

More than 75% of children 3-5 years old get early education. Although essentially early childhood education is provided by the government through public primary schools, the Ministry of Education actively encourages private schools and local governments to play a significant role in getting involved in early education. Therefore, lately it is seen that a lot of early childhood education is offered by

private educational institutions. This is evident in Bangkok and its surroundings, marked by the growth of a number of early education institutions managed by the private sector.

Basic education in Thailand is intended as 12 years of study divided into 6 years of primary school (Prathom 1-6), followed by 3 years of junior high school (Mattayom 1-3) and 3 years of senior high school (Mattayom 4-6). Since 2003, compulsory education has been extended to 9 years (6 years of elementary school and 3 years of junior high school), but school education is free up to 12 years so students are expected to complete education until Mattayom 6, or the equivalent of high school graduation.

In general the Prathom School is separated from the Mattayom School, but in some places in Thailand we find schools that provide educational services ranging from Prathom 1 to Mattayom 6. In the case of high schools in general, Mattayom 1-6 education is in one school, however can be found Mattayom education that is served by two separate schools, namely schools that serve Mattayom 1-3 and schools that serve Mattayom 4-6.

The national curriculum contains 8 core subjects, namely: Thai Language, Mathematics, Science, Social Sciences, Religion and Culture, Health and Sports, Art, Career and Technology, and Foreign Languages. The flexibility of the curriculum enables the integration of culture and local wisdom so that it is consistent with learning output standards (Dr. Ir. Yunardi, 2014). While APKs for junior high schools in 2010 showed greater than 90 percent, at the senior secondary level it was only around 60 percent (UNESCO, Education Profiles, 2011).

2. Vocational and Technical Education

Vocational and technical education is formally carried out at three levels: upper secondary level (equivalent to vocational schools in Indonesia) with a study period of 3 years, a diploma level with a study period of 2 years and an undergraduate level with a study period of 2 years after completing the diploma level. Vocational and technical

education is carried out at technical colleges, for example Minburi Technical College etc. But now most technical colleges in Thailand only offer a 5-year program consisting of 3 years of upper secondary level and 2 years of diploma, so students generally spend 5 years to finish from a college like this.

Only a handful of colleges offer degree programs. The study programs offered at the technical college can be categorized into 8 concentrations namely: trade and industry, agriculture, economics, business and tourism, arts and crafts, textiles and marketing. What's interesting about vocational education in Thailand is the opportunity for those who have worked to get a certificate of expertise is very open. (Dr. Ir. Yunardi, 2014)

3. Higher Education

Higher education in Thailand is carried out at universities, technical institutes, professional and technical colleges and educational universities. Higher education in Thailand can be divided into two institutions. First is higher education institution under the Ministry of Education, such as public and private universities, professional / technical and agricultural institutions, and teacher education colleges. The second is specialized institutions under other ministries, such as the classic Thai arts high school under the Ministry of Culture, the nursing school under the Ministry of Health, etc.

Fundamental changes in higher education can be seen from the increasing number of private universities in recent years. In the case of public universities, changes are seen in: 1. State universities have become more independent 2. Institutions that were previously categorized as Rajabhat (universities that concentrate on producing teachers), have now turned into comprehensive universities so that they offer programs other than education 3 As many as 35 Rajamangala Institutes of Technology spread throughout Thailand are now formed into 9 regional universities, without changing the name of the institution. That is, each

regional Rajamangala Institutes of Technology has several campuses.

Another very fundamental development in Thai higher education was seen with the birth of a research university. Since 2009 the Thai Higher Education Commission has established 9 state universities as research universities, in order to improve the quality of universities in Thailand, especially in the field of research. These universities through research funding from the Thai government are expected to play a role in making Thailand a center for education, research and science development. These universities educate prospective researchers who focus on solving economic and social problems in Thailand. The 9 universities in question are Chulalongkorn University, Kasetsart, University, Chiang Mai University, Khon Kaen University, Thammasat University, Mahidol University, Prince of Songkla University, Suranaree University of Technology and King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi.

At present more than 2.2 million students study at public and private universities in Thailand. University participation rates have increased significantly in recent years from an average of 26% to 40%. This is most likely due to the increase in college opportunities due to the addition of private universities. There are currently 78 public universities and 89 private universities in Thailand. (Dr. Ir. Yunardi, 2014)

C. Curriculum in Thailand Education System

Since 2002 the Thai Ministry of Education has implemented the 2001 basic education curriculum. Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the 2001 curriculum over a period of 6 years has demonstrated the strengths and weaknesses of the 2001 curriculum. For example, the 2001 curriculum provided an opportunity for decentralization of educational authorities, provided opportunities for local communities and schools to participate and play an important role in preparing the curriculum so that it fulfills their desires.

However, the results of the 2001 curriculum evaluation showed a number of weaknesses related to the curriculum itself, including its application, the process of its implementation, the difficulties of teachers and practitioners in preparing their school curriculum. Many schools are very ambitious to create the expected learning content and outputs but during exams and assessments they do not meet established standard criteria. In addition, the quality of students in absorbing basic knowledge and skills is expected to be quite disappointing.

Based on the findings above, the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) under the supervision of the Basic Education Commission took action to revise the 2001 Basic Education Curriculum to prepare the Core Primary Education Curriculum 2008. Basic Education Core Curriculum (KIPD) 2008 was designed by emphasizing conformity. Improvements were made in the objectives and process of implementing the curriculum at the office and school level. The principle of decentralization is still prioritized in KIPD 2008, by providing opportunities for local communities and schools to develop school curricula. Teaching and learning activities that are applied to all Thai students in basic education are directed in order to improve the quality of students in mastering the basic knowledge and life skills needed in facing a changing world. Therefore they must be equipped with the spirit to seek knowledge to develop themselves in a sustainable manner. (Dr. Ir. Yunardi, 2014)

D. Current Condition in Thailand's Education

According to UNESCO's 2017/8 Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report, there remain substantial challenges to the quality of education in Thailand:

1. 99% complete primary education, but only 85% complete lower secondary education.
2. 50% are not taught in the language spoken at home.
3. 12% do not achieve a minimum proficiency level in mathematics at the end of primary.
4. 62% of out of school lower secondary school adolescents are girls.

5. At the end of lower secondary education, only 50% have a minimum proficiency level in reading and only 46% in mathematics.
6. Only 45% of schools have basic sanitation facilities – only 60% have access to basic drinking water.
7. 80 of the poorest complete lower secondary education compared to 100 of the richest.
8. There are 3.9 million adults unable to read a simple sentence
9. A third of students aged 13 to 15 years experienced bullying between 2010 and 2015, and 29% experienced physical violence.

Positively, Thailand has the justiciable right to education, meaning that citizens can take the issue to court if that right is violated – something only 55% of countries can say. The accountability of education needs to be improved: Thailand has an accountability system based on test scores, yet learning outcomes have not improved from 2003-2015. The country has not published a national education monitoring Report since 2006, which the GEMR deems crucial for transparency with the public over progress against the national education plan.

The government would also benefit from developing credible and efficient regulations as well as monitoring mechanisms and adhering to follow-up sanctions when standards are not met. There are no regulations on the maximum number of pupils per teacher in either primary or secondary education. There are also no regulations on health and safety at all in public, with regulations only for private schools on access to water supply and separate toilets for boys and girls. Most likely as a result, only 45% of schools have basic sanitation facilities.

Thailand uses student evaluations to feed into evaluations of teachers, which are subject to bias. The validity of student evaluations rests on the assumption that students understand, observe and recognize good teaching, and report it truthfully. A comprehensive international review of the evidence, since 2000, cautioned that student evaluations can be subject to bias. Their reliability and validity depended on the evaluation tool used, how it was developed, how it was administered and its degree of detail.

Governments need to enforce educational technology contracts more effectively to ensure equal access and utility. In Thailand, a private provider of laptops could not deliver 800,000 tablets, refused to pay late fees, filed for bankruptcy and terminated the contract. In 2012, Thailand launched the One Tablet per Child project. The relatively low winning bid came from Shenzhen Corp. The Bangkok Post reported major issues, with 30% of the initial products broken, although the government claimed less than 1% were in disrepair. Ultimately, Shenzhen could not deliver the promised 800,000 tablets on time. It refused to pay late fees, filed for bankruptcy and terminated the contract. In 2014, a new government scrapped the program and ordered schools to turn over the tablets.

There are data challenges in Thailand: In Thailand, the National Institute of Educational Testing Service (NIETS) has administered the Ordinary National Educational Test (O-NET) at primary grade 6 (P6) and secondary grades 9 (M3) and 12 (M6) since 2005. The number of subjects was reduced from eight to five in 2016. The data is used by local education authorities to compare individual schools against district or national averages. They are also used by the inspection service. However, there are no common student performance standards, and the main role of O-NET is to certify education level completion. O-NET scores fluctuate between years, which means they cannot be used to assess whether the system meets curricular expectations. A review indicated capacity gaps in test development and analysis at NIETS.

Similar concerns were also raised about central and local education administrators' capacity to interpret results. (UNESCO, 2017/2018 Global Education Monitoring Report: Thailand highlights, 2017)