Strategies and Constraints in Developing Teachers in Thailand

Abstract
In an age of globalization, developing countries have to adjust themselves to many dimensions of development: economical, social, political and so on. The direction of adjustment is from the traditional to the modern. The word "modern" is used here in the westernised, industrialised context. As a result, developing countries have to manage dual societies - a mixture of the new and the old cultures. This duality produces many problems. Many theories of public administration in the developed nations are concerned with the strategies of democratic style focusing on participation. However, in the context of developing countries, bureaucratic organisation or even dictatorial styles are traditional. So, within this context there are some constraints for developing teachers. For example, in Thailand, the structures of administration are strongly centralised, The behaviors in a typical workplaces is subservient, passive and overly concerned with red-tape, etc. In designing strategies to develop teachers, such constraints should be considered. There is little point in preparing teachers for a theoretical democracy when the reality is quite different. Their development program should prepare them for the real context.

Introduction

The strategies and constraints in developing teachers in Thailand in this article will be confined to micro-level rather than macro-level concepts--that is the article will be especially related to teachers' behavior instead of the structure of the profession. The main purpose of this writing is to incite and instigate a comparative study of societies which posses whether similar or different cultural and administrative bases. Such a study will eventually bring about both critical and creative development which fits in with collaboration in the present global community.

Thai Society: In the Era of Global Society

Formerly, Thailand was an agricultural society which produced mainly for daily consumption but later when the first national socioeconomic development plan was launched in 1961, the society has been accordingly developed and its social and economic structures have gradually changed from agricultural to industrial and service ones ever since. The production rates of agricultural, industrial and service sectors in 1961 in proportion to the ones in 1995 were 38: 20: 42 and 12: 37: 51 respectively. The percentage of labor in the agricultural sector which used to be as high as 83 in 1961 is lowered to 58 in 1994. Such changes have affected the society both positively and negatively. Positively, for example, per capita income increased from 2,100 Baht/year in 1961 to 68,000 Baht/year in 1995 (32 times up); living condition and quality of life improved as considered from the human development

index which despondently ranked Thailand as no. 58 out of 174 participatory countries in 1995; Thais' average life span moved up from 52.3 years of age in 1960 to 68.7 years of age in 1994; the percentage of villages having electricity and drinking water are 94 and 83 respectively; road distance in the country is much above the standard of a developing country; rural women and children as well as pregnant girls are better kept; and so on. Negatively, for instance, the problem of increasing gaps of economic chances and income distribution between the rich and the poor; the problem of exploitation and deterioration of natural resources and environment; and so forth. (Wirawan, 1996)

Recently, in addition, there has been a certain change in global situation--that is the worlds of democracy and communism have become intricately woven into the only global macrocosm. Consequently, the principal indicative factor of survival becomes the economics instead of the politics and hence an attempt to build a new world order. There has been economic cooperation among various regions and sub-regions which, paradoxically enough, results in highly competitive trade wars and influences of rich countries over the others. In the meantime, the stream of globalisation also becomes stronger--which is the stream of information technology, the tendency of free trade rivalry, the drift of decentralization, the course of participatory democracy, the drift of diversity, and the stream of high-end technology. (Chareonwongsak, 1996; Sisa-an, 1996; and Thirawekhin, 1996) These altogether have changed Thai society in every single one of facets to be accordingly more globalised. During the past decade, for instance, Thailand has fostered relationship both economically, socially and politically with more other countries in every region; she has also introduced herself as the regional center of economics, finance and communication ; she has put a reasonable emphasis on foreign policy progress; she has increased her roles in the global community by means of multinational cooperation such as APEC and ASEAN; she has strategically changed the fighting ground in Indochina into a trading one through the project for cooperation of the Khong River development among six countries; still, she has painstakingly endeavored to reform the system of politics, education as well as bureaucracy; and so on. (Chareonwongsak, 1996; Karoon, 1996; Kulathanan, 1996 and Wirawan, 1996)

With respect to the future trend of Thai society, Thailand has been criticized to be in the next 20 years more capable of keeping her balance among agricultural, industrial and service sectors if she has stayed on the right track. The agricultural sector will be more strengthened, resourcefully producing foods for the national population and putting raw materials into the industrial sector to make goods for world export. Meanwhile, the industrial sector will establish a stable foundation both deeply and widely-- labors will be as more standardized, competently specialized and skillful as those in the international world. As for the service sector, they will be able to compete with foreign countries in every field. In addition, the form of production will be changed from resource-based to knowledge-based one. As a result, more pressure will be put on the country to enter and complete in the world production which employs high-end technology. Not only the country has to build, develop and apply production technology on her own, but also her population and the production line need to collaboratively regard the consumption of natural resources and environment. (Kwanmuang, 1996 Thanaponpan, 1996; Wasi, 1996; and Wirawan, 1996)

By all accounts, Therefore, a careful step towards the most favorable things and away from all possible perilous ones ought to be made, especially what practically promotes the strengths and improves the weaknesses of domestic cultures in existence. To develop the national human resource so as to satisfy such qualifications is thus unavoidable or else it will be hard for the country to stand firm on this competitive world stage. With regard to modern Thais' characteristics, some likely fit into the future trend, for example gentleness, delightfulness, complaisance, and simplicity will help make progress in service industry more easily than in other industries, whilst the appearance of compromise will contribute to a successful trade bargain, national negotiation even. Others are possibly inappropriate to serve the future trend, for instance their favor towards the patronage system, aristocratic lifestyle, defensive rather than offensive attitudes, consumptionism, private rather than public mind, authoritarianism rather than egalitarianism, and so forth. However, there are still some other characteristics necessary to be developed, such as curiosity about knowledge, democratic spirit, mindfulness of the conservation of natural resources and environment, respect for human rights, and global competency (e.g. proficiency in languages, and using basic information technology, etc.). (Chareonwongsak, 1996; Choogsathiyoo, 1996; Kiranan,1996; Kwanmuang, 1996; Sisa-an, 1996; Tansiri, 1996; Wasi, 1996; and Wirawan, 1996)

Fortunately, the Eighth National Socioeconomic development Plan (1997-2001) outlining guidelines for the development of the country has put a great emphasis on the development of human resource. Its strategies determine "humans" to be the center of development. Additionally, it is commonly agreed that "education" is an essential tool of a nation for human development , as well as that "teachers" are the significant change agents of the educational system over learners' behavior. However, in the era of global society, teachers' roles have also changed admittedly from the ones who transfer knowledge to learners to the ones who motivate learners to learn things on their own and facilitate learning for them. As such, teachers need to outdo their learning so as to keep pace with social changes and be a leading role model of dos and don'ts for their students on picking out good things and avoiding bad ones among outside cultures, as well as promoting the strengths and improving the weaknesses of existing domestic cultures. To sum up, teachers are therefore the foremost targets of the reform in the human resource development process. (Dulyakasem, 1996; Kiranan, 1996; Phra Thammapidok, 1996; Sanrattana, 1996; Sisa-an, 1996; Warapipat and the other, 1996; and Wasi, 1996)

The Strategies for Thai Teachers' Development: A theoretical proposal

From the studies of various theories of both administration and development, and many scholars' conceptions, they agree that the global society is in the stream of participatory democracy. thus, working out the appropriate strategies for Thai teachers' development in the era of global society should focus more on those "strategies for development in a democratic way" and meanwhile lessen those "strategies for development in an authoritarian style". The possibilities can be brought the promotion of the culture of learning to be self-reliant rather than dependent on others; through the promotion of voluntary rather than directive development; through the promotion of development by teamwork rather than by an individual; through the promotion of qualitative and objective-based rather than quantitative and ritual-based development; through the promotion of client-oriented (namely students) rather than authority-oriented development; through the promotion of student-centered rather

than teacher-centered development for amelioration of the teaching-learning process; and above all through the promotion of learning-by-doing rather than learning-to-know-and-be-promoted development.
(Sanrattana, 1996)

Constraints of Teacher development: The real Thai Context

The above-mentioned strategies for development are believed to be sustainable means of developing teachers to be assuredly able to keep step with the rapidly changing society. However, there are some certain constraints in applying those strategies. They are as follow :

(1) Constraint of Social Culture. Since Thailand has originally been an agricultural society and governed by absolute monarchy, some Thai teachers' attitudes, social values as well as behavior are probably highly inconsistent with the strategies for development in a democratic way. For example, they tend to place trust in an individual, especially the one who is in authority or more mature rather than in principles and reasoning. As a result, they naturally lose self-righteousness and lack creativity, as well as prefer working by themselves to sharing by teamwork. Furthermore, preferring authoritarianism to liberalism, they will consequently by all means accept top-down authority. Besides, their lavishness imprudently impairs certain seriousness towards their work. (Sanrattana, 1996)

(2) Constraint of Organizational Culture. It is quite obvious that Thai bureaucracy itself produces sort of the constraints because of its nature of centralization. Unavoidably, the system of Thai education which is an instance of bureaucracy is also held back from such a constraint. For example, centralization results in work of ritual-oriented rather than objective-oriented nature, strictness of rules and regulations, work at the word of command with self-defensive nature, and perception of work principally as a personally economic advance. Educational staff therefore seem to have a tendency to make approaches to their superiors rather than to students or direct clients for their work progress and lose their virtual creativity automatically in the end. (Sanrattana, 1996)

(3) Constraint of teachers themselves. Owing to the values Thai society presently has about a teaching career, a large sum of teachers becomes sort of teacher spirit. The career is currently regarded as very lowly and the last priority for the ones who cannot find any other professions. Besides, the society turns more in favor of consumptionism and thus teachers as its members become its victims. Due to low income, teachers, like others who have the same basic needs, will unfortunately have to earn more to satisfy such living by running into debt or otherwise. Consequently, they pay dull attention to their real work and hardly ever improve their teaching. Another possible reason why the process of teaching and learning has been scarcely ever developed or at all neglected by teachers is that there is no real use of quality control by bureaucracy. As a matter of fact, hardly any government teachers get dismissed from employment because they are virtually inefficient workers. (Karoon, 1996; Kulathanan, 1996; and Sattayanurak, 1996)

(4) Constraint of teacher development institutes. There are two types of development institutes for inservice Thai teachers: one is administered by an individual teacher's office of the origin and the other belongs to a teacher college

within the jurisdiction of the Education Ministry. However, both of them are bureau under the same Thai bureaucracy and similarly affect teachers' patterns of behavior. In other words, the institutes produce exactly the same kind of above-mentioned organizational culture. A top-down approach is fixed on as a blueprint for building so-called forms of development for the country. Every one of the things in a superior's mind is handed over to teachers regardless of their consent--this is truly developer-centered development.   Such a portraying pattern has been handed down in the institutes as a model of development and grown its seeds in schools. (Choosakoonchat, 1996; and Tansiri, 1966

Conclusion: The Strategies are not congruous to the real context. What shall we do, then?

The above constraints may result from a couple of things: one is that Thailand is a dual society which has adopted both customary and novel cultures and the other is that bureaucracy is the main system of her government as well as the national education. Each of the things reinforces teachers' attitudes, values and behavior with the notions of traditional culture and authoritarianism. The former is too hard to improve as the further the society is inundated with new cultures, the faster it becomes burdened with conflicts and confusion. It, by all means, ought to take its time over transferring and developing more towards true democracy through the process of social culture. The latter can be resolved by making it less bureaucratic, for example, through decentralization,   promotion of participation,   application of quality control, and the like. Owing to the distinct incongruity of the strategies for development with the social and organizational cultures, this second circumstance needs to be rectified sooner or later so that the strategies will not fail. However, at the moment, the question is "How can Thai teachers in the era of global society be improving efficiently?" The answers may vary at least into 2 choices. One is by putting all emphasis on the strategies for development in a democratic way regardless of the dual characteristics of the society or organization. The other is by integrating both traditional and alternative strategies into "the happy medium" in accordance with the Buddha's teaching and perhaps later turning more completely democratic when things have changed. The final question is *"Which choice do you make or do you have any choice?"*

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