

Evaluation of Learning Reform Results Based on the National Education Act, B.E. 2542: Multi-Case Study

Suwimon Wongwanich
Nonglak Wiratchai

ABSTRACT

This research project, one of the 4 subprojects of the National Evaluation of Learning Reform Results, aimed to evaluate the reform, success conducive to students and schools, employing an indepth, multi case study. The data included learning reform results reports of 80 sampled schools written by 8 teams of local researchers, 10 focused group interviews, and evaluative site visits of 16 selected sampled schools. Data were analysed using content analysis, and quantitatively coded and analyzed using statistical analyses. The three major findings were: 1) learning reform indicated satisfactory results in all indicators except learners' academic achievement. 2) Factors causing significant changes in stakeholders' performance, were mainly quality and ability of the school administrators, schools participating in different school reform projects. 3) Out of 80% of the schools that organized learning reform process, it was found that the problems and barriers of learning reform were shortages of educational budgets and manpower.

Background Information

The significant intent of educational reform based on the National Education Act, B.E. 2542, was learning reform. As stated in Chapter 4 the National Education Guidelines, education should be based on the principle that educational provision process should enable learners to develop naturally to their fullest potentiality. It should lead to the development of their people to be perfect human being both in physical, psychological, mental, academic and moral aspects, with ethical and cultural way of life, and be capable of living with other happily.

After the promulgation of the National Education Act, B.E. 2542 on August 1999, there had been a big movement on learning reform in all educational institutions, under every administration organizations all over country. Since there were many factors related to learning reform, including internal and external factors, such as teachers, curriculum, learning process, learning sources, measurement and evaluation, educational resources, administration, environments, and educational institutional contexts; learning reforms in each of the educational service areas, therefore, were quite different.

The evaluation of learning reform in the early stage was a necessary activity to ensure the validity, the effectiveness and the appropriateness of the learning reform, and to set the policies supporting learning reform as stimulated in the National Education Act, B.E. 2542. The Office of the National Education Commission, as an institution responsible for policy setting and promoting learning reform at the educational institution level, therefore, supported several projects on evaluation of learning reform.

This research project, supported by the Office of National Education Commission, had been designed to maintain the strengths and to rectify the weakness of the previous evaluation projects on learning reform, in order to get more accurate and relevant findings. The project had been designed as a national evaluation project, employing the representative sample of the educational institutions which could be generalized to all institutions in the whole country. The evaluation design was the integration of the theory of change approach, the self evaluation approach, and the participatory evaluation approach (Chen, 1990; Lawrenz, Keizer and Lavoie, 2003; Minnet, 1999; Cousins, 1995; Scriven, 2000; Marsh, 2001). In the process of the evaluation, the local researchers for

each service areas were assigned to be responsible for the amicable supervision system helping and empowering all educational institutions. The data for the evaluation of learning reform included not only survey data and field data, but also the data from the performance test measuring the desired characteristics of the learners. This project focused on the summarized synthesis of the evaluation results of the process and the outcomes of learning reform, which would be used as the guidelines for making the policies to promote and support all educational institutions to modify their learning reform process leading to their maximum outcome in accord with intent of the National Education Act, B.E. 2542.

There were 4 subprojects in this national evaluation, namely: 1) Evaluation Report of Learning Reform Results Based on the National Education Act, B.E. 2542: Evaluation of Learner's Outcomes, 2) Evaluation Report of Learning Reform Results Based on the National Education Act, B.E. 2542: Multi-Case Study, 3) Evaluation of Learning Reform Results Based on the National Education Act, B.E. 2542: Evaluation of Stakeholders' changes, and 4) Evaluation of Learning Reform Results Based on the National Education Act, B.E. 2542: This research report was the second one emphasizing the evaluation of the reform success conducive to students and schools, employing qualitative research design covering data from the local researchers' reports, focus group interview, and evaluative site visit of the selected cases. The research findings covered the report of the nature of the reform process, reform success level, strategies used in schools, problems and obstacles found in the reform process, factors and conditions affecting the success of the learning reform

Theoretical Background

The conceptual framework for the evaluation of the learning reform in this project was displayed in Figure 1. The dependent variable, the success of learning reform, which indicated the results of learning reform, consisted of the learned lessons, learning process, utilization of learning results, and the existing changes. There were 2 factors affecting the success of learning reform: school input/context and learning reform process. The school input/context consisted of the type of schools' jurisdiction

units, school size, and province. The learning reform process consisted of school management model, the organization of learning process, measurement and evaluation, quality assurance, action research, creation of partnership with community. The learning reform results consisted of learning results earned by teachers, students and schools, including the impact and learned lessons.

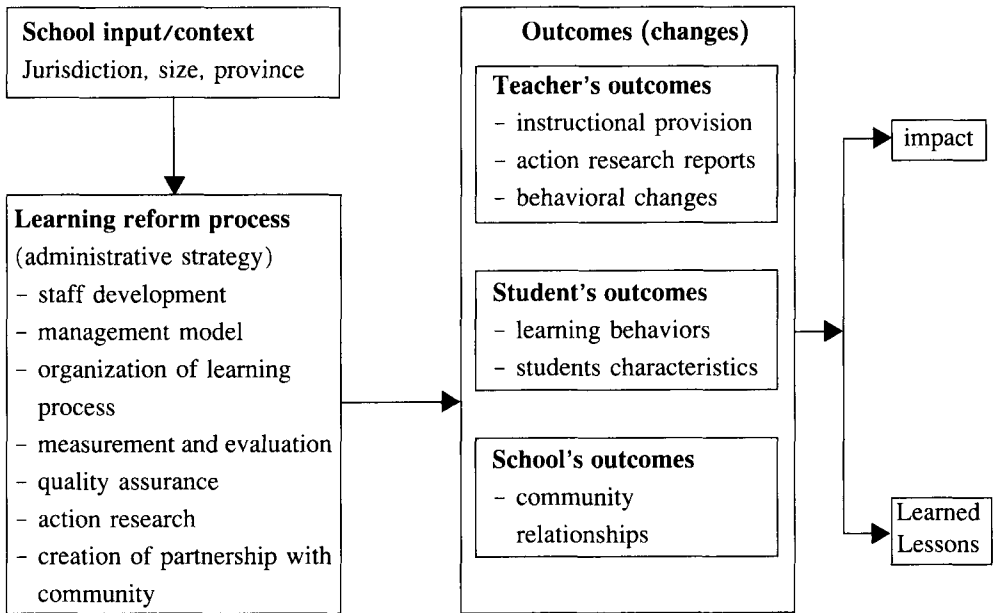


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Research Objectives

1. To evaluate the success of learning reform based on the National Education Act, B.E. 2542 on the following aspects:

1.1 The effect of learning reform on the learners.

1.2 The effect of learning reform on the schools.

1.3 The status of behavioral changes of learners, teachers, administrators and schools after the learning reform.

2. To obtain the policy recommendation and practical guidelines to carry out learning reform along the line in accord with the objectives of the National Education Act, B.E. 2542.

Research Methods

This research, a multi-case study, was an in-depth aiming to study 1) the school context and environment, 2) learning reform both in the classroom and the school levels, on the following aspects: curriculum, learning content, learning process, learning sources, measurement and evaluation, learning results and utilization of learned lessons, 3) factors and conditions affecting, supporting or obstructing, learning reform, such as staff development, parental and community participation, role and function of higher education institutions, school management system, etc., and impacts of learning reform.

The sample was 80 schools, 16 of which were selected from each of the 5 provinces. Data collection included learning reform results reports written by 8 teams of the local researcher, school-visits and 10 focus group interviews. Content analyses were employed to analyze data from the local researchers' reports, focus group interviews and the school visits using evaluative site visit as suggested by Lawrenz, Keiser, & Lavoie (2003). The qualitative data, then, were quantified coded and analyzed quantitatively by descriptive statistics, analysis of variance, chi-square test, to study the relationships between schools' characteristics, context and learning reform results.

Research Findings

Learning reform conducive to learners on the aspect of students' characteristics indicated satisfactory results. Learning reform enabled learners to be happy in their learning, to know how to work in a team, dared to express themselves and their opinions. However, on the aspect of learner' academic achievement, there was no clear evidence of satisfactory results.

Factors causing major changes in stakeholders' performances, were mainly the quality and ability of the administrators. Many schools reported the implementation of school-based management, but the in- depth study shown that there was hardly a clear model except the participation of the relevant staff members.

Based on the qualitative study, it was found that the problem and barriers of learning reform in schools were shortages of educational budgets and manpower. In

particular, the schools had problems pertaining to the early retirement of the staff members, the provision of budgets to acquire media, learning sources, educational materials and equipments, worksheets replacing textbooks which were not on sale to students anymore. Consequently, schools had to spend a lot of educational budgets. Many schools locating in rich communities, particularly the municipal schools at Phuket and Khon Khaen, received much financial and manpower supports from local administration organizations. Moreover schools had problems concerning knowledge and understanding about learning reform. The previous teacher training programs conducted by the Office of National Education Commission were not organized throughout the whole country. There were problems concerning the variety and differences of knowledge transferred by academic professionals, which caused confusion in the implementation process.

Most of the successful reforming schools were the schools that had participated in different pilot projects. They had been promoted and supported by scholars, mentors and local researchers, and they were capable of being a mentor-school, and creating learning reform school-network for other schools. There were different organizations playing important roles in supporting the performance of the schools. However, most of the schools in this study reported that they relied on themselves using school-based training, sending teachers to participate in the in-service training programs. The assistance the schools obtained from their jurisdiction at the district, the provincial, the regional, the ministerial levels, were not thoroughly delivered. Teachers had a tendency to learn, know, and to update the reform movement mostly from mass media rather than the official sources.

Due consideration of the National Education Act revealed that there were an increase in the distribution of educational opportunities. Parents had more trust in schools, and consequently sent their children to continue studying. For educational provision, there were a development of school curriculum, the results of which were not clear because teachers lacked understandings. There was an increase in the utilization of learning resources and local wisdom, but there was not much changes in learning media. The learning process of the students had been improved into practical performance, where there was unclear changes in measurement and evaluation. Attention should be

given to quality assurance, classroom action research which had not be performed as due routine of the teachers.

From the follow up of 80 schools in this study, it was found that more than 80% of the schools had organized learning reform process, the results of which were clearly seen in terms of non-academic characteristics such as cooperating with others, self-directed inquiry of knowledge, being brave to express themselves, eagerness to learn and learning about their communities. There were 83-91 percent of schools having successful learning reform. However, the comparison of the 3 desired learners' characteristics: being smart and good, learning and working, and happy learning, among schools having different background, regardless of jurisdiction and size, indicated that there were no differences, except that the student in medium-size schools had more happiness in their learning as compared to those in big schools.

Moreover, the research results indicated different trends between the reform performance levels and the reform success levels. Schools with different sizes, jurisdictions and located in different provinces had different reform performance levels. Schools in Phuket, Cholburi, Chiangrai had high reform performance levels, regardless of school sizes, whereas only the schools under the Office of National Primary Education Communion, Private Education Communion, and the Municipalities in Cholburi, and the municipal schools in Khon Khaen had high reform performance. Big and medium schools had high reform performance levels as compared to those of the small schools. Similarly, the analysis of the reform success levels yielded the same results that there were different level of reform success among schools under different jurisdictions within provinces.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Research Implementation

1. The implementation of learning reform concept was not quite successful. It should be accelerated using strategies that quickly produced results. There should be a promotion of knowledge and understanding about school-based management and collaboration which were the main factor enabling schools

- to provide whole-school learning reform.
2. Since teachers' performance, regardless of cooperation, team working and knowledge sharing, had changed but the quantity of change was not quite satisfactory, and the applications of new principles and ideas were not quite accurate. Hence, the follow-up of teachers' performance should be carried on at the school level to diagnose the misconception related to learning reform. The in-depth study to identify the misconception issues, and to acquire the guidelines for further rectification.
 3. Based on this study, the local educational personnel could be a good mentor helping teachers in schools. Therefore, there should be a promotion and supports of co-operating strategies to deliver assistances from universities and Rajabhat Universities to schools. However, these personnel should have similar principles in transmitting knowledge to avoid confusion of concepts, the problems of which was strongly clear in this study.
 4. The Government should promote staff development. Although this study indicated effective mentoring of university and Rajabhat universities, but there were limitations in the distribution of services and continuity of the mentoring process. Consequently, school-based training was a recommended promising approach that should be promote immediately.
 5. The Government should mobilize sufficient resources and budgets to schools to provide fully education for learners, especially in the schools, which could not rely on the community support.
 6. There should be an acceleration of staff development in the aspects of quality assurance, classroom action research, learning movement and evaluation, especially the evaluation based on learning reform focusing on learners' performance and learning process. This study found that the measurement and evaluation still emphasized the subject content and paper-pencil tests, in spite of the changes in instructional process.
 7. The administration system at the district service areas should be designed and implemented to enable school of providing learning-reform education. This

study found that only the administrators had a clear concept of decentralization of power, but the concept had not been imported to practitioners. There should be a practical guidelines for these practitioners and a practical transfer of concepts.

8. The Government should pay attention to the promotion and support on educational reform for the small schools, where performance were lower than these of the big and medium ones. The reason underlying low performance might be due to teacher shortage, and remote location, resulting in fewer chances to learn new concept of the educational reform. Thus, the Government should mobilize the resource to the small schools and distribute equal chance to teachers in remote areas.

Recommendations for Further Research

1. Although this study had use 80 schools selected distributively areas jurisdiction, size and community, in 5 provinces, the generalization of the research findings to the whole population of schools was limited in terms of the context, therefore, further research should be conducted with an extension of sample size.
2. In spite of great efforts of the development of learning giving highest importance to learners, they were still misconception among teachers. It became necessary to put more efforts for this development, especially the acceleration of research to diagnose the misconception and rectify, becomes there would be great impacts in the next 3-4 years.
3. There should be an acceleration of the promotion of instruction techniques enabling learners to acquire thinking skills and academic ability, the result of which was quite unclear in this study. Because, practically, schools could only enable learners only in creating happy learning, self directed inquiry of knowledge and team working.

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