

WHAT ENHANCE AND HINDER THE DEVELOPMENT OF VOCATIONAL COLLEGES IN THAILAND

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ABSTRACT

The study had aimed at system identification of the administrative problems of the North – east vocational colleges in Thailand. The study had done using both secondary and primary data. In depth interview data was collected from 20 directors, deputy directors of the North – east vocational colleges and 10 government employees from the Ministry of Education on the administrative problems. Some respondents have been interviewed more than once. The total of 69 time of depth interview was collected from both groups. The vocational education in Thailand originated in 1899 before the year of the transition into Thai democracy in 1932 which the national education plan was firstly decreed. Nowadays, there are 3 or 4 very well-known private vocational colleges also, but overall, the private vocational schools are still weak in term of number and fame. We can say that mostly, the vocational education in Thailand is implemented by government and influenced by the politicians. The physical features of vocational colleges in North-east Thailand were surprisingly modern. Most of the directors' and deputy directors' mentality seemed to be active. Still, the personnel politics seems to be prevalent at the Education Ministry (politicians) level and regional level also. The administration is top-downed and bureaucratic but still with some vitality. The main relevant ambiguities which relate to the administrative problems are (1) the declination of agricultural sector and fuzziness of the direction of economy itself which induces the ambiguities of direction of agricultural and technical vocational colleges and direction of curriculums themselves (2) bureaucratic process, corruption and politicians meddling (inducing vitality and also corruption at the same time) (3) the cultural prejudices against vocational colleges graduates which impede social opportunity and capability itself. Still, the vocational education seems to be possessing vitality with adaptability and flexibility to any transition partly because of top-down bureaucratic systems prevalence. The conclusion is that the vocational education has seemed to gain momentum by regional politicians than before and now on the transition period upon globalizing of Thai economy including service sector boom.

Keywords: Vocational education, administrative problems, Ministry of education, Office of vocational education commission, identification of administrative problems.

INTRODUCTION

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PUBLIC VOCATIONAL COLLEGES

Up to recently the graduates from vocational colleges (2 years or 4 years school system after graduating from junior high school (Grade 9)) have been the “doers” of almost every economic activities including service sectors. The main vocational education in Thailand is implemented by government. Thus, the question what enhance and hinder the development of public vocational colleges in Thailand is as significant as question into the strength and weakness of Thai economical activities themselves and also the question into the performance of public administration itself.

THE OBJECTIVE AND METHOD OF THE STUDY

The study had aimed at system identification of the administrative characteristics and problem of the North – east vocational colleges in Thailand. The study had done using both secondary and primary data. In depth interview data was collected from 20 directors, deputy directors of the North – east vocational colleges and 10 government employee from the Ministry of Education on the administrative problems. Some respondents have been interviewed more than once. The total of 69 time of depth interview was collected from both groups

THE BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION COMMISSION

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

In 1932 the year of transition into Thai democracy, the national compulsory education plan was firstly decreed. The educations were equipped with general and vocational ones which this pattern had prevailed until recently. In 1936, 1939, 1951 and 1959, that education plan had been revised repeatedly. In 1960, the 1st National Education Development Plan had been decreed in line of 1st National Social and Economical Plan from 1961 to 1966. The 2nd to 8th had been decreed extending from 1967 to 2001. During these periods, the agenda in currents were the Reform of Thai Education which have lasted even today. This has been done by National Education Committed which was establishing in 1992. Today. Notingly, in 2003, the Ministry of

Education's functions were strengthened into "4 Pillars", those were : Office of the Education Council, Office of the Higher Education Commission, Office of the Vocational Education Commission and Office of the Basic Education Commission of Thailand. The thing which should be noted here is recent happening of the agenda so called, "the Second Decade of Education Reform 2009 – 2018" which emphasizes the "whole life learning with quality" which depicts some what educational atmosphere nowadays.

OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION COMMISSION

The history of vocational education lasted from 1899, which vocational schools were established for training for teachers and nurses etc. In 1941, the Department of Vocational Education was firstly established within Ministry of Education. In 1960 with 1st National social and Economical Plan, the vocation education was set into secondary school and higher education (colleges) every region of Thailand. In 1977 vocational educations were set into general, technical and agricultural ones. In 1992, the National Education Committee had increased more than a hundred vocational colleges and even nearly same number in 1999. In the same year, the laws that have enhanced education by private sectors including private work place (factory etc.) establishing private vocational colleges or schooling was decreed. The significant of vocational education has been intensified in 2003 when Office of the Vocational Education Commission became one of the "4 Pillars" of Ministry of Education as mentioned before. It seems that the rise of the North – eastern politicians in those years had enhanced the rising role of vocational colleges into unity of existence of vocational colleges. Finally, the Laws that promote vocational colleges to include Bachelor Degree programs was decreed recently.

The real final note (from observation through conversations) in this section of "brief history" should be written here that in these 10 years like other public administration through out the country, the political rivalry from "power and money struggling" also prevailed in vocational colleges or Ministry of Education itself. This phenomena seems to obstruct the strength of education reform schema, but in contrary, the rise of politicians from region (especially North – east) has seemed to promote vocational colleges themselves either real budget or public atmosphere

THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF VOCATIONAL COLLEGES ADMINISTRATION

The main characteristics are:

- (1) The public vocational colleges which outnumber the private ones, are centralized into the Office of Vocational Education Commission within Ministry of Education (as mentioned before). The central administrators will send the philosophy, policy, regulation functions outlines, agenda, central schoolings contents, improvement of personnels and others etc. to the regional colleges and also receives the feed-back and forth (The benefits of this streamlining effects should be noted here)
- (2) Each vocational college administration is centralized to the hierarchical administration of directors and vice – directors.
- (3) The regional government seems to have very small impact to the administration of vocational colleges (from interviews) which seems to be not always negative phenomena. (assessed by researcher.)
- (4) From North – east vocational colleges surveying, the infra-structures of the colleges including computerization are modern and possess vitality. The streamlining to the central government's good effects are sensed.
- (5) The personnel administration including the approval of directors and vice directors is centralized to the Ministry of Education. (by examination and approval of committee)
- (6) Recently, by the central policy, the coordination between colleges and private companies or factories are promoted and seem to be in good progress. The symbiosis between public administration of vocational colleges and private sectors seems to be on rail. (from observation) The adaptability of people (administrators), themselves Thai people, can not be neglected as one of key factors in this area of study. (from observation)
- (7) Like other Thai public administration the "Muda" (the "waste" in Operation Management's term) had been sensed in the Minister of Education itself. (in some sense, more than regional vocational colleges administration.) This might be related to the "people rifts" in any Thai public work places been observed by the writer.
- (8) Even the infra - structures at the regional vocational colleges seem to be good, the difference between the endowment of the central educational public institutes (universities) and vocational colleges is briefly incomparable (for example the research fund for any one researcher in Bangkok well – known university is roughly 3 times the research fund for the whole one Vocational College) and unmentioned by any party even the regional politicians. Thankfully, this difference seems not to have any antagonism among people. Any way, for the time being, the symbiosis seems to go on.
- (9) Still, the vocational education seems to be possessing vitality with adaptability and flexibility to any transition partly because of top-down bureaucratic systems' prevalence. (assessed by researcher)

IDENTIFICATION OF THE MAIN ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS OF NORTH – EAST VOCATIONAL COLLEGES

From the depth interviews, the problems below have been identified and analyzed.

(1) The declination of agricultural sector and fuzziness of the direction of economy itself induces the ambiguities of direction of agricultural and technical vocational colleges and direction of curriculums themselves. This problem might decrease faith in career of teachers and personnel themselves. Moreover, some agriculture colleges (one type of vocational colleges) have decreasing number of enrolled students as well as some what prejudice from surrounding societies.

(2) Although the streamlining and centralizing of public administration of vocational colleges seems to be needed among too complexity of the organizations. Too much politicians involvement in the administration create instability of the policies practices and reshuffle of the personnel's both central ministry and regional colleges into cliques power structure and also induces corruption problem

(3) The cultural prejudices against vocational colleges graduates which impede social opportunity and capability itself. Partly, this comes from the rampants of the street fighting among vocation colleges mostly in Bangkok at urban congesting areas around these 10 years. The government from Mr. Thaksin's side, well equipped with marketing technology, tried to reimage vocational colleges with some degree of success. Example of such activities are the helpings extended to the people in technical matters by out of charge.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion is that the vocational education has seemed to gain momentum by regional politicians than before and now on the transition period upon globalizing of Thai economy including service sector boom.

One extra note is that, nowadays, prevalent practices of centralization and streamlining of vocational colleges administration seems to be some what more effective than decentralization of public administration of vocational colleges in region. This problem should be debated amid fuzziness of the industrial policy and even unsettled ideal picture of the society in this period of globalization itself.

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