

## **School Improvement and Roles of Local Community: The Case of Thailand**

**Waraiporn Sangnapaboworn**

**Head of International Education Section, Office of National Education Commission,  
Thailand**



Schools and community in Thailand have been close partners in the provision and development of education. School, temple and family are regarded as the three pillars of Thai society in which family foster children with love and care, school provides education to develop learners physically, mentally, intellectually and socially, while temple or other religious institutions cultivate moral values.

However, due to the centralization system of education administration and the rapidly changing society, the educational roles of family and temples decline and the two institutions were pushed apart from school.

The 1999 National Education Act, which was aimed at the reform of education, stipulated that educational provision shall be based on the continuous development of the quality of education, the provision of lifelong education for all Thai people, and all segments of society participate in the provision of education. Article 9 of the law also provides that the principles of education operation and management shall be a collaboration of family, community, community organization, local administrative organizations, private organization, professional organization, religious organization, entrepreneur, and others. Moreover, in order to give school more autonomy, the Ministry of Education shall decentralize the power in education administration to schools and there must a school council in every school to supervise and support the management of school. The school council shall be comprised of representatives from parents, teachers, local administrative organization, community, alumni of the school, Buddhist monks and those of other religious institutions and scholars.

In order to materialize the education reform policy, Office of the Education Council launched a Research and Development Project on “The Whole School Reform for the Development of Learners” with a sample group of 250 schools. Concerning the decentralization of power in educational administration to school and the empowerment of school-based management, at the beginning of the project it was found that school council did not understand their roles and duties and school merely expected school council to give donations and mobilize resources from community. Nevertheless, after working together under the guidance of the researchers, school council came to realize the significance of their roles and duties and were able to perform them better than before. School also found that the school council and community had more resources than money. Above all, they had ideas, creative thinking, knowledge, wisdom, expertise, networks, technology, equipment, labor, learning sources, all of which could be useful to school improvement.

In the first decade of education reform in Thailand (1999-2009), several changes could be seen in the development of school-community collaboration. For example, monk teachers are assigned to teach Buddhism and morality in school and get paid by Office of Buddhism. Students learn Thai arts, music, agriculture, handicrafts, Thai herbs and medicine, and other Thai knowledge from local wisdom experts. Students are encouraged to learn out of school by using learning sources available in community. Learning can take place in any learning sources – rice field, forest, temple, market, seaside, all kinds of museums. Students enjoy learning outside and get hand-on experience. In many cases, community people dedicate their labor to schools in construction work. Besides, stakeholders such as temples, alumni, parents, and community people provide scholarship and donate for school improvement. According to the survey conducted by Office of the Basic Education Commission In 2006, about one-third of budget used in school come from other sources

than government budget, which confirmed the significant role of community in extending financial support to school.

Although schools are under the jurisdiction of Ministry of Education while local administrative organizations are under the Ministry of Interior and an attempt to decentralize the power of education administration from the Ministry of Education to local administrative organizations is still far from reality, there is a tendency that the number of local administrative administrations which strongly support schools keeps increasing. I would like to refer to the case of Surplur Tambon Administrative Organization (TAO)<sup>1</sup>, which has been recognized as a best practice in operating school-community collaboration for educational development.

Surplur District is situated in Udonthani Province, the northeastern part of Thailand. There are five primary schools and one secondary school in the district. The case began with a discussion among local leaders from three agencies – Surplur District Administrative Administration, Educational Service Area, and schools. These leaders were concerned with the low achievement of education in the 6 schools of the district, the decreasing enrolment and popularity. Parents lost their confidence in schools and decided to send their children to study in city schools, leaving local schools downsized.

After several meetings with community people, the leaders of the three parties agreed to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to improve the quality in the six local schools. They called it the Surplur Model in which collaboration among the three hosts is closely connected. The model of school, family, and community partnerships locates the student at the center.

Five steps were introduced for the collaboration according to the MOU – thinking collaboration, planning collaboration, implementing collaboration, evaluating collaboration, and appreciating collaboration. Each party identified its mission and key performance indicators and agreed to carry out their duties accordingly to their fullest potential.

The key performance indicators set by Udonthani Educational Service Area are comprised of 7 items. First, schools provide education that meets the national standard and community needs. Second, teachers are qualified according to the professional standard. Third, school curriculum is appropriate with the context of community. Fourth, budget allocation and resource mobilization are adequate according to school needs. Fifth, teaching force is sufficiently provided. Sixth, the system of supervision, monitoring and evaluation is efficient enough to support the development of school education. Seventh, school teachers are given morale and motivation.

Regarding the Surplur District Administrative Organization, there are 16 indicators under the 4 categories. First, health and hygiene (lunch, milk, water, individual's hygiene, medical care). Second, sanitation (toilet, canteen, health clinic). Third, environment and utilities (landscaping and maintenance, electricity and maintenance, water supply and maintenance, building and equipment, playground and sport instrument). Fourth, the promotion of education, religion, and culture (scholarship, travelling expense or bicycles, manpower support, teaching aids and media, promotion of sports, religious and cultural activities).

As for schools, there are 16 indicators that they have to achieve which include school curriculum, teaching, desirable characteristics, co-curricular activities, quality assurance system, participative education administration, providing basic educational service for all students in the age group, student care and help, mobilizing resources for education, in-service training for teachers to meet the professional standard, school annual report, school safety system, guidance and counseling, community learning service, school assets maintenance, joint promotion of sports, religious and cultural activities with TAO and community.

Surplur Model is not different from others in terms of local community's contribution to school improvement. Temples and other stakeholders donate fund and scholarship. Monks come to teach Buddhism and morality in schools. Local wisdom experts demonstrate and transmit their Thai knowledge and wisdom to students. Perhaps, an initiative

---

<sup>1</sup> Tambon means "District" in Thai language

that made Surplur Model different from others is its education volunteers who actively participate in many activities to improve schools and students.

Education volunteers take part in identifying the desirable characteristics of school children in Surplur TAO and set them as the expected outcomes of education. That is Surplur students must love the nation, religion, and king, be honest, disciplined, concentrate on learning, self-sufficient in living, committed to work, love to be Thai, be public-minded, modesty and respectful, creative and expressive in a positive way, be able to solve conflicts by peaceful means, be obedient to parents and teachers, be healthy and cheerful, be able to reckon, read and write according to their age, be able in integrated learning, be able to use computer and have necessary ICT skills for searching knowledge and communication. These education volunteers also help teachers and parents look after students to assure that they will be properly nurtured to achieve the expected outcomes or desirable characteristics.

In addition, schools in the Surplur Model gained support from various public and private agencies concerning the supply of school lunch. Department of Fishery provides fish breeders and advice on how to increase fishery production from fishery and aquaculture. Department of Agriculture Promotion provides seedlings and technique on how to grow vegetables and fruits. Department of Cooperatives Promotion gives advice on the operation of School Bank and accounting. Private Companies provide chicken, ducks, pigs and feed, and gives advice on how to increase the productivity. All these activities not only supply enough food for students' lunch in rural areas but also cultivate in students the understanding of the philosophy of sufficiency economy which was introduced by His Majesty the King of Thailand.

After two years of the implementation of Surplur Model, better communications, interactions, and exchanges across these three important contexts yielded several fruitful results.

Several changes have occurred. Firstly, parents and community people are satisfied with students' better behavior, good manner and eagerness in learning. Their academic achievement is not yet significantly changed but expected to improve in the next national test. Secondly, teachers move from clerical work to classrooms and concentrate on teaching more than before. Thirdly, Surplur Tambon Administrative Organization changed its priority from construction to supporting education. They are quick to respond to schools' needs according to their roles and responsibilities for the benefit of teachers and students. Fourthly, Educational Service Area succeeded in mobilizing people from all segments of community to collaborate in providing quality education for all students in the target group. By the year 2015 it expects to be able to have all students of the age group to attend schools which means the achievement of Education for All Goal set by the UNESCO and international community. Lastly, community people are proud of their schools and have more confidence in their quality. Moreover, whenever schools or students are awarded for their high achievement in any academic competition, they regard it as the whole community's achievement and success that everyone involved must share.

This model demonstrated that local community can play a very significant role in school improvement. However, the main reason for their partnerships is to help all youngsters succeed in school and in later life. If school and community recognize their shared interests in and responsibilities for children, they will work together to create better programs and opportunities for students. A caring community will form around students, and this is a key factor for success in creating such partnerships.

At present Thailand is implementing the Second Decade of Education Reform policy (2009-2018), and school-community partnerships is one of the major measures in achieving the goal of providing quality education for all students who are placed as the heart of education reform.

## School Improvement and Roles of Local Community: The Case of Thailand

Waraiporn Sangnapaboworn, Ph.D.  
Office of the Education Council  
Ministry of Education, Thailand

## The Three Pillars of Thai Society

- Home (family) rearing children
- School providing education
- Temple (or other religious institutions such as church, mosque) cultivating religious values

## The 1999 National Education Act, the Law for Education Reform

Educational provision shall be based on the following principles

- Continuous Development of the Quality of Education
- Lifelong Education for All
- All segments of society participating in the provision of education (All for Education)

## Article 9 The Principles of Education Operation and Management shall be a collaboration of

- Family
- Community
- Community Organization
- Local Administrative Organization
- Private organization
- Professional organization
- Religious organization
- Entrepreneur
- Others

## School-Based Management (Juristic Schools)

- Decentralization of power in education administration from the Ministry to schools
- Establishment of school council in every school (9-15 persons) to supervise and support the management of school

## The School Council shall be comprised of representatives from



**Findings from R&D on "The Whole School Reform for the Development of Learners", conducted by OEC, 2001-2004**

**At the Beginning**

- School Council did not understand their roles and duties
- School only expected school council to mobilize resources from self and community



**Through the research project**

- School council realized the significance of their roles and duties and performed them better
- School found that school council and community organizations had more resources than money
  - Ideas, creativity
  - Knowledge
  - Wisdom
  - Expertise
  - Networks
  - Technology
  - Equipment
  - Labor
  - Learning Sources
  - Money

**Recent Development of School-Community Collaboration in Thailand**

- Monk teachers teach Buddhism and moral values in schools or temples



- Students Learn from Local Wisdom Experts



- Learning can take place in any learning sources available in community

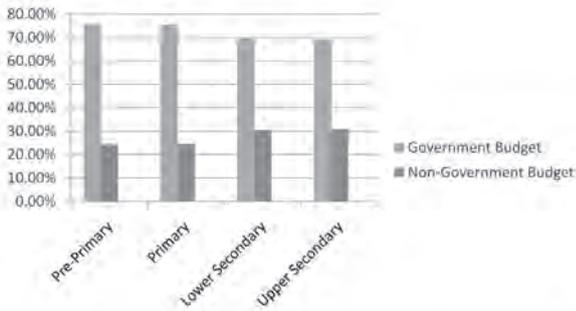


**Recent Development of School-Community Collaboration in Thailand**

- Community people help in construction
- Stakeholders such as temples, alumni, parents, and community people provide computers, scholarship and donation for school improvement



### Sources of Per-Head Expenditure



Source: Research on Per-Head Expenditure of Basic Education, MOE Thailand, 2006

### A Case of Surplur District, Udonthani



### Problems of Education in Surplur District

- Low achievement of education
- Declining enrolment and popularity
- Inefficiency of management of small Schools

### Tripartite in Collaboration

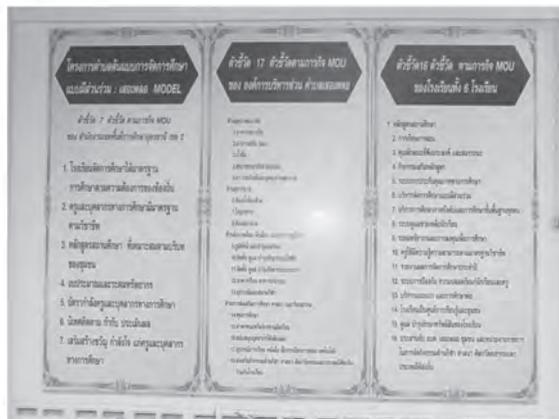
MOU – Each party does its best in performing roles concerning the provision of education

- Tambon (District) Administrative Organization (TAO)
- Educational Service Area
- 6 Schools in the TAO



### 5 Steps of Collaboration

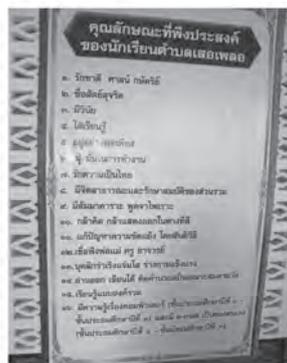
- Thinking Collaboration : identifying school problems
- Planning Collaboration : identifying each party's duties to support education, and their key performance indicators
- Implementing Collaboration : collaboration of teachers, parents, education volunteers according to their duties and roles
- Evaluating Collaboration : monitoring and evaluation
- Appreciating Collaboration : sharing success



key performance indicators set by the three parties

## Roles of Local Community

- Temple donates fund, scholarship and monks teach Buddhism
- Local wisdom experts teach and demonstrate knowledge and occupation concerning Thai local wisdom
- Education Volunteers set educational outcomes and help look after students' manner and behavior



Education Volunteers participate in identifying the desirable characteristics of school children

## Public-Private Partnership contribute to Self-Sufficiency School Lunch Program

- Public Organizations :
  - Department of Fishery gives fish and frog breeders and advice on fishery and aquaculture
  - Department of Agriculture Promotion provides seedlings and technique on how to grow vegetables and fruits,
  - Department of Cooperatives Promotion gives advice on the operation of School Bank and Accounting
- Private Companies provide chicken, ducks, pigs and feed, and gives advice on how to increase the productivity



Self-Sufficiency Farming of Vegetables and Fruits



Students learn how to raise chicken, fish, pigs, and ducks for school lunch program and sufficiency



## Results of the Collaboration

- **Students** : good-mannered, eager to learn (academic achievement is not yet significantly changed but expected to improve in the next national test)
- **Schools** : teachers concentrate on classroom teaching
- **Tambon Administrative Organization**: gives more priority on education and realizes its' role in supporting education e.g. health, utility, ICT, finance
- **Educational Service Area**: gaining participation from all segments in community in providing quality education for all
- **Community People**: proud of their schools and have more confidence in their quality



Thank you very much  
for your kind attention

