การใช้การศึกษานอกระบบและการศึกษาแบบเรียนรวมเพื่อลดช่องว่างทางการศึกษา

Using Non-Formal Education and Inclusive Education to Reduce the Gap in Educational Exclusion

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บทคัดย่อ

      บทความนี้ ได้วิเคราะห์และอภิปรายเปรียบเทียบถึงแนวคิดเชิงเหตุผลและบทบาทหน้าที่ของการจัดการศึกษานอกระบบและการจัดการศึกษาแบบเรียนรวม ที่ไม่จำกัดสถานภาพทางเศรษฐกิจ สังคม วัฒนธรรมและเชื้อชาติ บทความนี้ชี้ให้เห็นว่า การจัดการศึกษาทั้ง 2 รูปแบบมีความคล้ายคลึงกันในเชิงหลักการและอุดมการณ์ของการจัดการศึกษา การจัดการศึกษาทั้ง 2 รูปแบบต่างมีเป้าหมายร่วมกันในการสร้างความเท่าเทียมกันให้แก่สมาชิกทุกคนในสังคมและมองว่า การศึกษาเป็นสิทธิที่ทุกคนสามารถเข้าถึงได้ ทั้งการจัดการศึกษานอกระบบและการศึกษาแบบเรียนรวมต่างก็มีความยืดหยุ่นและสามารถนำมาปรับประยุกต์ในเรื่องวิธีการสอน ระยะเวลาการเรียน สถานที่เรียน หลักสูตรและเนื้อหาสาระ เพื่อให้สอดคล้องกับความต้องการของผู้เรียน อย่างไรก็ตาม การศึกษาแบบเรียนรวมให้ความสำคัญกับเรื่องสิทธิของการได้รับการศึกษาที่มีคุณภาพ ไม่เพียงแต่ความเท่าเทียมกันเท่านั้น ในบทความนี้ได้ให้ข้อคิดว่า การจัดการศึกษาทั้ง 2 รูปแบบ สามารถนำมาใช้เป็นยุทธศาสตร์ที่ช่วยให้บรรลุเป้าหมายของแผนงานการศึกษาเพื่อปวงชนขององค์การ UNESCO นอกจากนั้นบทความนี้ยังได้ให้แนวทางในการนำการจัดการศึกษาแบบเรียนรวมมาใช้ในการพัฒนาทรัพยากรมนุษย์ของประเทศ

Abstract

      Relying on data from documents, this paper discusses the rationale of inclusive education vis-à-vis non-formal education and analyzes the functional benefits of the two education concepts. It demonstrates that both non-formal education and inclusive education share the same ideological root of making education available and accessible to all. Both are very similar in terms of adaptability and flexibility method of instruction, study duration, study location, content and curriculum that can be adjusted to suit the needs of individual learners. Inclusive education, however, is an educational approach that recognizes the equal rights of all learners to access quality education. It is argued that the two education systems can be used to help achieve the goals of Education for

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All program of UNESCO. This paper also provides guidelines to use inclusive education for human capital development.

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Keywords: Non-formal education, Inclusive education, Education for All

Introduction

Recently, there has been discussion about inequality in education, including the gap between the rich and the poor and social exclusion in education. The implementation of decentralization of governance by empowering local administration organizations and the schools to provide education and support services did not succeed in closing the gap of education exclusion. It has been said that education is a social good that we all have rights to enjoy. UNESCO (2012) sees that the principle of equal opportunity for education is a basic right of every citizen. It urges the governments of all member countries to provide universal primary education under the Education for All (EFA) movement, which is a global commitment to provide quality basic education for all children, youth and adults. As about 164 member countries have been working to achieve the goal of EFA by 2015, there is also a complementary argument that education should not only be available to all, but it has a crucial function in creating a progressive and equitable society.

Under the policy to achieve the EFA goal, UNESCO (2009) also defines inclusive education as a process intended to respond to student diversity by increasing their participation and reducing exclusivity within and from education. As a staunch supporter of EFA, Thailand legislated the 1992 National Education Act, which specifies the rights and duties in education for every citizen and that the country must provide free basic education for 12 years. The same National Education Act also legislated a special education plan, which provides opportunities for persons with special needs to attend regular schools. Chapter 2, section 10, paragraph 2 of the Act states that persons with physical, mental, intellectual, emotional, social, communication and learning deficiencies; those with physical disabilities; those unable to support themselves; or those destitute or disadvantaged; shall have the rights and opportunities to receive basic education specially provided (Office of the National Education Commission, 2002).

This Act led the Thai government to formulate policies and programs targeted to underprivileged groups. These policies and related programs have been implemented for more than two decades, but we are still short of the goal of EFA. The data from a survey conducted by the National Statistical Office under the auspices of UNICEF (2015) show that in 2012 only 75% of children of primary school entry age (age six) are enrolled in Grade 1. This means approximately half a million children, mainly from poorer, minority backgrounds, either enter late (at the age of seven) or some may not be able to attend formal school at all. The same survey also shows differences between regions and between municipal and non-municipal areas. For example, in Bangkok, 83.2% of children of primary school entry age enter Grade 1 of primary school, while in the Northeast only 69.5% do. In addition, a report from the Quality Learning Foundation (2014) reveals that only 10% of the physically impaired, 10% of those with learning disabilities, and 40% of the children of minorities have an opportunity to attend school. All these indicate clearly that not only has Thailand missed the goal of EFA, but they also reflect that exclusion from formal education is a problem.

For quite some time, non-formal education, which covers various structured learning situations and people of all ages, is viewed as a mechanism to enhance the education opportunity for those who miss the formal school. Because non-formal education is open to people of all ages and since Thailand is an aging society (Narot et.al., 2014; Atcharawan 2014; Jumsri 2014), non-formal education is not only viewed as a strategy to tackle the problem of lack of opportunity for formal education among certain segments of the population but it is also viewed as an alternative approach to give elderly Thais knowledge and skills in health and social wellbeing. The unintended but the desirable outcomes would be to enhance spiritual wellbeing and create a valuable human resource in the elderly. The non-formal education, if done properly and through mutual understanding among people of different generations, will not only promote the inclusion among the elderly but will also promote stronger intergenerational solidarity in Thai society, which is viewed as a strategy for coping with the problem of an aging population (see, Kamnuansilpa, Thang and Mehta, 2015; Harnchengchai & Kamnuansilpa, 2014)

While non-formal education is carried out in most parts of the world, including Thailand, it does not completely tackle the problem of exclusion of some segments of

the population, particularly the marginal groups. Therefore, there is increasing recognition of the need to promote inclusion in education, which is a step beyond non-formal education, to increase social equity, a necessary condition to make EFA a reality.

Objectives

This article discusses the rationale of inclusive education and non-formal education, analyzes the functional differences between these two approaches and formulates guidelines to reduce the problem of exclusion in the education system in order to promote human capital development in Thailand.

Rationale of Inclusive Education Vis-à-Vis Non-formal Education

To achieve the first objective, we will first look at the rationale of inclusive education vis-à-vis non-formal education. Based on UNESCO document (2009), the concept of inclusive education is based on three main tenets: ethics, human rights, and educational and social benefits. Consistent with the view of UNESCO, Ainscow (2008) pointed out that, in order to create a more just society, education systems need to be developed towards more equity. To achieve a more equitable education system, inclusive education is seen as a means and a process of strengthening and making education not only available but also accessible to all member of society.

> "At first, inclusion was used to promote the integration of those who, due to physical or psychological limitations, attended special schools, from where the demand for the inclusion of the excluded was intensified. Today, it is conceived as the way of the future to think of education according to a right-based perspective" (Opertti, & Belalcázar, 2008 as cited in UNESCO, 2009).

According to Salend (2011), inclusive education is a philosophy that brings diverse students, families, educators and community members together to create schools and other social institutions based on acceptance, belonging and unity. All learners' benefits come from a meaningful and appropriate curriculum delivered within the general education classroom, and from various instructional techniques. Inclusion programs also provide all students with access to challenging, engaging and flexible curricula that help them to be successful in society. In summary, the concept of inclusive

education supports underprivileged children by providing education services through special education or through an inclusive system in mainstream schools. However, the children within social groups such as cultural and linguistic minorities, poor and marginal groups are still excluded from schools.

Next, we next look at the rationale of non-formal education. Non-formal education is based on the philosophy of lifelong learning and equal opportunity for education. While Knowles et.al. (1984) focused on the benefits of leadership development and problem solution for the learners, Kendevatter (1979) viewed non-formal education as an approach to empower the learner. When the learners participate in non-formal education, they would have ample opportunities to learn and understand the complexity and intricacy of interwoven social, political and economic aspects in their own society. Consequently, they would be able to analyze, and create their own development path to prepare and cope with the dynamism of society and their environment.

Coombs & Ahmed (1974) and Le Bell (2000) summarized that non-formal education is an education alternative for disadvantaged groups. Nayar (1979) defined non-formal education as a carefully designed system of education for those out of the formal system with its cost structure, rigid timetable, examinations, and universally recognized degrees. Its careful design distinguishes it from accidental learning. The goal of the learners may differ from group to group, but non-formal education is designed to match the requirements of participants with different needs and backgrounds. Thus, non-formal education is prepared to serve the immediate needs of the learners. The program mainly deals with people who are engaged in life tasks; and the majority of them are out of school and/or disadvantaged groups. Coombs (1976) saw non-formal education as a convenient approach to cover a wide assortment of organized educational activities. It is distinct from formal education in its much greater flexibility, versatility and adaptability, thus meeting the diverse learning needs of virtually any kind of clientele and in any situation.

Functions of Non-Formal Education and Inclusive Education

The Education for All report by UNESCO (2015) indicates that the world is making progress in education compared to 1999. However, Thailand, like many countries, still has missed the six major goals of the program: 1) expanding and improving

comprehensive early childhood care and education; 2) ensuring that by 2015 all children have access to complete, free primary education of good quality; 3) ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met; 4) achieving a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015; 5) eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieving gender equality in education by 2015; and 6) improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence for all.

In this section, we review both the function of non-formal education and inclusive education. In Thailand — at least in the view of the Office of the Non-formal and Informal Education of the Ministry of Education — non-formal education is advocated as a powerful form of education that can reach out to a wide population and help them develop outside of the school system, creating a greater equality of opportunity for education. From the programmatic point of view, non-formal education is an integral part of lifelong learning concept. It is a loosely defined term covering various structured learning situations, such as swimming lessons for young children, community-based sports programs and conference style seminars, which do not have the level of curriculum, formal syllabus, accreditation or certification associated with formal education, and is open to people more widely than formal, institutional education. It therefore typically takes place more casually and can also be applied to general or basic education for the purpose of improving the levels of literacy, numeracy and an elementary understanding of physical and environmental sciences among the rural populations and disadvantaged or oppressed groups. In most instances, it is designed to impart knowledge, skills, and create a better understanding of various facets of life, community and national institutions. It can also include occupational education, designed to develop particular knowledge and skills associated with various economic activities and useful in earning a living (Coombs and Ahmed, 1974).

In a study, Narot et al. (2005) document that in Thailand non-formal education has functioned as a rural and community development strategy. The prime target groups are adults and other out-of-school populations. Another programmatic value of non-formal education is that, in various cases with a well-designed curriculum, non-formal education can benefit school-aged populations, as well. In the same study, Narot et al. (2005) found that there were as many as 70 learning centers in Thailand that could be classified under the label of non-formal education learning centers. These learning

resource centers could be classified into two main groups. First were learning resource centers that were not under government sponsorship but organized basic and vocational education. These centers were operated under article 18(3) of the 1999 National Education Act. The main target groups were children and youth. These centers usually based their practices on concepts such as Waldorf, Montessori, Neo-Humanist and Buddhism. Two centers organized inclusive classrooms, blending mainstream children with special needs children. One of them was a base for underprivileged and delinquent children. The school ran on the concept of Summer Hill School (A.S. Neill). Some of them were home schools. The Buddhism-based schools involved both children and parents in the training process. Some of the centers were run for conventional children but emphasized western concepts like Waldorf and Montessori. The children who graduate from these centers could receive a certificate equivalent to a public school's and recognized by the Ministry of Education. This non-formal educational setting showed success in opening up opportunities for the marginal, underprivileged and diverse-needs children for basic education. The other classification of learning resource center was the centers neither under government sponsorship nor providing a basic education In this group, there were two types: (1) the centers that aimed to help people develop their minds and bodies to reach full potential. These centers based their practice on Buddhist philosophy by providing a linkage between religion and daily life practices. Their targets were mainly youth but some centers would provide sessions for adults as well; and (2) the centers seeking to provide knowledge that included science and environmental education, cultivating and preserving art and culture, raising awareness about relationships between people and their environment. Some centers were very strong in art and culture preservation. Their targets were farmers, villagers, youth and parents.

Inclusive education, on the other hand, is a vehicle to ensure that every child receives quality and appropriate education *within* the school system. Like non-formal education, its purpose is to facilitate the realization of the program goals of EFA. UNESCO (2009) pointed out that EFA must take into account the needs of the poor, the disadvantaged, marginal groups, linguistic minorities, those in poor health and children with special needs. If these groups are still excluded, the goals of EFA will not be achieved. The genesis of both non-formal education and inclusive education emerged out of the problem of inequity in education opportunity. However, both have gone

beyond solving the problem of inequity. They address issues of quality and pedagogic methods, which have made both sound more like a discourse than the actual practice of teaching students to be able to think critically, understand the relationship between oneself and the environment or culture, and be able to direct themselves to further the knowledge necessary for their lives. Therefore, both forms of education occasionally have to modify or adjust the contents and methods of teaching to suit the interests and learning capability of the target groups (Nayar, 1979)

How inclusive education reduces inequity in education

Social inclusion is considered to be central to ending extreme poverty and fostering shared prosperity. It is a process of increasing the opportunity for people to take part in government development programs. The same conceptual argument and its promised benefits can be applied to the field of education development. At present, a number of scholars in the field of education, such as Ainscow, Both and Dyson (2006), have placed greater significance to the concept of inclusive education. They call for more research to provide needed answers to questions like when and how an improvement in our education system becomes inclusive and how inclusive school development can be best supported. Previous studies revealed that there is a need to strive for more common understandings about inclusion strategy in the field of education. To shed some light on the issue, Forlin (2008) asserted that the success of inclusion in education in Hong Kong rests very much on the effectiveness of five strategies: a) early identification, b) early intervention, c) a whole school approach, d) home-school cooperation, and e) cross-sector collaboration. In order to achieve the goal of inclusive education, there are various factors involved. The two main factors are the competency of personnel - they must be knowledgeable about implementing and monitoring the progress of the work and managing inclusive classrooms, and the understanding and cooperation of the parents. Kudhom (2008) reported that the reasons why inclusive education has not achieved its intended goals were because: 1) there were no school personnel with a suitable educational background to work with students with special needs, 2) teachers had too much of a workload to deal with the extra attention required by students with special needs, and 3) parents had no knowledge about requirements of students with special needs.

Moreover, Narot (2011) investigated the situation of pre-service training programs for teachers in Thailand. It was reported that schoolteachers, or even university faculty, often had little or no knowledge about human rights, the marginal and underprivileged, and special education. Some kinds of short-course training or learning packages are recommended for the teachers of schools or faculty members of universities who are in charge of inclusive classrooms. Further, it is important that parents and other members of society have knowledge and understanding about the rights to education and the concept of lifelong learning services.

As implied earlier in this article, inclusive and non-formal education systems are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Both can be applied to provide education for marginal, delinquent, and disadvantaged groups. In fact, there are still a large number of people who do not have full understanding or have the correct concept of special needs groups. There has been a dearth of research on this issue regarding Thailand, but there was a case study in Spain where immigrants from other countries had been settled in Spanish towns. In the past, the immigrants were primarily working people. The natives were accustomed to having maids and other service people, but when the children of immigrants wanted an education, it was hard for the people to accept. In order to manage this new immigration situation, the local government developed a series of integration programs, which included intercultural mediation services. These activities were offered to all youths by several approaches (Rios-Rojas, 2011).

This kind of public education and updated information relating to changes in the environment and society can be disseminated effectively via non-formal education. Inclusive education, as well, can be adopted as a process of addressing and responding to diversity needs of learners through the process of social inclusion. The people who work in these two areas should have a common vision and work together in curriculum development to suit the needs of the target groups. With well-structured planning, non-formal education can be an appropriate tool to complement the development of inclusion in education and reducing the gap in exclusive education. All the approaches for inclusion should be implemented not only by the educational institutes but also by and at the local administration organizations. Examples of strategies are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Guidelines for Strategic Plans to Reduce the Inclusive Education Gap

Strategies	Objectives	Approaches
The distribution of knowledge and understanding to the public	1. Provide knowledge and understanding to the public about inclusion; 2. Promote awareness about inclusive education among administrators and teachers.	1. Using regularly scheduled informative T.V. programs. 2. Instructional materials such as a learning package: CD, DVD, and handbooks.
Campaign for improving attitudes and cultivating collaborations	1.Involvement – people can analyze their own problems; 2. Facilitate a dialogue among involved groups.	Popular theater[*] -group pedagogy -story telling; dramatization
Sustainable implementation	1. Develop knowledge and skill in working with inclusive classrooms. 2. Motivation and confidence building for teaching personnel.	Training courses -short course training -Online learning

[*]Popular theatre is one pedagogical approach that aims at active, interpretive study of one's own social, economic, cultural and political conditions. It employs symbolic imagery and action to represent life, and can include song, dance, drama, masquerades, mime, narrative presentations and puppetry (Bates, 1996).

Theatrical presentations have a history of serving as a medium of dissemination of information with the objective of encouraging learners to adopt certain attitudes or practices (Bates, 1996). In Thailand, a form of theatrical presentation that was organized in 1980 by a group of activists who called themselves "Villages Media Group." Drama was used as a medium to present information, knowledge and social issues, as well as entertainment, for people living in rural areas. In 2000, this group joined the community development scheme, where their work mainly involved youth. The themes of the

drama now include: cultural promotion, reflection on social problems and workshops in various forms of arts and crafts.

Popular theater and other schemes proposed above can be a powerful addition to strategic plans for promoting knowledge and understanding of the general public about inclusive education concepts, as well as raising awareness of equality and equity in education.

In order to promote inclusion successfully, participation from various groups is needed. The non-formal education model is based on successful participation, so the approaches employed should use strategies that promote inclusion. This can consist of information sharing through media, seminars and public meetings, such as:

(1) Teachers and administrators can organize educational meetings with parents or community members;

(2) Shared decision-making, which enables stakeholders to influence projects by letting them join the planning and determination of positions, priorities and roles. These activities are managed through meetings;

(3) Collaboration can be done in the form of joint committees or working groups; and

(4) Empowerment. This approach would enable stakeholders to develop and manage their own programs.

Policy guidelines for implementation of inclusive education

Based on the 11th National Social and Economic Plan (2512-2518), Thailand encountered changes from both in and outside the country and the changing direction seems to be more complicated than in the past. By the end of 2015, Thailand is to be fully integrated into the ASEAN community. It is imperative to develop and strengthen every aspect of society. Education is the sector that urgently needs to be strengthened, along with health, economic, and human capital development. Organizations that deal with local citizens need to pay close attention to citizen development regarding changing situations and the incidence of problems such as the increase in the numbers of the aged, refugees and marginal groups, the growing multi-cultural population, the increasing numbers of people with special needs and the development skills for labor in order to keep up with the dynamically changing society. In order to promote the strengths of

various aspects of society, the guidelines for program implementation using the inclusive and non-formal education approaches can be proposed in Table 2.

Table 2. Policies and Guidelines Programs to Promote Citizen Development

Policies	Guidelines Programs for implementation
Human and Society Development: Development of quality of life	- Strengthening the functions of learning centers, self-study center projects, career development projects
People in community development: youth, parents, labors, and the general community	- Establish loosely structured services centers which seek to find a natural leader who can distribute their community - development projects or on-the-job training plans. Promote participant-governed groups in which people are motivated to join in activities such as seminars, interest based courses, youth organizations, political clubs, co-operative organizations, language skill development or environment education.
Development of the elderly	Health literacy program, information technology skills development, training courses for people who are involved with the elderly, including relatives and community care personnel

Conclusion and Discussion

This article discusses the rationale of two types of educational approaches: non-formal and inclusive education. These two educational approaches seem to come from the same ideological root of creating an equitable society, as elucidated under the aegis

in the UNESCO Education for All framework. While non-formal education is more flexible and covers more diverse groups of learners, especially those in formal schools, both are functionally complementary to each other. At the same time, inclusive education serves people with special needs and diverse abilities. However, from the program point of view, to date there is little evidence, if any, to demonstrate that inclusive education has made it possible for the most vulnerable and the disadvantaged or marginal groups to enjoy the program goals of EFA.

Ideologically, both forms of education provide greater opportunity to access education and development. There are still much to be seen that with good management coordination between non-formal education and inclusive education program the gap of educational exclusion should be reduced. This paper suggests that the two education systems should be used in tandem as a tool to enhance citizen development and help us meet the goals of EFA.

Thailand is joining the ASEAN community and embracing technology, as well as becoming a multicultural society. One problem Thailand faces now is gaps in skills and education. It is evident that Thai society has problems with equality and with shortages of skilled workers in various fields. The situation seems to be exacerbated by the aging population. Therefore, development of human capital is an aspect upon which the government must act quickly. Non-formal and inclusive education systems seem to be appropriate approaches to deal with these problems. Skills that need to be developed are English language proficiency, IT and other technology, along with analytical and cognitive skills. As for the aging population, these skills can be included for the development of this group, as well. Other skills development should cover health and economic development skills. Historically, non-formal education is an educational approach that has a strong impact on development when it proceeds from the grassroots. But at present, when the society is in need of improving human capital for all sectors, the non-formal and inclusive education programs promise to be an effective way to deal with the situation. To address the imperative of skills development, Thailand should grant more autonomy in education management to the local administrations. This would allow more effective cooperation among themselves and with other public and private organizations. Having a greater degree of autonomy will make it more effective for the local governments to put the concept of inclusive education to work

and help the country achieve the program goals of EFA, thus making education truly for all.

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