

Collaborative Cooperation between the Juvenile Observation and Protection Center and the School in Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency*

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Abstract

This research had the objective to produce guidelines for collaborative cooperation between the juvenile observation and protection center (JOPC) and the school in prevention of juvenile delinquency. The authors studied the outcomes and problems/obstacles in implementation to develop the guidelines. Data were collected by personal interviews and focus group discussions with staff of the JOPC and schools in the participating provinces. One JOPC and one school from each of ten pilot provinces were included in the study. This study found that there are different stages of collaborative coordination. The first stage involves collaborative decision-making regarding planning. Next is participation in activity implementation, requiring collaboration between the staff of the JOPC and schools, with the

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network of parents/guardians of target population youth. There are inherent benefits for all concerned parties in the implementation, for example, by reducing juvenile delinquency in the schools and; thus, reducing the population of JOPC residents. The implementing partners share in accruing these benefits. A final stage is participation in evaluation of the activities. That information is used to improve the activities and refine the strategies. Some of the obstacles to implementation include negative attitudes of teachers toward students with risk behaviors, concern by schools that collaborating with JOPC will tarnish the school's reputation, and the anticipated increased workload of JOPC and school personnel due to project tasks. This pilot project found that there needs to be careful tailoring of the activities to the local situation. The project activities need to be implemented on a regular and continuous basis. There is a need for capacity building of relevant personnel. There needs to be a systematic design for the project evaluation, and there needs to be regular support from the relevant government agencies.

Key Words : juvenile delinquency, prevention of delinquency, Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection

Introduction

It is trite but true that its children/youth are a nation's future. That maxim points to the importance of ensuring quality development of the younger generation for enhanced development of the country itself. Thus, every sector must play a role in the care and nurturing of the

children/youth, and help them reach their full potential. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that Thailand is still evolving as a society, and many Thai children/youth face problems in the family and society at-large. There is increased marital dissolution in families with young children, there is a declining warmth and closeness as households transition from extended families to nuclear or broken families, there is a lack of training of parents/guardians in proper child care, poverty threatens a child's educational and occupational prospects, some communities have become degraded due to accelerating migration, and modern information technology is having a variety of impacts on today's children/youth in ways that are hard to predict. These factors combine to cause aggressive behavior in some youth. In some cases, this aggression leads to violent or criminal behavior which can result in juvenile detention (Patcharee Bunkham, 2016).

Accordingly, this pattern of increased aggression in youth can lead to a cycle of violence and crime which becomes an ingrained lifestyle for some. It is not just a matter of adolescent rebellion against cultural norms of civility; indeed, the behavior can worsen into crimes against the state. There are increased reports of rebellious behavior of Thai youth, such as petty theft, drug abuse, fighting among gangs or vocational school students, sexual rights violations, rape, or acts as bad as homicide (Suniya Kalyachit, 2013). Currently, Thai society prefers to deal with these problems by remanding problem youth to one of the provincial juvenile observation and protections centers (JOPC). This has the effect of stunting the educational opportunities for these youth and they tend to fall behind their peers after being released.

Juvenile delinquency should be a concern of all sectors and related organizations, and urgent action is necessary. The agency with the most direct responsibility in this area is the Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection which formulates policy and guides intervention programs for both prevention and problem resolution. One of the newer initiatives is the collaborative coordination between educational institutions, the JOPC and the parents/guardians of vulnerable youth. A pilot project of the Department is testing out networks of communities and schools to help in the identification of at-risk or problem youth so that remedial action can be taken before the youth descend into delinquent or criminal behavior (Wirayuth Sukcharoen, 2015).

The field experience suggests that prevention of delinquency is more efficient if there is collaborative coordination between the JOPC, the families with youth in their care, the schools and the local community. Through careful intervention at an early stage, guidelines can be applied to nip problems in the bud before they become a larger threat (Jutharat Uaamnoey, 2008). The program that is the focus of this study encourages schools to become actively engaged in the prevention strategy in ways that are tailored to the local culture and society. Primary and secondary schools are a good place to start since they are a gatekeeper for youth (Mohideen, et al, 2016). These schools help shape knowledge, thought, attitudes, and behavior of the younger generation so that they can make constructive and responsible decisions. The goal is for everyone to have the opportunity to achieve their full potential. At the same time, the schools need to have strong links with each other and the host communities they serve. Children must be made to feel that they are

protected and valued since that will give them the confidence to behave civilly and shun the delinquent behavior of others. If the key agencies, schools, and communities work together to implement the project guidelines, then prevention of juvenile delinquency could be achieved much more efficiently.

The department is promoting this strategy at the provincial level through collaboration of the JOPC and local institutions as a process of alternative justice for juvenile delinquency and as a preventive mechanism to avert delinquency in others. This study is an examination of guidelines for collaborative coordination between schools and the JOPC in prevention of juvenile delinquency, and an assessment of outcomes of implementation thus far. The findings should be useful to refine guidelines for collaborative coordination between the government and local institutions for implementation of prevention interventions in the school and home community setting. These guidelines can help inform policy development of the government in the process of collaboration among agencies working on issues related to juvenile delinquency.

Objectives

- 1) To study guidelines for collaborative coordination between schools and the JOPC in prevention of juvenile delinquency;
- 2) To study the results of collaborative coordination between schools and the JOPC in prevention of juvenile delinquency;
- 3) To study problems/obstacles in prevention of juvenile delinquency.

4) To produce a refined set of guidelines to further develop the participatory process for the JOPC and schools working to prevent juvenile delinquency.

Research Methodology

This was a qualitative research study which collected data by in-depth interview and focus group discussion. Data were collected from staff of the JOPC and schools participating in the project entitled: "Promotion and support to build capacity of schools and networks in the community in prevention of behavioral problems and juvenile delinquency" of the Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection. The project is being implemented in ten pilot provinces. A total of 56 persons were key informants who provided data to the research team. Data were processed using content analysis which identified themes concerning implementation and use of the guidelines.

Results and Discussion

Collaborative coordination of schools and the JOPC in prevention of juvenile delinquency

This study found that participating schools and JOPC collaborated in each step of the implementation process. This collaboration was characterized by 'full participation' as conceptualized by Cohen & Uphoff (1977). Table 1 outlines the project activities by the four types of participation.

Steps in the participation process	Guidelines for collaborative coordination
1. Participation in decision-making	<p>In this first step, the participating staff and stakeholders worked together to define guidelines and activities for prevention of juvenile delinquency, with an initial focus on schools. The school administrators, teachers and JOPC representatives shared ideas and jointly planned implementation, with an emphasis on tailoring activities to the local socio-cultural context. They also reviewed the current status of juvenile delinquency in the schools.</p>
2. Participation in collaborative implementation	<p>The second step included joint implementation of project activities. These activities differed from site to site. The local social network joined the implementation at this stage. This study found that the guidelines in prevention of juvenile delinquency can be classified into prevention and control, as follows:</p> <p><i>1) Educating students in schools</i></p> <p>Content includes relevant laws and the criminal justice system, understanding the different types of crimes and delinquent behavior, typical punishment for different types of criminal acts, etc. The objective is not only to educate the students on juvenile delinquency but also to encourage them to share this information with their peers.</p>

Steps in the participation process	Guidelines for collaborative coordination
	<p>2) <i>Promoting participation of parents/guardians and teachers in prevention of juvenile delinquency</i></p> <p>In addition to educating the youth, parents are also an important target population of the project since they can reinforce the prevention education and serve as role models for their child(ren). The adults are coached on parenting techniques, especially during adolescence which can be a time of turbulence as a youth matures. Parents are advised of different types of family activities that can improve inter-generational relationships in the household. A third target audience of the project are the teachers in participating schools since teacher attitudes toward youth can be very influential in how those youth choose to behave. All students need to feel valued, and teachers must avoid favoritism and must refrain from expressing negative disposition toward those youth who show tendencies toward juvenile delinquency.</p>

Steps in the participation process	Guidelines for collaborative coordination
	<p>3) <i>Building relationships among schools, the JOPC and relevant agencies in the locality</i> This component is important to align the various implementers in accordance with the implementation guidelines. These actors are a diverse group, with representatives from the schools, JOPC, the public, and local officials who come from different backgrounds. They need to share a common vision of the project objectives, activities and desired outcomes as a prerequisite to effective collaboration.</p> <p>4) <i>Learning from experience</i> This component involves former residents of the JOPC to give presentations about their experience to groups of students in participating schools. This activity can have real impact since it is no longer theory but actual testimonial about the causes and consequences of juvenile delinquency.</p>

Steps in the participation process	Guidelines for collaborative coordination
	<p>5) <i>Building networks of students</i> In order to sustain the project interventions, it is important to recruit, train and link volunteer-minded students to become peer leaders who can share knowledge and understanding about the prevention and response to juvenile delinquency with their fellow students. They can help youth understand what constitutes risk behavior and monitor students who may be prone to juvenile delinquency.</p> <p>6) <i>Study visits</i> Outside the classroom, it is important for children and youth to visit actual communities to understand the contextual environment which can lead to juvenile delinquency. These can take the form of study visits to homes, risk groups or other groups of students.</p>

Steps in the participation process	Guidelines for collaborative coordination
3. Participation in accruing benefit	<p>In this stage, implementers and stakeholders share in benefits from the project in terms of the reduction in juvenile delinquency, the emergence of mediation/counseling centers for troubled students, and social networks which become more active in the prevention and control of juvenile delinquency. Networks can be virtual or on-line to speed the sharing of information. The exchange networks can provide up-dates on the juvenile criminal justice system, conduct monitoring of risk situations and vulnerable youth, and share leads. These types of on-line networks have been studied by Eid and Ward (2009) who found that these networks enable multi-directional communication among peer groups and significantly increases frequency and scope of information sharing and peer-to-peer counseling and coaching. In addition, project implementation can help to generate a database with student profiles which teachers can access to better understand the history and context of each individual in their classroom on a timely basis. The database needs to be up-dated on a regular basis to ensure relevance of information. This information can be applied in the prevention and control of juvenile delinquency in the school setting.</p>

Steps in the participation process	Guidelines for collaborative coordination
4. Participation in the evaluation	<p>The final step in the collaboration is full participation in the evaluation of the inputs, process, outputs and outcomes of project implementation. The evaluation creates an opportunity to hear the thoughts and views of project implementers, participants and stakeholders. This information gathering can be in the form of small group sessions or key informant interviews. The evaluation should be a continuous process so that findings can be applied to on-going implementation to improve results.</p>

The results of this study show that the guidelines in prevention of and control of juvenile delinquency have been applied through a refined process of socialization. The schools are viewed as a “second home” of the youth in the classroom and are a captive audience for education, attitude shaping and skills building for prevention of juvenile delinquency. The project uses both direct and indirect socialization methods. Students learn about the laws and punishments related to juvenile delinquency, and they hear testimonials from older peers who have actually spent time in a JOPC for criminal offenses. This information is supplemented by various media which the students can review at their leisure. The project implementers understand that change won’t occur overnight, and that the socialization process is gradual. The youth absorb

the juvenile delinquency prevention messages from both the direct and indirect interventions, and their norms begin to shift toward a zero tolerance of juvenile delinquency. While the process takes time, it should be a more sustainable strategy for prevention.

This approach is consistent with the concepts of Mazerolle and Rombouts (2005) as referenced in Penchan Sherer et al (2011). That is, approaching prevention of juvenile delinquency through the schools should be an effective place to start, followed by reinforcing interventions outside the classroom to “inoculate” youth, suppress delinquency, and provide rehabilitation for offenders through collaborative coordination among relevant agencies. The effectiveness of coordination between correctional institutions such as the JOPC and schools is consistent with the work of Korakod Narkvichetr et al (2012) who found that prevention and response to juvenile delinquency should be a collaboration between the relevant government agencies and the public to keep a caring eye on children/youth who may be prone to juvenile delinquency. In addition, the study of Nataya Janreun (2013) also reinforces the strategy used in this project. That study found that creation of a social network and collaborative implementation between the JOPC, the family, the schools and the community is an effective approach to developing guidelines for rehabilitation of youth who have been convicted of juvenile offenses, so that they can re-integrate into society in constructive ways.

The guidelines used in this project are also consistent with the Social Bond Theory of Hirschi (1969). Enrollment in an educational institution is a key factor in shaping individual behavior as the student matures into adolescence and adulthood. By contrast, juvenile delinquency

is often associated with dropping out of school or not participating in school activities. Participation in organized activities of the school is a way to strengthen the relationship between the student and the school, and further reinforces the “inoculating” effect of formal schooling on prevention of juvenile delinquency.

Results of collaborative coordination between the school and the JOPC in prevention of juvenile delinquency

1) Reduction of juvenile delinquency in schools

Juvenile delinquency declined among the populations participating in the project. The number of student offenses recorded in participating schools declined, and some schools reported that none of their students were remanded to the JOPC. Disruptive student behavior also declined; and none of the students participating in project activities violated school regulations.

2) Formation of on-line social networks to aid in the observation of youth and delinquent behavior in schools

The on-line networks are the result of collaboration of students themselves in creating peer-based networks for surveillance and prevention of juvenile delinquency. The networks create an additional channel for multi-directional communication, and enable real-time reporting of offenses as they occur. In this way, counseling can be accessed immediately in the wake of a problem or disturbance.

3) Formation of local social networks for prevention of juvenile delinquency

The collaborative coordination between schools and JOPC contributed to the formation of social networks in surrounding communities. Some of these networks were integrated with local government agencies, for example, in conducting project activities or other collaborative endeavors to combat the problem of juvenile delinquency. These community-based networks are also a mechanism to keep an eye on vulnerable individuals and risk groups which are prone to delinquent or disruptive behavior. This networking reinforced the formal project interventions and helped spread the knowledge and attitudes to help in the prevention effort. The network also helped to educate the community on the role and function of the JOPC, the Department for Juvenile Observation and Protection, and the Ministry of Justice. These community-led networks are more likely to be sustained since they are driven from the grassroots level. This collaboration helped to provide good public relations about the project and increased the profile of the project among other government agencies and private groups.

4) Creation of a database on juvenile delinquency in schools

The project activities enabled the collection and storage of data on students in all participating schools. This database allows teachers to review the history and status of each student in real time because the information in the system is up-dated on a continuous basis. This can help teachers to identify students at risk of delinquency before it occurs. On-line screening check-lists can also help to assess behavior and emotional state of youth.

5) Increasing capacity of implementers

Just by participating in the project, the collaborative planning, implementation and evaluation helped to build capacity of the participating staff and other implementers. Staff acquired increased confidence to express their opinions and work constructively in teams. The improved capacity reflects well on the home agency and increased morale of the workforce. Participants acquired an increased recognition of the problem of juvenile delinquency and learned how to design measures and plans for effective implementation.

6) Increased knowledge and understanding of law and processes in the justice system

Students who participated in the project gained knowledge about behavioral guidelines and standards to keep them out of trouble with the law. They learned about the criminal prosecution process and the experience of being remanded to the JOPC. This knowledge can serve as a deterrent to juvenile delinquency, strengthen prevention skills, and serve as a basis for advising peers how to resolve problems or stay out of trouble.

7) Behavior change of children/youth in schools

Students who were identified by the project as having risk behavior were more carefully monitored and mentored than other students by the teachers, guidance counselors and staff of the JOPC. Thus, this probably helped to prevent juvenile delinquency before it occurred or became an ingrained behavior. As a result of the project-based interventions, students learned how to defuse conflict with their peers before fights break out. They learned how to speak and act civilly to each

other and practice self-control and emotional discipline to avoid aggressive or antagonistic behavior.

Based on the findings of this study, the collective impact of the collaborative coordination of the government, schools and host communities generated positive gains in prevention of juvenile delinquency. This is reflected in the reduced incidents of juvenile delinquency and reduced number of school youth remanded to the JOPC. This project can be considered to have had a significant social impact in participating provinces.

Problems/obstacles in project implementation

1) Some teachers in participating schools still have negative attitudes toward students who display inappropriate behavior. If the teachers expressed this disapproval in obvious ways, some students might lose self-esteem or rebel by joining the group of youth who have delinquent tendencies.

2) Some personnel of the target schools feared that joining the project might tarnish the image or reputation of the school. Thus, some of the staff attempted to hide the fact that they had problem students or refused to implement the project activities. In particular, these personnel opposed the idea of having former residents of the JOPC to come to the school to give a presentation to students. They argued that these presentations would take time away from regular class instruction.

3) Some persons felt that participating in the project created more workload for the implementing staff. For example, it was argued

that JOPC staff already have a heavy workload, and participation in the project would create an imbalance between those staff who work in the JOPC (controlling and observing youth residents) and those who work in the field (preventing delinquency). Thus, not all staff who could have joined the project did so, or some refused to go to participating schools to implement project activities as scheduled.

4) Some of the project activities overlapped with or duplicated routine activities of the JOPC, and this disrupted the collaboration process in some sites.

5) The duration of implementation of the project was too limited. It wasn't always possible to schedule activities in ways that would not conflict with regularly-schedule school events. Thus, there was a lack of continuity of project activities in some sites since activities had to be scheduled in ways that accommodated the students' and teachers' obligations. Achieving full coverage of the vulnerable students with a complete array of activities would require extending the duration of project implementation.

6) It was a challenge to find times to convene meetings of the implementers that was convenient for all of the participating personnel or parents/guardians. During some periods of time, the project implementation coincided with the annual harvest, and this prevented many of the parents who were farmers to participate in project activities. Thus, some activities had to be re-scheduled at a later date to accommodate these conflicts. In addition, many of the students did not live in the same household with their parents in cases where the parents had to go to another province for work. Thus, there may have been less

oversight and warmth in those households which could, in theory, contribute to delinquency or reduce the opportunity to prevent it. Thus, this made it more important to strengthen the students directly to help each other and boost the ability and concern of teachers to identify and attend to the more vulnerable students.

7) Almost by definition, those students who were prone to delinquency (i.e., displayed inappropriate or disruptive behavior) did not actively participate in project activities. Indeed, if they knew there was to be a project activity at the school on a certain day, they would skip school.

Guidelines for promoting participation of the JOPC and the school in prevention of juvenile delinquency

1) *Consistency of implementation with the nature and status of the problem in the target site*

Before launching a project in a given location, there should be a situation assessment of the scale and nature of the problem of juvenile delinquency in target schools so that the interventions can be tailored to the local context. The implementation team should also begin to build a database of students, starting with youth who are already showing signs of delinquency or are vulnerable to becoming delinquents. Next the generic guidelines in prevention and control of juvenile delinquency can be adapted as the basis for the implementation plan. There should be baseline measures compiled by the schools and JOPC in order to track the level of delinquency before, during and after project implementation.

2) *Collaboration between relevant agencies and networking in the locality*

In addition to the central collaboration between the schools and the JOPC, the project needs to create links with the network of public and private sector entities as well as the host community to help participate in prevention and monitoring of juvenile delinquency. The network might include the village headmen, staff of the local administrative organizations, the police, community leaders, etc., and their participation will help improve the efficiency of project activities, particularly outside the classroom. The participation of law enforcement is particularly important given their hands-on experience in dealing with criminal behavior and surveillance of risk areas in the school neighborhood. The more participants who are involved in supporting the project activities, the more likely it is that a social norm will develop and spread which discourages any form of juvenile delinquency, and help eradicate it altogether. These guidelines are consistent with the findings of Jutharat Uaamnoey in that participation in prevention of crime through collaboration with the community as equal stakeholders with the government is likely to be a more effective and sustainable approach to creating safe neighborhoods and quality of life.

3) *Support from the government*

One of the key government agencies involved in a project such as this is the Ministry of Education (MOE). The MOE should be involved in the planning and defining the direction of the project and specifying activities that should be integrated into the routine curriculum. For example, there should be a module on legal aspects and the process of the juvenile justice system. Staff from the appropriate agencies

would then deliver the content to the classroom. For their part, the school staff should periodically visit children and youth in the JOPC. There needs to be a policy for prevention of juvenile delinquency which is adopted by the school in a concrete way. This principle is consistent with the study of Yu Aoki (2010) who found that having such a school-specific policy on juvenile delinquency (separately for teachers, students and the school) is a crucial element in reduction of juvenile delinquency among school students.

4) Systematic monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of implementation

In order to ensure the project implementation meets the targets, the JOPC and schools should have guidelines for M&E of inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes of activities. The data should also be used to make modifications in implementation where there is under-performance. The M&E data should be able to be classified by the different groups of implementers and beneficiaries. There should be both internal and external evaluation.

5) Building life skills

School-age youth should acquire the essential life skills to help motivate them to set goals for themselves and feel optimistic about the future. These skills should be reinforced by family members and the community as part of their participation in the project activities. This guideline is consistent with the experience of the JOPC in Ayuttaya Province which promoted rights protections and community networking to mobilize local resources and wisdom to help rehabilitate juvenile offenders after their release from detention. This included counseling for the individual and the family, and general information for the public on how to support youth to lead constructive lives and create drug-free communities.

6) *Build capacity of people involved in prevention of juvenile delinquency*

The Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection needs to intensify its support of the JOPC personnel to apply the guidelines for conducting juvenile delinquency prevention activities. There should be associated programs of capacity building for teachers and other personnel whose job is to assist vulnerable children and youth. There should be youth behavior change training for teachers and parents/guardians with youth in their care. The JOPC should also play the role of mentor and advisor for the schools that are participating in projects such as the one described here, in order to sustain the motivation of the teachers and to help the teachers feel a sense of accomplishment.

Summary and Recommendations

This study of the collaborative coordination between JOPC schools in prevention of juvenile delinquency collected evaluation data through in-depth interviews with staff of the participating JOPC and schools in ten pilot provinces. This study found that the project guidelines are being applied throughout the four steps in the collaborative process: planning, implementation, accruing the benefits, and M&E. There was a reduction of juvenile delinquency in schools and there was a creation and expansion of cooperating networks for sustained prevention of juvenile delinquency. Despite these accomplishments, this study documents some of the problems/obstacles to projects of this kind. For example, some teachers still openly express disapproval of students at

risk of delinquency, others are concerned about tarnishing the reputation of the school if it collaborates with the local JOPC, while some personnel in both the JOPC and schools expressed concern about the potential for an increased workload by participating in the project. It is important for the guidelines to be tailored to the nature and scale of the problem of juvenile delinquency in a target area before proceeding with implementation. The following are more specific recommendations based on the findings of this study.

- 1) Before launching a project such as this, the Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection must conduct an orientation for participating schools so that administrators and teachers recognize the importance and potential benefit of the project and the need for close collaboration between the JOPC and the educational institutions.
- 2) There has to be systematic collaboration between implementers, including joint planning (short-term and long-term), developing the implementation schedule, and conducting the activities. The interventions should be scheduled to achieve maximum coverage of vulnerable youth, and minimal overlap/duplication with the routine work of the JOPC.
- 3) Implementers need to be mindful of the M&E indicators from the outset of implementation and throughout the project duration. Each activity must be consistent with a project objective. On-going monitoring of implementation should identify areas for improvement, and changes should be made during implementation if they will improve efficiency and effectiveness. There should be both internal and external assessments before, during and after project implementation.

- 4) The guidelines should be disseminated to every district in the province to expand the prevention of juvenile delinquency. There should also be creation and expansion of the network of student peer leaders, starting with peer educators in the pilot sites who then help to train their peers in other schools until every school is covered.
- 5) There should be concrete documentation of project implementation as a reference for replication by other schools who wish to apply the guidelines.
- 6) Schools should develop a learning module on prevention of juvenile delinquency for students that is integrated into the routine curriculum.
- 7) There should be strengthening of implementation through collaboration of the JOPC, the schools and related organizations in the community.

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