January - February 2020
ISSN: 0193 - 4120 Page No. 8081 - 8089

Policy Suggestions on Teacher Professional Development for Thailand: Assessment for Learning to Drive Education 4.0

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Article Info
Volume 82
Page Number: 8081 - 8089
Publication Issue:
January-February 2020

Article History
***Article Received**: 18 May 2019*
***Revised**: 14 July 2019*
***Accepted**: 22 December 2019*
***Publication**: 05 February 2020*

Abstract:
Thailand has been working through 2 decades of educational reform, but currently, the country still has many challenges to promote to reach the nation educational objectives. Professional development of teachers is one of the important issues had mentioned in the Thai education reform plan. In raising the educational standards and quality many countries over the world have mentioned the concept of assessment for learning (AFL) could increase the learning achievement of students and were success from promoting the AFL concept in educational system of the country. The purpose of this research was to make policy recommendations to the relevant authorities to create a strategic approach to support teachers' assessment for learning skill of Thailand. The results founded those policy suggestions to the relevant authorities for promoting teachers in terms of AFL in Thailand including some issues surrounded by professional learning on AFL.

Keywords:*Assessment for Learning; Professional Development; Educational Policy, Formative Assessment*

I. INTRODUCTION

The vision for educational reform in the second decade (2008-2018) was for the next ten years is “quality learning among Thais throughout their lives”. The aforementioned phenomenon will occur only when systematic educational and learning reform has taken place in terms of three main aspects and four new aspects, consisted of 1) principles for developing education quality, 2) standards and learning among Thais, 3) principles of educational and learning opportunities and principles in supporting participation by all sectors in society to manage and arrange education.

The “new four” educational reform structure comprises the following: 1) to develop quality of new age Thais; 2) to develop new age teachers, 3) educational facilities and learning source development in the new age, and 4) to develop new management with emphasis on power distribution for the most flexible and independent educational facility management together with the emphasis of good governance principles. There are some major problems and challenges still need to fix for Thai education are; the problems of the Thai education system are highly complex, low quality of education, problems of educational inequality, problems of the education system that hinder the country's competitiveness, problems of using inefficient educational resources, problems of lack of good governance, including the context of a rapidly changing world.[1]

In raising the educational quality, one of the highly important variables in achieving successful educational reform is teacher quality. Teachers have played in the important role of the educational system who must manage various need situations in classes, and help students learn and grow to become good students in the future. The aforementioned standards will be raised if

January - February 2020
ISSN: 0193 - 4120 Page No. 8081 - 8089

teachers can work effectively in classrooms. How could government or agencies to help teachers in these situations? So the answer of that question was “depends on teachers themselves” might not sound fair, because it was the enormous responsibility for all educational sectors, and the aforementioned, every sector should be involved to help because that mission should not be left for teachers or educational staff to take responsibility alone. [2]

From earlier studies, there is a correlation between professional development (PD) and students’ achievement improvement. [3] PD is also a more cost-effective way of improving student outcomes than reducing class size or increasing student learning time.[4] High-performing education systems tend to invest the most in teachers’ initial and ongoing learning and ensure that teachers’ professional development begins with induction [5][6] [7]. If PD was well designed, this type of PD can improve retention, effectiveness and job satisfaction among new teachers. [7] [8]

One of the studies about factors which affect the students’ learning achievements which well-known for academics over the world was conducted by Black and William in 1998, which found formative assessments to have an effect size of 0.40 – 0.70 on learning achievement while also finding formative assessment to have the greatest effect size among variables related to educational development which helped Great Britain raised its level in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) from the middle of forty-one countries to one of the top five. [9]

Furthermore, Stiggins has mentioned that if we want to improve students’ achievement we should emphasize the educational evaluation system, and balance the formative assessment and summative assessment,current education systems usually pay more attention to summative than formative assessment. Therefore, the concepts of learning assessment and also methods must be changed to solve the aforementioned problems and integrate into pedagogy through educational processes with teachers as a key factor as in many countries, realizes the significance and has turned to promote the assessment for learning concepts. [10] [11]

The objective of this research was to make policy recommendations to the relevant authorities to create a strategic approach to support teachers' assessment for learning skill of the country.This researchwill give policy direction on professional development in terms of assessment for learning in Thailand because there is a correlation between sustained teacher professional development (PD) and improvements in student achievement. [3]Professional development is also a more cost-effective way of improving student outcomes than reducing class size or increasing student learning time. [4]It will also help in developing the model of school effectiveness. It would be useful information to furtherestablish a foundation of PD program.

II. Scope of the Study

The aim of this research was to make policy recommendations to the relevant authorities to create a strategic approach to support teachers' assessment for the learning skill of the country, by studying the context of Thailand and New Zealand about the process of developing teachers. It was documentary researchand qualitative research. Researchers used comparative analysis followed Bereday’s method. [12]

This research was documentary researchand qualitative research, the research procedures weresetting common goals, setting specific objectives, collecting data, describing and interpreting phenomena, and classifying or analyzing for differences and similarities .

III. Literatures

A. Student assessment in Thailand

Feedback to students on how well they are mastering a defined set of skills and knowledge,

January - February 2020
ISSN: 0193 - 4120 Page No. 8081 - 8089

and points them to ways in which they can improve is the important point of students' assessment. A good assessment system can let teachers know how well they and their students are doing, and help identify ways to better deliver and tailor instruction. As aforementioned a good assessment system serves not only to measure but also to improve students' acquisition of skills and knowledge. (OECD. 2016) Good assessment must be diversified. An overall approach to student assessment needs to effectively combine summative assessment balance with formative assessment. [13] [14]

The assessment would be happened in every hour in classroom and within the school, but external large-scale assessment has an important role to play – helping schools compare themselves to others, and help administrators and policymakers about the overall state of schools, school districts, and school systems.

Thailand's extensive national standardized testing regime as well as assessments at classroom, school and local level. It identifies three policy issues about the assessment system, consisted of weak assessment capacity, the validity and comparability of Thailand's national assessments, and the narrow approach to assessment. Thailand should be considered on the national assessment infrastructure to add rigour to the development process and broaden its assessment mix and build capacity to support the effective design of assessment procedures at all levels. [13] [14]

The current assessment framework

The 2008 Basic Education Core Curriculum outlines the framework principles behind the current student assessment system in Thailand, building on the broad expectations for student assessment laid out in the 1999 National Education Act B.E. 2542 (NEA). It identifies the objectives for student assessment washelping learners to develop their capacity and measuring their achievements. It points to four main levels of student assessment: 1) classrooms, where teachers are to regularly and continuously measure and evaluate learners' performance, 2) schools, where annual or semester-based assessment seeks to determine whether the education programme has enabled learners to reach learning goals and to identify any gaps that need to be addressed, 3) the educational service area (ESA) or local level, which monitors student learning through instruments including standard examination papers and data obtained from schools, and 4) the national level, where assessment of students in Grades 3, 6, 9 and 12 (P3, P6, M3, and M6) provides data to compare educational quality "at different levels". The results of national tests should be used to inform policy to support education quality and making more broadly.

Assessment at the classroom, school, and local level

Schools should determine their own criteria for student learning assessment, teachers are responsible for identifying, designing and employing assessment techniques in their classrooms, and using these for both formative and summative purposes. They do so with assistance from their schools, their local ESA, the central commissions and other agencies such as the Institute for the Promotion of Teaching Science and Technology (IPST). Reforms stemming from the 1999 NEA have emphasized implementing assessments that gauge student progress and achievement in a variety of ways, such as promoting portfolio-based assessment, etc.However, the curriculum gives teachers only scant concrete guidance to achieve the curriculum's goals, and principals and teachers may not receive the training and support they need to use classroom assessment to better enable student learning. The results of school assessment are reported up to the ESA and central levels. From our interviews in Thailand, The OECD's review team understands that the data are not analyzed at regional or national levels, except on

January - February 2020
ISSN: 0193 - 4120 Page No. 8081 - 8089

an ad hoc basis – for instance, Thailand compared school data to national assessment data soon after the Ordinary National Educational Test (O-NET) was introduced, in attempt to see whether the O-NET was generating scores that made sense compared to existing data. [13] [14]

Assessment at the national level

Thailand operates a large-scale national level assessment system.Created in 2005, the National Institute of Educational Testing Service (NIETS) is responsible for managing testing systems and methods, developing tools to measure and assess educational standards, management, and national tests.NIETS assessments are administered to primary Grade 6 (P6) students, as well as to secondary school students in Grades 9 (M3) and 12 (M6). The whole student must be involved in the test. [13] [14]

B. Assessment for Learning

In its traditional form, formative assessment has been used to enhance student learning. One reason for the recent resurgence of interest in formative assessment has been educators' realization that once-a-year summative standardized testing doesn't happen frequently enough to affect specific day-to-day, week-to-week, or even month-to-month instructional decisions. Besides, it provides a sufficiently detailed picture of student learningto identify ways to help individual students. Thus formative assessment is very helpful in guiding learning at the classroom level. So annual standardized tests have not affected so much to instruction.[16] [17] The assumption, fundamentally unproven, is that such tests produce real improvements in student learning better than do other educational methods. [18]

Assessment is designed to improve learning

Effective assessment should be informed inquiry, decision making, adaptation, and transformation. It should be "a process of learning, for learning" Whether assessment improves learning depends to a large extent on the quality of interactions between teachers and students. Some countries such as New Zealand, on assessment policy, has focused on improving student learning by building students' assessment ability through active involvement in assessment. Both the NCEA examination system and assessment practices at the primary level are consistent with such a policy.[19]

The focus on rigorous monitoring of the impact of assessment on student learning has resulted in a series of optimizations where student assessment of learning is a part of teachers' professional learning, which in turn makes teachers' professional judgment increasingly suited to support students' learning. [20]. Teachers are the principal assessors of student learning. The assessor's competencies in interpreting data are central not only in making the right diagnosis but also in making the right decisions [21][22]. Teachers' professional development in assessment is a career-long learning experience that needs to be sustained. [23].

Part of teachers' professional development occurs continuously on-site through teachers' involvement in school activities where assessment plays an important role [24]. As students develop their own assessment capacity, they may become an important source of feedback for teachers [25].

Intended Purpose of Assessment for Learning are; 1) to increase students' learning 2) to adjust instruction 3) to diagnosis student needs 4) to improve the instructional program. [26]

Effective assessment for learning practices have the potential to greatly increase both student achievement and motivation, as the key classroom assessment features that result in these large achievement gains as 1) assessments that result in accurate information 2) descriptive rather than evaluative feedback to students and 3) student involvement in assessment. [27]

C. Related Research

Baranaa and Marchisiohave studied about ten good reasons to adopt an automated formative

January - February 2020
ISSN: 0193 - 4120 Page No. 8081 - 8089

assessment model for learning and teaching Mathematics and scientific disciplines. The result shows that the practice of automated formative assessment is very appreciated by students and teachers, as shown by the results of several surveys aimed at monitoring projects using this model.

Mukhtara and Ahmad have studied about AFL which practice in the secondary vocational schools, the result showed that the teachers practiced AFL effectively with the interpretation of a high mean during the implementation of CBA. Besides, the teachers and the administrators claimed that the Competency Assessment among the vocational teachers (Agriculture) had been effectively implemented, as required by the curriculum. Furthermore, they found that the assessments had been performed very well by the students and they were able to assess the level of students' competency, and the teachers' attitudes influenced the practice of AFL. [29]

Rian and others have examined variation in self-, peer, and teacher assessments in an EFL presentation skills course. Theresearch results contradicted expectations that students would score themselves and their classmates more leniently. Possible explanations for this are specifically worded scales in the rubrics and cultural tendencies toward modesty. Teachers considered that student scores were within an acceptable range for incorporation in final grades, and students positively evaluated the video assessment process. [30]

Cimer and Cakir have studied about Teachers' knowledge and practices of performance assessment, that study was conducted to reveal teachers' knowledge and practices related to the performance assessments that were introduced with recent curriculum reform in Turkey. They found that performance assessment was not effectively implemented in schools where this study was conducted, the teachers continue to use traditional tests in their assessments. Some teachers used portfolio and performance tasks, but they are not implemented effectively. However, the self-reflection process adds on the benefits of the portfolio process to learning and differentiates it from a process of simply collecting samples of students' work in a folder. The causing factor from the data is teachers' lack of knowledge of performance assessment methods. There is a need for collaboration between policymakers, INSET planners, academics and teachers. [31]

Andrew Pollardand others have studied about Trainee teachers' developing values and practice in relation to assessment to examine how the values and practice of secondary trainee teachers develop during the year. The result appears that trainees' values and practice in relation to assessment do develop during the year. They were increasing emphasis in providing guidance to support their students'learning. The impact of curriculum objectives on their values and practice also appears to become more significant during the year. [32]

Bahar Memarian and Susan McCahanIn have examined the types of feedback provided to students on engineering problem-solving tasks. Theysuggested that assessment tasks should further be learning rather than being only summative. The types offeedback on the papers are characterized using a hierarchical schema with checkmarks (basicvalidating feedback) being the least effective, and textual comments (elaborating feedback) beingthe most effective. The proposed classification is then used to code graded student test papers(naturalistic material) from three electrical engineering courses. The material includes 7problems from each course, leading to 21 engineering problems in total. The research resultsdemonstrate that poor quality student solutions receive less, and less valuable feedback than high-quality student work. Therefore, also has a high degree of variability between types offeedback. [33]

Herman and others have explored the influence of their environment on the decision-making of academics to participate in PL opportunities at

January - February 2020
ISSN: 0193 - 4120 Page No. 8081 - 8089

one research-intensive university. Findings indicate that university management should realize that a care-full environment, certainly at research-intensive institutions, is essential for PL, for individual academics and subsequently for students and society, to prosper. [34]

Eleanor and others have mentioned that the current study uses social judgment theory to inform the design of processes to be used in selecting teachers for training programs.Further research is required to validate the current findings however they lend support to the use of all six constructs in teacher selection, particularly cognitive ability. [35]

IV. Research Summary

In Thailand, the stages of initial teacher education and professional development are interconnected to create a continuum of teacher learning and development. Thailand introduced an induction programme for new teachers in 2013, school (principal, a senior teacher, a member of the school board) have to evaluate the assistant teachers every three months on the first two years.Evaluators receive a manual to support their work and that assistant teachers receive on-the-job training in the form of written material on how to perform their duties in the school. If assistant teachers do not pass the induction, they need to quit their job within five days. Thailand's induction programme was to lack is mentoring, a key component of most induction programmes, nor does it have any bearing on teacher certification. [3][13][14][36] [37]

Providers in Thailand, the National Institute for Development of Teachers, Faculty Staff and Educational Personnel (NIDTEP) oversees the professional development of teachers, but its capacity to co-ordinate and guarantee quality across the multiplicity of providers of PD appears limited. Given the high number of PD providers and programmes, it seems likely that, if an accreditation process exists, it may not be thorough. [3][37]

The MOE sets PD priorities and provides training, often using the "train the trainer" model, on national policies such as inclusive education. Thailand does not currently use student assessments such as PISA or national standardized tests to identify schools' or teachers' professional development needs as some countries do. [3] [37]

There is encouraging evidence that school leaders and teachers work together to plan for participation in PD. Teachers identify training they would like to take, sometimes using annual self-assessment reports (SARs) or individual development plans, and depending on the cost, they may have to ask their principal for permission to participate in it.[3][13][14][37]

In Thailand, the TCT requires teachers to participate in at least 20 hours of professional development per year in order to maintain their teaching license, a requirement that may also be necessary for promotion. (Requirements for annual PD participation range from a minimum of 8 hours per year in Luxembourg to 150 hours per year in Iceland. Regularly, teachers are entitled to leave their classrooms to participate in 50 hours of training per year. Actual rates of participation in professional development in Thailand appear to be high. [3][37]

The strength of the Thai education system is that it has developed TCT's standards of knowledge, performance, and conduct for teachers. The Standards describing what teachers should know and be able to do should be used to align all of the elements of the teaching profession relating to teachers' knowledge and skills. These should include pre-service education, continuing professional development, certification, performance appraisal, and career progression. [37]

Thailand should use its standards for the teaching profession, by aligning all relevant aspects ofthe teaching profession. They are a part of the processes to accredit pre-service programmes and license teachers, but teachers' performance is not actually evaluated against the standards as part of the licensing process. Other areas continuing professional development, performance appraisal and career progression fall under the mandates of different organizations with their own assessment criteria. The TCT issues initial teaching licenses to individuals who graduate from the country's pre-service programmes, relying on the programmes to address the standards of knowledge necessary for certification. [37]

V. Conclusion and Discussion

Researchers divided the recommendations into 3 dimensions such as the dimension of national agenda, professional development procedures, and factors related to professional development (PD) on Assessment for Learning;

1) Recommendations in terms of national agenda; Thailand should be taking attention seriously on assessment for learning, Thailand's policy could set funding priorities for the professional development, accreditation, and delivery of the training. Thailand should be amended the teaching professional standards, Thailand could be reduced inequities by supporting schools in their efforts to improve students' learning outcomes, OHEC should make reference outline of the standards which follow the TCT that teacher students are meant to acquire, university should be integrated role of cooperative with professional development for teachers, professional development funding should be depended on needed.

2) Recommendations in terms of professional development procedures; professional learning community (PLC) could be used in professional learning development system for Thailand context, timing of professional development on assessment for learning may take time for sustaining the teachers' competency such as 1-2 years, the educational organization may have to concentrate more on updating pedagogy than on providing assessment toolkit to teachers,the training strategy should focus not only on the content but methods, prioritizing school-based, job-embedded learning opportunities, mentoring is a key component to enhance teachers' competency, PD should be aligned with professional standards and made available to assistant teachers working on temporary contracts [38-42].

3) Recommendations in terms of factors related to PD on Assessment for Learning; major factor of productive professional development on assessment for learning is the relationship between providers and schools and teachers, theoretical and a practical of assessment for learning are necessary for both teachers and school leaders.

VI. Acknowledgements

Thisresearch was funded by Thaksin University cooperated with Massey University.

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