An Educational Management of Alternative Schools in Northeastern Thailand: Multi-cases Study
Ariratana Wallapha a, Narot Pennee b, Somjai Utis c

aFaculty of Education, Khon Kaen University, Khon Kaen and 40002, Thailand
bCollege of Local Administration, Khon Kaen University, Khon Kaen and 40002, Thailand
cDirector of Alternative Education Centre, Khon Kaen and 40000, Thailand

Abstract

The aim of this research is to study situations thus propose guidelines of educational management of alternative schools in Northeastern Thailand. Research samples included two alternative schools as a multi-cases study. Instruments comprised of a semi-structured interview questions, observation note and participatory and non-participatory observation record. Triangulation technique is used for reliability verification and validity of data before analyzing it by content analysis method. Finally, data is summarized by applying descriptive approach. The results revealed that the situations of educational management as such: (i) the policies and goals are determined to focus on the vision of moral, ethic, knowledge and life skills, right and freedom of education, being happy, forming a justice community, loving a local community. Instructional management emphasized on an integrated and flexible curriculum, student-centered instruction, helping students to solve their problems, participation of community and multi-disciplinary sectors and developing the potential of teachers and administrators using contemplative concept; (ii) policies and goals are driven by focusing on participatory networks of parents and multi-disciplinary sectors in order to provide lifelong education management and student development; (iii) learning management activity pattern are focusing on contemplative concept application, informal education, critical thinking activities with parent and community and psychological and life skills development program. In addition, the proposed guidelines are schools are encouraged to accept fully qualified students, alternative education should be managed concurrently with the regular system and all the related sectors should participate in management.

Keywords: Alternative education management, alternative education, guidelines, situation;

1. Introduction

Thai government has determined the direction of Alternative Education in order to serve the needs of those students who do not have an opportunity to study in general education system. The Office of Basic Education Commission, Ministry of Education (2011) has identified three types of educational management inclusive both
formal and non-formal education to fulfill the various learning needs since 2006. The first type is the Alternative Education in public system of the Office of Basic Education Commission, Ministry of Education is implemented parallel with general education system. Students who are poor, underprivileged, drop-out and at-risk would have an alternative to obtain educational services as well as educational opportunity. Currently, the instructional model and technique based on context and problem situation in each area applied to an approximately 100 schools by the Office of Educational Service Area and School. The second type is Alternative Education provided by family whereby parents provide education for their children at home which is known as home schooling. The Office of Basic Education Commission has supported this type of Alternative Education to 197 students from 101 families throughout Thailand. These home schools are also under close supervision by 40 Educational Service Areas. The third is Alternative Education organized by learning centers. Up to this date, this type of Alternative Education has been offering secondary education and vocational certificate to 4,378 students from 23 learning centers implemented in 15 Educational Service Areas (The Office of Basic Education Commission, 2011).

2. Problem statement

Survey findings in educational management deposited with the number of drop-out students from the Office of Educational Research and Development, the Office of Secretariat of Educational Council (2008) showed that there was 47.2 percent of drop-out students who did not continue their study in grade 12 and Vocational Certificate based on the student enrollment in grade 1 in 2007 school year. This further supported by the Office of Basic Educational Commission (2008) data which indicated that there was an increasing trend of drop-out students every year. The cause is the instructional management system in schools fail to serve different needs of students. This was supported by Wijan Panich's (2011) statement that most of learning in Thailand still emphasize on knowledge material. Hence it is lacking of necessary skills development of students for the 21st century such as thinking skill and creative problem solving skill and life skill.

Findings from the pilot study that was carried on 12 schools revealed some major issues that related to the implementation of Alternative Education as follows: (i) the usage of usefulness from alternative education management in solving the problems of at-risk students as well as drop-out students was not successful; (ii) there were problems of student groups including the undesirable behavior problem, health problem impacted from family, economic problems and family problems; (iii) usage of various and flexible models in alternative educational management to solve students' multi-dimensional problems, and (iv) staff still lacked of knowledge and comprehension in educational management (The Office of Basic Education Commission, 2008).

3. Research objectives

• To study the situation of alternative educational management in schools in the North Eastern of Thailand.
• To study the guidelines of alternative educational management in schools in the North Eastern Region of Thailand.

4. Methodology

This study employed a multi-cases study that involved two successful schools in providing Alternative Education and participated in policy of alternative educational management, under jurisdiction of the Local Administrative Organization, the Office of Secondary Educational Service Area 25. A total of 58 key informants namely director of the Office of Educational Service Area, school administrators, director of Educational Institute, the Khon Kaen Lord Mayor, academic chief, school boards comprised of 10 persons, 10 teachers, 10 parents and 16 students.

Multiple methods of data collection employed in order to gather sufficient data to achieve the study's objectives. Multiple methods encompassed in-depth interview, participative observation, classroom observation, focus group discussion, documentary analysis and field work study. Structured interview questions form, observation checklist
and photographs are the instruments utilized in this study. The research timeframe was about six months, from October 2010 until April 2011. The obtained data after treated with triangulation checking, researchers reviewed and analyzed the data. Content analysis is the method employed to analyze the qualitative data and presented in descriptive approach.

This study started by studying principles, theories and related literature to Alternative Education, learning model for Alternative Education, government policy and school management. This is followed by coordinating Provincial Education Service Areas and Local Administration in Khon Kaen province to conduct the research. Next several meetings with target schools were organized in order to clarify the research objectives as well as create awareness among informants. Finally, developed familiarity with context and staff from both schools before data collection.

5. Findings

The study findings are discussed based on these two aspects, namely situation of alternative educational management and guidelines for alternative educational management.

5.1. The situation of alternative educational management in schools

Findings from this session are presented based on conceptual framework.

5.1.1. Policy and objectives

Finding revealed that the implementation covered the following aspects:

- Vision focused on students' freedom in education, ethic and morality, knowledge and life skill and love and be proud in being Thais;
- Objectives in educational management focused on helping students with learning problems and encouraging students' need to come to school as well as happy learning;
- Educational administration and management focused on participation of school and community and continuous management based on student-centered;
- Academic management focused on heterogeneous class program as well as special program established from the students' needs through the implementation as project associated with educational management in general system as well as professional team in order to assist the problematic students, and
- Staff development focused on workshop and field trip in the work office of Alternative Education.

5.1.2. Movement of policy and objectives

Research findings found that:

- Administrator had to have their vision in academic management focusing on promoting new kind of learning;
- Creation of collaboration with institutions or outside work units or Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) as well as local wisdom for life-long education and all aspects of student development;
- Teacher development in body of knowledge and good attitude towards students as well as professions;
- Application of community learning source and community, in learning and teaching as well as administration and management, and
- Enhancement for collaboration and development of network between parent and community for educational management as well as collection of resources for educational management.

5.1.3 Model of learning management activity

Research findings revealed that:

- Learning management activity using various approaches including Waldorf, Montessori, multiple intelligence, non-formal education and informal education etc;
5.2. Guidelines for alternative educational management

Findings of the study propose the following guidelines:
- Promote schools to develop their student support system for individual of them thoroughly covered every area together with parents as well as community, and establish information technology;
- Enroll every student and group, problem was in Educational Criterion to be enrolled in school equally and thoroughly without double standard;
- Bring the model of a variety in alternative educational management into general classroom and implement in school through the technique of alternative educational management parallel with formal educational management;
- Organize the education focusing on participation by every division or sector;
- Develop program focusing on participation by school staff as well as community in order to have real practice learning relevant to lifestyle and school administrators continuously until they were skillful and develop their morale in order to achieve the work unit goal.

6. Discussion

Since the implementation of Alternative Education was implemented parallel with school system. Therefore it was necessary to focus on collaboration between the school staff and community especially the entrepreneur in professional development accordingly to one's interest. Consequently, programs should be flexible and congruent with students' needs in which they would be interested. It was supported by National Education Act 1999 and the Revised Issue (the Second Issue) 2002 enacted that educational management should be performed in order to develop Thai people to be perfect human beings in physical, mental, intellectual, knowledge as well as ethics and morality, and happy livelihood. It further supported by Rachanee Tongchai's (2010) statement that Alternative Education emphasized on solving students' problems in desirable characteristic focusing on variety as well as congruence with human nature with learning throughout the time. Consequently, students would be proud of their own success and have the dignity in being human with learning potential, self development and being happy.

Owing to the movement of school policy, administrators emphasized on the creation of good understanding with related persons and staff in the whole as well as facilitated factors in implementation. For instance, timetable adjustment, establishment of work management structure and staff training and development etc. It was supported by Fullan's (2006) statement that the academic work management was the key changes in learning and teaching. It was also supported by Sergiovanni's (2001) statement that school is a part of community since it situated in community which is a very influential environment on school. As a result, the community have to participate in determining direction of school development.

Because of implementation of learning management activity based on Alternative Education emphasized on the enhancement of students' differences, found that alternative educational management tried to provide activity enhancing the thinking process as well as problem solving skill for students, provide activity both from inside and outside classroom. Consequently, students should practice their work in group. It was supported by Pennee Narot et.al.'s (2003) statement that non-formal education and informal education caused by group working would lead to empowerment process as well as relationship in student groups which would enable to control social situation, for instance, problem solving and group working etc.
Alternative educational management is another alternative used to solve the problem for every group of people to have opportunity in education based on their potentiality as well as interest. Schools should emphasize on the process for efficient management especially design the program focusing on life skill development as well as knowledge as an instrument in searching for knowledge and occupation in aligned with instructional management in general program of the same schools.

Besides, research findings also indicated that administrator should emphasize on professional development so that teachers would have knowledge to keep pace with the changes and develop awareness in their work tasks so that teachers would have good attitude towards their students as well as profession. It was supported by the findings of Tissana Khammane (2005) and Wallapha Ariratana (2006). They found that in order to bring innovation or changes into school, it needed to be aligned with teaching professional development under the process of working training, internal supervision, and management in facilitating factors.

Finally, participation between school and community in educational management should be enhanced. For example, program development with community, usage of community learning source as well as classroom wisdom in creating learning community as well as student development simultaneously. It was supported by Barth's (1990) statement that the strength development of school is depended on the creation of learning community in both of inside and outside the school. Furthermore, administrators have to be community leaders.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, school should emphasize on the efficient administration and management especially the vision management focusing on the desirable characteristics as well as life skill, the establishment of local program or special activity to serve the various needs of students. The administrators should develop teachers’ morale by honoring them as well as enhancing their professional progress continuously. The Office of Educational Area should plan and establish policy for staff development focusing on providing knowledge in new instructional techniques as well as classroom research especially case study for individual student development. Ministry of Education should develop program producing teachers for Alternative Education and expand the model of educational management to be relevant to the community context as well as schools.

Acknowledgements

The project was made possible with funding from Research Creativity and Management Office, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia.

References

Barth, R.S. (1990). Improving Schools from Within: Teachers, parents, and principals can make the difference. San Francisco: Jossey – Bass.