

An Effect of the Co-Operative Network Model for Students' Quality in Thai Primary Schools

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Abstract

This research aimed: 1) to study the current and desirable states of the co-operative network in developing the learners' quality in Thai primary schools, 2) to develop a model of the co-operative network in developing the learners' quality, and 3) to examine the results of implementation of the co-operative network model in the primary school. Research and development was employed. The research procedure was divided into three stages. The first stage studied the current and desirable state of the co-operative network in development of the learners' quality in Thai primary schools. The samples in this stage were school administrators, academic teachers and chairpersons of the primary schools totaling 1,113. The second stage was concerned with the development model of the co-operative network in developing the learners' quality. The third stage studied the results of the implementation of the co-operative network model in developing the learners' quality. The research instruments were the questionnaire and semi-structured interview form. Statistics used were mean and standard deviation. The research results were: 1) the current states of the co-operative network in developing the learners' quality were at moderate level, and the desirable states were ranked at highest level; 2) the co-operative network model in developing the learners' quality was a relation structure of awareness, perception of problems, common analysis and planning, operation as planned, and determination of techniques and evaluation; 3) as per the use of the model, the students under study had increased learning achievement and had the desirable characteristics as stated in the core course of the basic education.

Keywords: co-operative network, students' quality, Thai primary school

1. Introduction

Education is a process which equips humans with knowledge and other skills for them to survive in the world. It is also useful to a family and society as a whole. Educational quality reflects the quality of humans. Unfortunately, in the present circumstances there are inequality and differences found in the majority of the schools in terms of budget, quality, personnel and learners. Other related factors include cooperation, support from a community or organization and assistance from other agencies. As a result, the learner quality and the administration quality are different (Educational Test Office, 2013).

Educational quality is the heart and soul of an education. In respect of the quality development and evaluation, standardized education is required. Thai education is set according to the ideology and principles as stated in the introduction of the national educational standard that it has to be a life-long learning and Thai society is to become a learning one. Education has to develop the life quality and integrated society which sees a balance between wisdom, virtues, and culture. Children have to be equipped with knowledge, responsibility and ability. Education is to be organized in such a way that the public demands or wants are met (Asawaphum, 2010).

For an educational organization to be according to ideology and principles, the basic education is set according to the standards of the learner quality, educational management, learning society, identity of the educational institute and promotion (Educational Test Office, 2013).

According to the National Education Act 1999 (Revised in 2002), the educational reform aims to organize education to make Thais perfect, good, capable and live happily in society. To carry out the educational reform successfully and efficiently, it is important to adhere to conditions and principles as stipulated by the Ministry of

Education which are: 1) decision making is a school-based process, the school is independent to make its own decision by prioritizing the learner; 2) collaboration: many parties and stakeholders have to be involved; 3) decentralization: this covers administration of budget, personnel and general administration; 4) accountability: responsibility and mission are assigned to individuals, the one who is assigned has to do his best to bring about the benefits or interests (Office of the Basic Education Commission, 2007).

Based on the education reform, the problems found can be detailed as follows. On the development of the quality of learners and schools: there are many schools that are not up to standard according to the criteria. It was also found that learners' learning achievement in the main subjects were lower than 50% and 20.3% of the schools were required to improve (Office of Educational Secretariat, 2009).

In the educational reform from 2009-2018, the vision is that Thais have to develop a life-long learning with efficiency. Focus is on 1) development of the quality and standard of education and learning; 2) opportunity for education and learning; 3) promotion of participation of all factions in society.

The outcomes are as follows: parents and community are aware of the importance of participation in educational organization. Hence, they are fully alert to take part in the activities related to education. However, students' parents still follow the traditional way of learning for their children. They had little chance to take part in academic affairs and to be the committee member. Furthermore, the majority of the schools rarely provide the opportunity to the students' parents to participate in developing the learners. Importantly, there is no guidance or counseling on how to rear children and/or there is no help from parents for their children's learning (Tesaputa, 2007).

To improve the standard of educational quality, participatory administration is essential to encourage relevant agencies, persons, organizations and others to take part in educational management. The Ministry of Education is not totally responsible for education. Many relevant parties including family, communities, religious institutes, mass media as well as political institutes have to work together or be cooperative in order to achieve the set goals. All these have to be involved in the tasks ranging from planning, working, to evaluating and using natural resources. The goals can be common or different. The operation has to be under a common responsibility and the benefits have to be commonly shared. If cooperation and coordination are systematic, resources are well utilized. Efficiency and relations are expected (Tesaputa, 1999).

Callal and Ashworth (2004) conducted a research on cooperation and co-working between the school and entrepreneurial agencies. The variables used in the study were background information, environment factors, training model, people issues, background characteristics, partner-ships between institutions and industry employers. The research in question found that the factors which favored an efficient cooperation were the following: 1) both sides were willing to cooperate; 2) they shared common objectives and goals as well as common vision; 3) they respected and trusted each other; 4) they had mutual communication; 5) both sides had leadership that could integrate strategies and methods of practice; 6) both sides accepted differences; 7) they were flexible and willing to act; 8) they possessed new knowledge, new skills and new thinking methods to change the structure and rules of an organization.

Coombs (1981) found that success of cooperation depended more on a co-operation between the organization close to the public than on the one in the higher level. The National Education Act 1999 clearly stipulated that it was essential to create a cooperative network with agencies and state and private sectors to increase efficiency and power to the educational institutes (Office of Education Reform, 2002). The concept on the co-operative network described above can be applied to develop learner quality in primary schools and increase learning efficiency on the part of the learners' themselves.

2. Objectives of Study

- 1) To study the existing situations and desirable situations of the co-operative network in the development of learner quality in Thai primary schools under the jurisdiction of the Office of the Primary Educational Service Area.
- 2) To develop the co-operative network model in the development of learner quality for Thai primary schools.
- 3) To study the results of implementation of the co-operative network model in the development of learner quality in Thai primary schools.

3. Method and Instruments

Research and development were employed. The samples in the research were school administrators, teachers and chairpersons of the primary school committee totaling 1,113. The research instruments were a semi-structured

interviews, questionnaire, records and form to evaluate satisfaction. Statistics used in data analysis were percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The research was divided into three stages.

Stage 1: studied the existing and desirable situations of the co-operative network in the development of learner quality in Thai primary schools under the jurisdiction of the Office of the Primary Educational Service Area. This stage included a study of relevant concepts and research results on the co-operative network, a construction of the questionnaire which was validated by experts and an examination of the current conditions of the network in the development of learner quality in the primary schools under the Office of the Primary Educational Service Areas in northeastern Thailand.

Stage 2: concerned the development of the co-operative network model. The following procedures were undertaken: two successful schools were studied as the model; the model was drafted and a handbook was made; the model was examined and its handbook was validated by experts.

Stage 3: dealt with the use of the model and its results. The model was experimentally used in one school. Activities were organized as described in the handbook. The results of the model used were studied by means of observation, informal questions, exchange and share of ideas, and meetings.

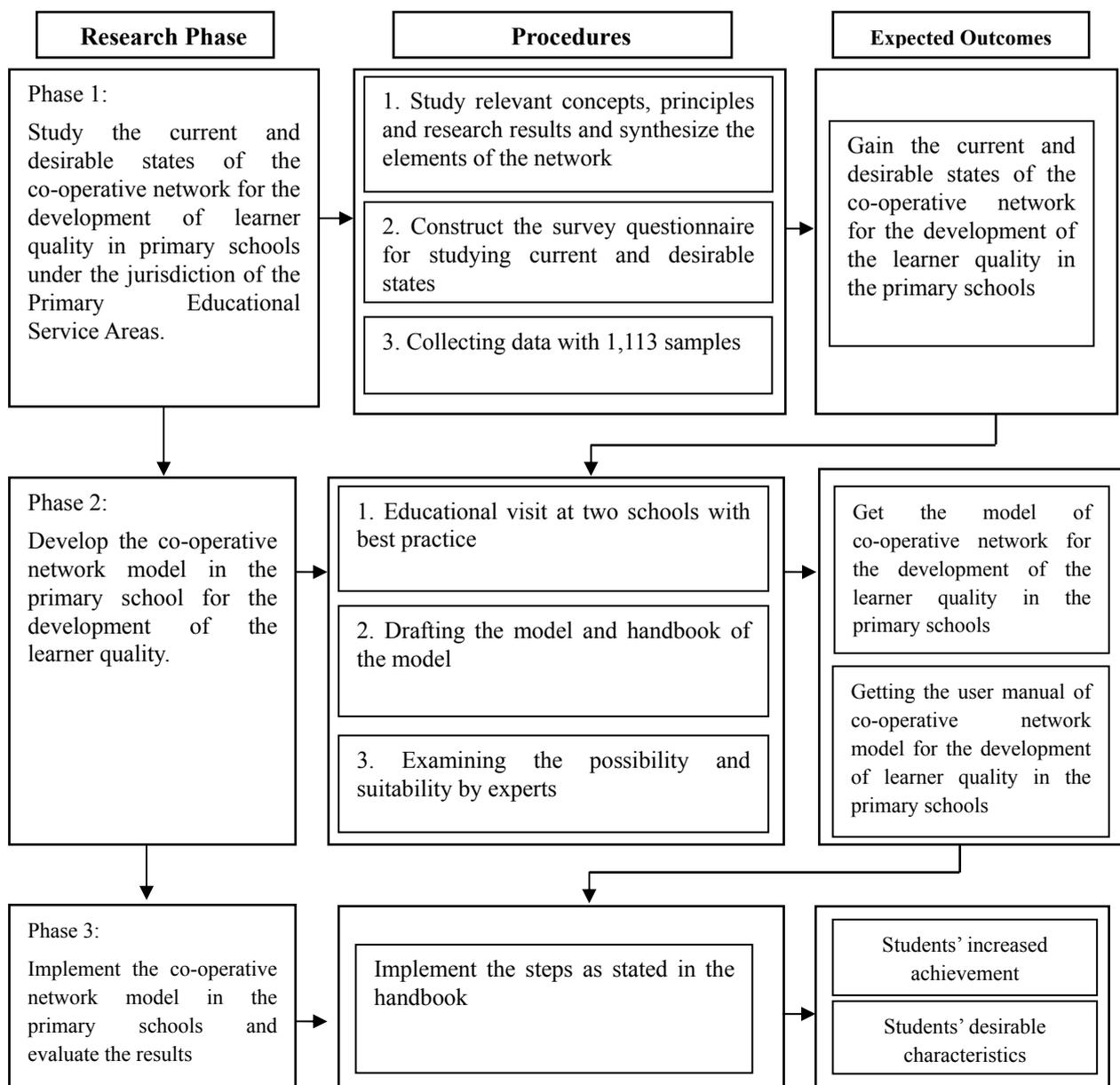


Figure 1. Research procedures

4. Results

4.1 The Current States of the Co-Operative Network in the Development of Learner Quality Were Found to Be at a Moderate Level

As regards individual aspects, it was found that awareness and perception of problems, joint planning, joint operation were at a moderate level. A joint evaluation was at a low level.

The desirable states of the co-operative network in the development of learner quality in primary schools were found to be at the highest level.

4.2 The Co-Operative Network Model in the Study Has Details as Given

Awareness and perception of problems: school personnel, committees and others concerned were informed of the model. The committee was formed, which consisted of the school administrators, personnel and experts. Objectives and operational plans were publicized. A forum was held to express opinions on the current and desirable states of the development of knowledge, skills and characteristics of learners.

4.2.1 Joint Planning

The administrative structure was made in response to the set objectives. The network members took part in making the strategic plans, regulations, and rules. There was an exchange of experience and knowledge among the members to promote learners to develop knowledge, ability and skills in learning. Assistance should come in the form of resources, funds, and other facilities.

Activities were held to encourage learners to develop desired characteristics, self-discipline and responsibility. Learning activities were to be various, efficient and systematic.

4.2.2 Joint Operation

The network members should be informed of details, plans and activities. They should be involved in supervision, monitoring and follow-up of the activities. The members could develop independent ideas, respect one another and accept others. They had to work as a team. All members should play a part in getting information on the progress made.

4.2.3 Joint Evaluation

The network members took part in determining the issues, constructing the instruments and being the committee in evaluation. They also had to participate in revising the plan and agreement to improve the learners' achievement.

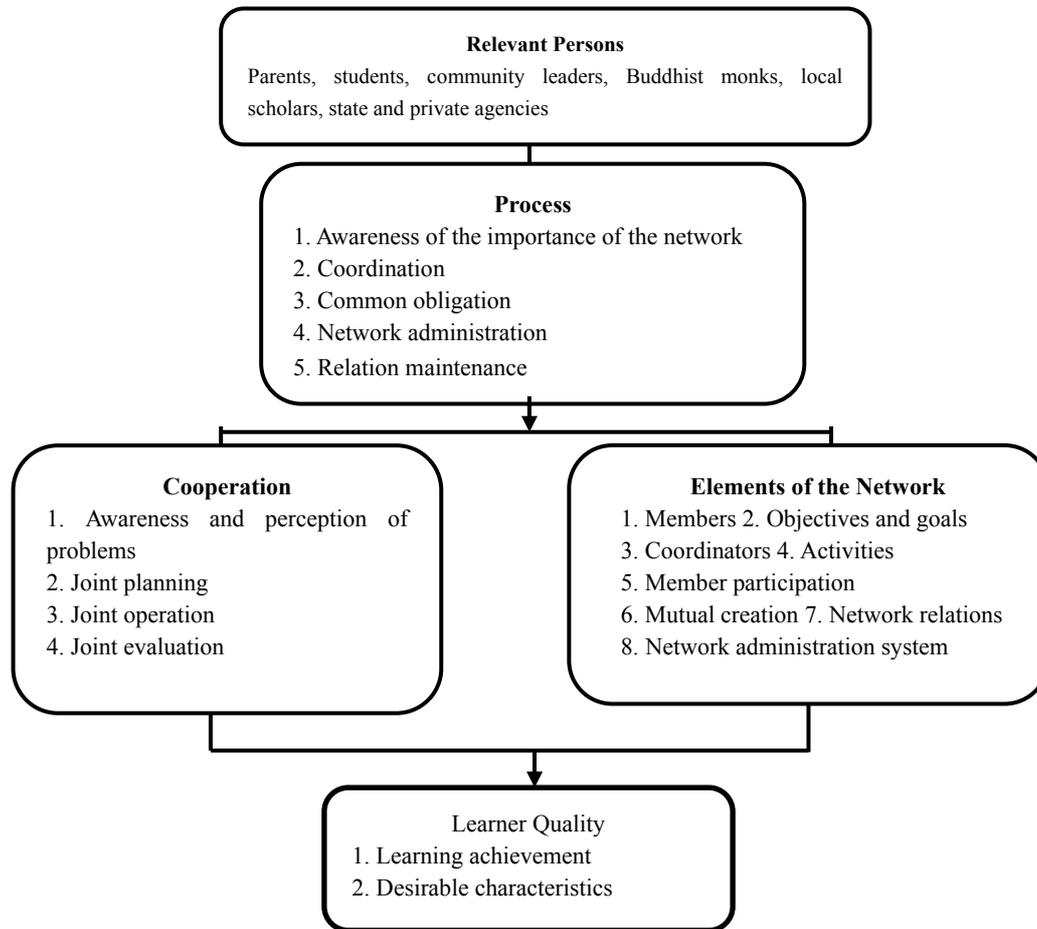


Figure 2. The co-operative network model in the development of learner quality in the primary school

4.3 Results of the Use of the Model

P: Planning

- 1) There was a meeting to create awareness in and recognition of teachers, personnel, primary school committee and experts. The research objectives were given by taking into account parents, students, communities, local scholars, private and state agencies. The following steps were followed: awareness and perception of problems, joint planning, operation according to the plan, and joint evaluation.
- 2) Awareness and recognition were created for those concerned. The teachers were made aware of the significance of the cooperative network. Then they were to brainstorm and analyze the current conditions and desirable states of the network. It was found that the operation of the cooperative network in the development of a learner quality in terms of output was moderate. Relevant cooperative networks should be sought after to help develop the schools. Parents, students, communities, local scholars, state and private agencies were essential to the development.
- 3) School administrators/coordinators should publicize the objectives of the network on the meeting day. Different agencies should be coordinated for them to be the network members.
- 4) There was a forum to share an opinion on the development of learner quality. All parties concerned were invited to attend the meeting to jointly analyze problems, current states by using the technique 'SWOT' in order to determine the guidelines to improve students' learning achievement.
- 5) MOU: representatives from all parties concerned were invited to sign a deal.
- 6) The network members determined the structure of the network administration.
- 7) The roles and duties of those concerned were determined and planned.
- 8) Members of the network participated in deciding to make strategic plans in order to raise learning

achievement and to determine rules and regulations in work.

- 9) The network systematized information, exchanged learning, developed new innovations, provided morale and built communication among members through a variety of methods. Activities for developing the learner quality were systematically evaluated.

A: Action

- 1) The network members were informed of details of the project under operation. Learning achievement of the students of the schools under study was raised.
- 2) Projects, for example the group relation activity, the saving activity were implemented according to the plan.

E: Evaluation

Current states and desirable states of the school with the best practice were studied to gain additional understanding and apply the results in practice. After one semester, the performance was evaluated. The results can be described as follows:

- 1) School administrators, teachers and primary school committee and others concerned were well aware of and realized the implementation of the co-operative network in developing learner quality in the primary schools. Findings were acquired from the interview before and after the use of the network model and were based on actual practice in the research field.
- 2) By comparing the learning achievement before and after implementing the co-operative network model, it was found that the students' learning achievement was higher in all learning units. The school administrators, teachers, primary school committee and others concerned were satisfied with the co-operative network model. The findings were based on the use of the model and practice in the research field.

5. Discussion

The research found that the operation of the co-operative network in learner quality development was overall moderate. As regards individual aspects, it was found that awareness of the problems was moderate. Joint-planning was moderate. Participation in evaluation was at the least degree. This may be due to the fact that teachers, school administrators and others concerned still do not have a clear idea on the implementation of the cooperative network. They view the network as a temporary one. There is no forum to share ideas on learner quality development. The information system is insufficient. Besides, the members of the network play no part in supervision and follow-up. Most Thai schools tend to complete responsibility by working individually. Lessons from the part show that the school network was loosely coordinated with others. The study findings are inconsistent with the work by Kosum (1999) who investigated the participation of a community and school in order to organize the primary education.

The study in question found that there were 8 key stages: 1) preliminary information prior to joining in the operation; 2) creation of relations with the community residents; 3) creation of activities; 4) bargaining for operation; 5) involvement in operation; 6) cooperative evaluation; 7) operation; 8) shared benefits derived from operation. Similar to the findings described above was the work by Callal and Ashworth (2004) who found that there were factors that were favorable to an efficient cooperation. The factors included 1) willingness of the two sides to cooperate; 2) common objectives and goals; 3) mutual respect and trust; 4) communication; 5) leadership on both sides which enable them to integrate strategies, tactics, relations and innovations; 6) acknowledgement of differences; 7) flexibility and willingness; 8) new knowledge, skills and thinking methods. Coombs (1981) conducted a study on a co-operation by pointing out the relations of the connected systems. He called co-operative form 'integration coordination'. He expounded that a good co-operation had to begin from a shared decision to determine a policy and planning. There should be an organization to analyze, select, plan and carry out development projects.

Considering the desirable conditions of the co-operative network in learner quality development, the desirable conditions were overall highest. As regards individual aspects, it was found that creation of awareness and recognition of problems, shared planning, plan implementation, and joint evaluation were at the highest level. The findings can be interpreted that teachers, school administrators and others concerned appreciated the co-operative network in developing learner quality. For the co-operative network to be successful, the following should be undertaken: the network's objectives and implementation should be publicized to motivate individuals, groups, organizations and agencies to participate in the network. The activities done by the network should be

followed up and evaluated in a systematic way. The government policy pointed out that all schools should try to promote educational quality. So, all schools that are not ready should find the way to work together in order to fulfill each other. A proposal was in accordance with Thongjuea (2007) who conducted research on the development of a co-operative model between higher education institute and the schools. In the research in question, four stages of co-operation were developed: awareness and learning, creation and development, common solution for problems, evaluation of success based on three levels.

The co-operative network for learner quality development was found to be suitable thanks to the following elements: 1) there were teachers, students' guardians, students, communities, Buddhist monks, officials from the community hospitals, local scholars, state agencies, and private agencies; 2) the network-creating process consisted of 5 elements: awareness of the significance of the network creation, common obligation, network administration, relation continuation; 3) the co-operative network comprised 4 main components: shared awareness and perception of problems, common planning, operation as planned, joint evaluation; 4) learners' quality had two elements: learning achievement, learners' desirable characteristics. This may be due to the complexity of problems and rapid changes in today's world, bringing about the cooperation of all parts of society to work together. All sectors have been impacted from changes. The model as described was in line with the work of Tepkraiwan (2001) who did research on the development of the cooperative model to deal with education at small primary schools. The model consisted of 6 stages: 1) awareness of necessity to build a network, 2) coordination of agencies/ organizations, 3) common obligation creation, 4) network administration, 5) relation development, 6) continuity of relations.

The elements of the cooperative network for quality education in small primary schools included: activities crucial to an efficiency of implementation, scope and mission, technique and methods of the network development, the network's empowerment, good attributes of the network leaders, and the network's operation and feedback.

Based on the results of the use of the cooperative network model to develop learners' quality, the model was found to be suitable. It played a part for students' increased learning achievement. The outcome was justified by the test results from the two semesters. The average scores of the students in the second semester were higher than the first semester. The students possessed the desirable characteristics as stipulated in the core course. Satisfaction of the school administrators, teachers and others concerned in the quality development model was overall high. Boonsong (2001) studied a suitable cooperative model for a school and a family in relation to an educational organization by a Thai family. The study gave attention to a decision to begin an operation so that education could bring about a maximum benefit to learners.

The school education and the education as organized by a family had their unique ways, with different strengths and weaknesses. If the advantages of each can be best utilized, then the desirable outcomes can be expected. However, for that to materialize, cooperation from all parties concerned is needed.

6. Recommendations

Recommendation for using the research results

1) School administrators

1.1) They are advised to thoroughly study the handbook as to the main and minor elements of the cooperative network.

1.2) They are to encourage teachers and others concerned and create an awareness for them to realize the significance of the network in the study.

1.3) They are advised to implement according to the steps as described in the handbook. Activities should be adapted according to the school setting.

1.4) The cooperative network model should be made use of for the whole year.

2) Teachers

2.1) They have to study the handbook to understand the main and minor elements of the network.

2.2) To use the cooperative network model, they have to be flexible and able to integrate it to learning activities.

2.3) They are required to be responsible and aware of their increased duties and acknowledge the significance of learners' achievement.

2.4) Others concerned

2.5) They should be made to realize the importance of participation in the learner quality development.

2.6) They are to be encouraged to participate in the activity to develop learner quality.

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