

Guidelines for the Development of Thai Reading and Writing under the COVID19 Situation of Grade 1 Students at Huai Ton Na Fai Educational Quality Development Center

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Abstract

This research aimed to 1) study current conditions and problems in the development of reading and writing Thai language under the situation of COVID-19 of Grade 1 students at Huai Ton Na Fai Educational Quality Development Center; and 2) study the guidelines for the development of Thai reading and writing under the situation of COVID-19 of Grade 1 students at Huai Ton Na Fai Educational Quality Development Center. This mixed method research was divided into 2 phases: Phase 1: studied current conditions and problems from the sample group consisted of 138 participants from 8 schools; and Phase 2 studied the guidelines for the development from 12 experts through a focus group discussion. Research tools used in the research were an interview form and a questionnaire with 0.977 of reliability. The data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and content analysis. The results on the study of the current conditions and problems on Thai reading and writing revealed that the policy in practicing reading and writing skills and the selection of the 5 “On”s (On Site, On Air, Online, On Demand, and On Hand) were operated the highest which was accounted for 100%. On the other hand, the lowest current operating conditions were the readiness of learning management of parents and the creation of a conducive atmosphere for students to concentrate on their studies which were accounted for 89.90%. In addition, the study also showed that, in general, the average mean score and standard deviation of the development problem are 3.07 and 1.21, respectively. For the development guidelines, the recommendations are as follows. 1) In term of the on-site learning’s concept, method, and process, it is suggested that the students should be divided into a small group to reduce a class size. Further, an MOU with parents should be made and equipment and safety management policies should be established using the agency's budget. 2) Owing to the on-hand learning development guidelines, the study suggests that teachers should explain clearly about the worksheets to parents, choose an appropriate learning style and minimize home visits for a safety reason, and study to find methods and approaches that are appropriate for the situation. In addition, parents should record videos of reading and writing and send to teachers. Finally, the professional development of teachers should be promoted. 3) In order to promote the Thai reading and writing competence and skills, a time should be allocated for students to meet with teachers and classmates to reduce stress, the learning media and technology should be provided, the authentic measurement and assessment should be applied with the necessary indicators, the reading habit should be built, and a reading and writing competition should be organized. 4) A reading habits project, a delivery project, and a learning innovation project should be organized to develop the Thai reading and writing skills.

Keywords: Thai reading and writing, the COVID-19 situation

1. Introduction

One of the accelerated goals determined by the Ministry of Education is that students at the end of Grade 1 must

be able to read and write because the Thai language is a learning tool. The Office of the Basic Education Commission, as the main unit in the management of basic education, has set important policies for improving the quality of education that focus on students' reading, writing, and communication skills as a base for the development of the other learning processes. According to the Office of the Basic Education Commission's policies, the emphasis is placed on organizing activities for teaching Thai language to enable students to read and write continuously and effectively. The policy entitled "Every New Normal Thai Children Can Read and Write" has introduced for student development. The indicators of this policy are literacy skills, reading and writing fluency, advance reading competency, and reading habits. This is aimed to develop the quality of learners to have the 21st century learning skills by requiring students to be able to read and write at the end of Grade 1 (Office of the Basic Education Commission, 2021). The Educational Service Area Office is responsible for formulating policies, preparing reading and writing plans for students of all levels, analyzing and summarizing data and solving individual student's problem, and adjusting and monitoring management system. Further, the Educational Service Area Office is also responsible for supervising and preparing plans/projects and activities to assist educational institutions in continually solving problems related to Thai reading and writing of students and progressing reports to the Office of the Basic Education Commission (Thai Language Institute, 2020).

According to the survey of students' illiteracy problem, it was found that the students need be addressed with targeted solutions that enable them to be literate, communicative, and able to learn happily and develop to their potential. Moreover, the study also showed that reading and writing skills are mutually reinforcing factors; in other words, the person who writes correctly is the person who has the ability to read. Additionally, the transfer of knowledge also requires writing skills as a tool for communicating meanings. Thai Language Institute has a role in promoting and developing teachers, teaching methods, and learning materials to raise the quality of learning and teaching Thai, and assessing the reading and writing of Grade 1 - 6 students. In the academic year 2020, it was found that, according to the assessment of reading and writing abilities, the students' reading and writing abilities are at a to be improved level (Bureau of Academic Affairs and Educational Standards, 2020). This is similar to the literacy assessment result of Grade 1 students of the Huai Ton Na Fai Educational Quality Development Center conducted in the academic year 2020 which found that the students' reading and writing problems are at a fair level (Huai Ton Na Fai Educational Quality Development Center, 2020). This is not in accordant with the policy of the Chaiyaphum Primary Educational Service Area Office 1 which has announced that all Grade 1 students must be able to read and write. Further, the COVID-19 situation affects the learning management of students with the literacy problem especially for Grade 1 students. As a result, every school has to urgently take action to solve the students' literacy problem.

Therefore, the researcher was interested in studying the current conditions, problems, and guidelines for the development of Thai reading and writing under the COVID-19 situation of Grade 1 students at Huai Ton Na Fai Educational Quality Development Center in order to develop the students' abilities to read and write. Moreover, it was also aimed to provide information for school administrators, teachers, students, parents, educational supervisors, and related parties who will use the information for further development of the students' literacy.

2. Method

This mixed methods research was divided into 2 phases:

Phase 1 was the study about the current conditions and problems of developing Thai reading and writing under the COVID-19 situation of Grade 1 students at Huai Ton Na Fai Educational Quality Development Center which was divided into 2 steps as follows. 1) A review of related documents, principles, concepts, theories, and research to define a research conceptual framework and determine a research process. 2) A study of current conditions and development problems. At this phase, the population of this study consisted of 11 school directors, 11 teachers, and 171 parents from 11 schools (193 people in total). However, the sample group of this study, received from a stratified random sampling, comprised of 8 school directors, 8 teachers, and 128 parents from 8 schools (138 participants in total). The study variables were the current conditions and the problems of developing Thai reading and writing under the COVID-19 situation.

Phase 2 was the study about the guidelines for the development of Thai reading and writing under the COVID-19 situation of Grade 1 students at Huai Ton Na Fai Educational Quality Development Center through a focus group discussion with 12 experts. The scope of this part of the study is explained as follows. 1) The key informants, received from a purposive sampling, were 12 experts including school administrators, educational supervisors, the president of School Directors Center, teachers, parents, and academics who have knowledge of reading and writing in the Thai language (12 participants in total). 2) The study variable of this phase was the guideline for the development of Thai reading and writing under the COVID-19 situation of Grade 1 students at

Huai Ton Na Fai Educational Quality Development Center.

3. Results

The results of data analysis are divided two parts according to the objectives as follows:

The results of the study on the current conditions and problems of developing Thai reading and writing under the COVID-19 situation of Grade 1 students at Huai Ton Na Fai Educational Quality Development Center show that the highest current operating conditions in the development of Thai reading and writing are the policy in practicing reading and writing skills and the selection of the 5 On (On-Site, On-Air, On-Line, On-Demand, On-Hand) instructional model which accounted for 100%. On the other hand, the lowest current operating conditions in the development of Thai reading and writing are the readiness of learning management of parents and the creation of a conducive atmosphere for students to concentrate on their studies which accounted for 89.90%. Further, the study also revealed that, in general, the average mean score and standard deviation of the development problems are 3.07 and 1.21, respectively, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of Problems of Developing Thai Reading and Writing under the COVID-19 Situation of Grade 1 students at Huai Ton Na Fai Educational Quality Development Center

No.	Facet	M	S.D.	Level
A1	Director	3.03	1.38	Moderate
A2	Teacher	3.16	1.45	Moderate
A3	Students	3.14	1.19	Moderate
A4	Parents	3.08	1.27	Moderate
A5	Environment and Media	2.94	1.23	Moderate
Total		3.07	1.21	Moderate

The results of the study on the guidelines for the development of Thai reading and writing under the COVID-19 situation of Grade 1 students at Huai Ton Na Fai Educational Quality Development Center are presented as follows. 1) In term of the on-site learning's concept, method, and process for developing Thai reading and writing under the COVID-19 situation, it is suggested that the students should be divided into a small group to reduce a class size. Further, an MOU with parents should be made and equipment and safety management policies should be established using the agency's budget. 2) Owing to the on-hand learning guidelines for developing Thai reading and writing under the COVID-19 situation, the study suggests that teachers should explain clearly about the worksheets to parents, choose an appropriate learning style and minimize home visits for a safety reason, and study to find methods and approaches that are appropriate for the situation. In addition, parents should record videos of reading and writing and send to teachers. Finally, the professional development of teachers should be promoted. 3) In order to promote the Thai reading and writing competence and skills under the COVID-19 situation, a time should be allocated for students to meet with teachers and classmates to reduce stress, the learning media and technology should be provided, the authentic measurement and assessment should be applied with the necessary indicators, the reading habit should be built, and a reading and writing competition should be organized. 4) A reading habits project, a delivery project, and a learning innovation project should be organized to develop the Thai reading and writing skills under the COVID-19 situation.

4. Discussion

Due to the study on current conditions and problems of developing Thai reading and writing under the COVID-19 situation of Grade 1 students at Huai Ton Na Fai Educational Quality Development Center, it can be seen that schools under the Huai Ton Na Fai Educational Quality Development Center have implemented a high percentage action to develop Thai reading and writing of Grade 1 students under the COVID-19 situation. This may be because the Chaiyaphum Primary Educational Service Area Office 1 had conducted the research on the participatory management model to develop reading and writing in Thai of Grade 1 students in schools under the Chaiyaphum Primary Educational Service Area Office 1. Further, the school administrators of the schools under the Huai Ton Na Fai Educational Quality Development Center are recognized the importance and benefits of such research; as a result, the model obtained from this research has been implemented to improve the reading and writing in Thai of students in networked schools. Therefore, the reading and writing in the Thai language of Grade 1 students has been developed to a certain extent. However, there is a lack of continuity in the development because of the Covid-19 epidemic. In addition, when considering the results of the assessment of each problem, it was found that most of the participants inform that problems related to the development of Thai reading and writing under the COVID-19 situation in all aspects are at a high level. Similary, Phra Palad

Sathaphon Pumpao (2021) summarizes the impact of COVID-19 on teaching the Thai language in 3 issues as follows: 1) In term of students, many students are not ready to study online because of a shortage of equipment. There is not enough equipment for every child in the family for online learning. Moreover, the unfavourable home environment or the economic situation also prevents families from being able to bear the additional costs of the Internet. As a result, many students cannot access to or lack of continuity in learning the Thai language. In addition, there is also a lack of practice in important skills including reading, writing, listening, watching, and speaking. Further, students are also rarely to learn more about the principles of using Thai language and Thai literature. Importantly, students also lack of interaction with teachers and peers. Therefore, when they do not understand the lesson, they cannot ask anyone. This makes learning ignorant and boredom and leads to a feeling of not wanting to learn, finally. 2) In term of teachers, some teachers still have limitations in technology. This is especially true for many senior teachers who are proficient in the subject matter but may not be proficient in using technology. As a result, the content cannot be fully taught as planned and the way students are assigned job or homework and tracked also have to change, too. Even after many years of teaching experience, teaching online can make some teachers feel less confident in teaching. Because teachers have to teach through the camera without seeing the reaction of the students instead of teaching in front of the classroom that enables teachers to interact or draw more attention from students. 3) In term of school administrators, many schools have limitations in setting up a system for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning outcomes. For large schools that are well-equipped on budget and equipment, located in the heart of the city, and the majority of students have access to technology may experience this problem less than smaller schools which are completely opposite. If the system for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning outcomes is ineffective, some students who are not good at certain subjects may not be closely supported by teachers or schools. Most teaching and learning activities are in an online format nowadays. These situations have forced everyone to change their learning role by adapting to use technology that has been developed to help to continue the teaching and learning process under the new environment. Finally, this will become the new normal for teaching the Thai language that everyone must continue to learn.

According to the focus group discussion to provide the guidelines for the development of Thai reading and writing under the COVID-19 situation of Grade 1 students at Huai Ton Na Fai Educational Quality Development Center, the results of focus group discussion are in accordance with the above findings. This may be because school administrators, teachers, and parents have realized and recognized the importance of developing Thai reading and writing under the COVID-19 situation of Grade 1 students. Therefore, their opinions on the guidelines for the development of Thai reading and writing are in the same direction. Ministry of Education (2020; cited in Office of the Education Council. 2020) has designed teaching and learning processes during the COVID-19 situation as follows: 1) Learning and teaching activities must be designed in accordance with the safety of the area. There is an on-site learning in a secure area where students can go to school while an on-air learning through the Distance Learning Foundation Under the Royal Patronage is mainly for learning and teaching activities in an insecure area. Further, additional learning and teaching activities are provided through an on-line system. 2) The main policy adopted is to increase rest time, reduce assessment, and refrain from unnecessary activities to relax students. A focus is given only to core subjects. 3) Preparation for the distance learning and online learning systems. 4) 80 percent of distance learning will be supported by the Ministry of Education to make basic learning accessible to everyone, and another 20 percent or more will be designed by schools and teachers in each area according to their needs. 5) Distance learning and teaching. This is in accordance with Phra Palad Sathaphon Pumpao (2021) who mentions about the guidelines for teaching the Thai language in the new normal era of the COVID-19 crisis. He points out that, in order to reach the objectives of learning and teaching the Thai language in the new normal era, the learning process should be adjusted. Teachers have to rethink about their attitude by believing that every place can be a school because learning must continue even if students are unable to go to school as usual. For this reason, different forms of distance learning are required based on the availability of equipment, readiness of parents, and readiness according to the age of the learners. According to the study, the adjustment of the learning process that teachers have used in the classroom in order to be consistent and connected with the changing learning situation can be summarized as follows: 1) producing the concise curriculum that is appropriate with the COVID-19 situation; 2) increasing flexibility of the learning time and a variety of learning styles; 3) designing a learning unit and teaching with an appropriate plan; 4) when students go to school as usual, raising the level of formative assessment in order to maintain benefits of learners and to prevent learners from losing opportunities to develop knowledge and skills during the COVID-19 situation; and 5) using assessment for accountability (e.g. assessing learners' learning opportunities rather than measuring knowledge with test scores).

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