

A Comparative Study of the Administration of Primary Education Between the Provincial Administration Organisation and the Office of the Basic Education Commission in Thailand

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Abstract: This research purports to conduct a comparative study of the administration of primary education between the 29 Provincial Administrative Organisations (PAOs) administering primary education and the schools running under the authority of the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) across the aforementioned 29 provinces of Thailand. The researchers have selected specifically 1 school from the PAO and 2 schools from the OBEC schools within a certain province. Within these 2 OBEC schools, the team has drawn one school with similar number of students to its PAO counterpart, and the other school with similar Output Unit Cost (OUC) to its PAO counterpart. The total selection has comprised of 87 schools and the gathering information are consisted of administrative data which can be categorised into several aspects namely good governance, leadership, and organisation climate, for instance. Such collective data are accumulated through the use of questionnaires giving out to 14 samples of officials working within each selected PAO school, and 7 samples of officials and personnels working for each particular OBEC schools. The total number of samples are amalgamated to 812 research subjects, these data are then run and analysed using average mean and t-test with statistic significance of 0.05. Accordingly, the findings reveal that the OBEC and PAO schools, that is to say for those with relative number of students and OUC to their counterparts, contain and hold an overall administrative functioning, even when specifically categorised using different aspects, at high level. Nevertheless, when considering the comparison between the average means across the overall administrations, basing on different aspects analysis, between all 3 main study groups, it is discovered that the PAO schools contain higher level of good governance than those of OBEC schools with relatively similar OUC.

Key words: Decentralisation, primary education administration, good governance, leadership, organisation climate

INTRODUCTION

The development of Local Administrative Organisation (LAO) initially emerged during the long rule of King Rama V. (1853-1910), an era of significant modification and development in Thailand. During this period where His Majesty the King had established the first sanitation district which was followed by other types of LAO. Over the years, many changes have continued to occur in Thailand. The 1997 and 2007 Constitutions can be considered as part of the many great advancements of Thailand. That is to say, the concerned provisions kick

started the notion of decentralisation, spreading out powers from the central authority to local administrative bodies. One feature of such decentralisation can be seen in the sphere of education. With the 1999 Act of Local Administrative Organisation Decentralisation Plan and Procedure Formulation (No.1) and 2006 Act (No.2), this has led to a compulsory implementation of the concerned acts where in 2002, it specified that all primary education schools under OBEC were to be put under the supervision of the LAOs once necessary criteria are complied and relevant assessments are carried out by the Office of the Decentralisation to the Local Government Organisation

Committee (ODLOC) together with cooperation from the Ministry of Education. The reassignment of authority and responsibility has been imposed together with the decentralisation of financial sovereignty. To elaborate, the government lays out the budget plan and distributes various sorts of budgetary allocations to local administrative agencies so that these agencies can achieve fiscal autonomy. The notion and the presence of fiscal autonomy is highly beneficial in developing countries as it enables and fosters public participation within communities, strengthens democracy, stabilises macro economic status, increases autonomy with respect to decision making, and helps reduce corruption. Nevertheless, arguments have been presented when the policy is put into practice. It is argued that there are too many rules and restrictions applying, especially when there is an issue of fiscal movement or transfer. Plus, in certain cases, concerns vis-a-vis transparency or inequality may also be an issue.

However, previous fiscal decentralisation theories still mainly focus on using fiscal decentralisation as a tool to develop and foster local democracy (Naald, 2007). There by, the use of fiscal decentralisation and transferring educational tasks strategy can be employed as an analytical instrument that helps determine whether local administrative authority should contain more fiscal autonomy, and should result in better administration of education services for the local community could be achieved or not. The 2012 survey reports that the total number of junior students under the Department of Local Administration (DLA) is listed as 281.447. Although, the evaluation results from the Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) between 2006 and 2010 on the local administration supervising schools, starting from primary years to high school years, the majority of students passed almost all ONESQA assessment criteria, unfortunately with more detailed considerations, it is revealed that major aspects of the student quality are still deemed as being average, and are even low in certain cases (Ritcharoon *et al.*, 2011).

With respect to educational achievement of the students in primary schools which are subject under DLA, it is found that local studies conducted by foreign researchers indicate that educational budgeting for local schools correlates with educational achievements (Akai *et al.*, 2007). As long as LAOs still lack the capacity to sufficiently self-fund themselves, the central government is still required to financially support these agencies. For Thailand, LAOs can be funded through 3 types of intergovernmental transfers, namely, general transfer, special transfer, and the one transfer set up to be used for the purposes of work transferring. Different

calculating formulas are applied to 3 intergovernmental funds depending on the capacity to generate revenue of each local administrative authority. None the less, financial responsibility is regarded as one of the key elements that signifies the transferring of powers to the LAOs. Provided that the local administrative bodies can function well after having been granted sovereignty, this would be likely to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the organisations. Noted that such target requires sufficient budget, either it is generated from earning revenue or receiving sponsorships, fiscal autonomy must always be ensured (Fisher, 2012).

Following the theory on intergovernmental transfer, the purposes of such a scheme is to have central government provide funding to local administrative agencies so as to make up for any fiscal discrepancies or inequality between the government and the local administrations. This is to bridge any gaps between the two parties and to encourage local administrations to comply with the central government policy. There are 2 categories of intergovernmental transfers which are unconditional grants which do not stipulate any conditions upon budget spending and conditional grants such as block grant, project grant or matching grants. It can be said that each transfer effects the LAOs differently. Yet, the unconditional grant is described as the sum which the local administrations can spend on any area; hence, this particular type of transfer contains the greatest distinct features of decentralisation. This is because such an event portrays freedom and autonomy of the local administrative agencies in budgeting where they can freely choose to allocate the money so as to fit the demands of the community which would essentially lead to the satisfaction of the community members (Boadway and Shah, 2007).

In the case of member states, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2012) has placed special emphasis on two education management principles, namely, equity and quality. Nevertheless, it should be highlighted that these two principles are different from each other. In other words, an equally distributed budgeting per person is an implementation of the rule of equality whereas helping students in need to gain proper education concerns the principle of quality (Mam, 2014).

Upon allocating resources for Thailand's education aspect, its features involve distributing spending on each person within the special category and transferring grants which are deemed to fall under the conditional grant category. On the contrary, the local administrative government can freely manage and allocate the general

transfers or the budgets generated from its revenue for the purposes of spending these funds on its local education needs. In a Brazilian case study with regards to the effects the transfers have on education achievement and poverty, the research reveals that when more transfers are allocated, effects can be witnessed on education achievements. To elaborate, class attendance rose by 7% and literacy rate increased by 4%, whilst there was a 4% reduction in poverty. Moreover, the study showed that the impact of budget spending from the unconditional transfers had a positive correlation towards an increase of revenues earned by local members within the community. Also, a such practice is a part of ensuring and safeguarding fiscal autonomy of the local administrative agencies as well as providing better welfare for the local community.

There is a question of the coherence between fiscal and educational autonomy of the LAOs, under the damage which can occur by centralisation of powers assessment strategy. Apart from the assessment with respect to the effectiveness and the efficiency of education administration, particularly upon the satisfactory aspect (Jermsittiparsert *et al.*, 2016) representing the awareness perceived by the service users (Nilsson and Folstad, 2012), lies the issue of the primary education administration (Jalan and Panda, 2010) across 29 provinces, upon comparing to the schools listed under OBEC within the same provinces, of which bares the question of whether or not which party could procure greater effectiveness and efficiency is addressed so as to trigger the process of analysing the power relations that are relevant to the educational duty and authority which can offer appropriate courses of action between the responsibilities held by the central government and the local government in the future.

Purposes of the study: This research purports, firstly, to study the level of effectiveness and efficiency of primary school administration with regards to issues concerning good governance, leadership and organisation climate, of all 29 PAO schools and the OBEC schools within the same provinces. Secondly, to compare the differences of effectiveness and efficiency between the concerned PAO and OBEC schools.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sampling subject: The subjects of this research are the personnel of the OBEC schools, of which are related to the 29 PAO primary schools and OBEC schools within the same provinces. The research team selected specifically 1 PAO school and 2 OBEC schools from each province. The

2 OBEC schools are comprised of 1 school with a similar number of students and another school with similar OUC to their counterpart PAO school, all of which amounts to the total of 87 primary schools. The researcher sets the sample size for each group which contains 406 subjects each. The groups are drawn from the PAO schools (14 examples), from OBEC schools with similar number of students (7 examples), and from OBEC schools with similar OUC (7 examples), aggregating to a total sample size of 812 examples.

Data collection and analysis: The researcher collected the data from both groups of the schools' personnel using a list of questionnaires which had been drafted upon information based on literature reviews between the months of June to November 2015. Analysis was then conducted using an average mean and t-test with significant statistic value of 0.5.

Conceptual framework: The study purports to conduct a comparative analysis of primary education administration, run differently between PAO and OBEC schools, moreover as it emphasises the analysis of the effectiveness and the efficiency, the conceptual framework of this research can be established into 2 types so as to be consonant with this study's methodology. PAO schools and OBEC schools within the same province and containing similar numbers of students which can represent the comparative administration performances.

PAO and OBEC schools with relative number of students Primary education administration between PAO and OBEC schools: PAO schools and OBEC schools within the same province and contain similar OUC which can represent the comparative administration performances.

PAO and OBEC schools with similar OUC Primary education administration between PAO and OBEC schools: PAO and OBEC Schools with relative number of students. Primary education administration between PAO and OBEC schools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Concerning the primary education administration by PAO and OBEC schools: From analysing the data using average mean, it is found that, overall, the primary education administration by PAO schools is ranked as High ($\bar{x} = 4.42$). When reviewing each group specifically, it is discovered that an issue on good governance ($\bar{x} = 4.38$), leadership ($\bar{x} = 4.39$) and the organisation climate ($\bar{x} = 4.39$) are all equally ranked as High. Also, it

Table 1: Primary education administration of PAO schools and OBEC schools, individually and regionally assessed

School/Administration	Region						Total
	North	Central	North East	East	West	South	
PAO							
Good governance	4.51	4.56	4.50	4.49	4.49	4.36	4.47
Leadership	4.25	4.46	4.45	4.41	4.41	4.43	4.39
Organisation climate	4.28	4.41	4.41	4.50	4.45	4.40	4.39
Overall	4.35	4.47	4.46	4.46	4.45	4.39	4.42
OBEC with similar No. of students							
Good governance	4.33	4.52	4.40	4.55	4.39	4.38	4.42
Leadership	4.17	4.64	4.38	4.33	4.51	4.45	4.41
Organisation climate	4.24	4.44	4.37	4.25	4.59	4.36	4.35
Overall	4.25	4.53	4.38	4.38	4.50	4.39	4.39
OBEC with similar OUC							
Good governance	4.41	4.38	4.31	4.48	4.44	4.29	4.37
Leadership	4.36	4.36	4.33	4.30	4.35	4.43	4.37
Organisation climate	4.32	4.47	4.51	4.25	4.52	4.48	4.42
Overall	4.36	4.40	4.39	4.34	4.44	4.40	4.39

Table 2: Comparison on primary education administration between PAO schools and OBEC schools, with similar number of students

Administration	PAO/OBEC	No.	Mean	SD	t-values	p-values
Good governance	PAO	406	4.47	0.38	1.69	0.09
	OBEC	203	4.42	0.38		
Leadership	PAO	406	4.39	0.41	-0.41	0.68
	OBEC	203	4.41	0.43		
Organisation climate	PAO	406	4.39	0.37	1.10	0.27
	OBEC	203	4.35	0.41		
Overall	PAO	406	4.42	0.26	1.12	0.26
	OBEC	203	4.39	0.28		

should be noted that the PAO schools in the Central region are placed the Highest ($\bar{x} = 4.47$), whilst their peers in the North ($\bar{x} = 4.35$) are placed at the lowest rank. With respect to the OBEC schools across the same province with a similar number of students to the relevant PAO schools, it reveals that, in general, the primary education administration is ranked as High ($\bar{x} = 4.39$) and when assessing each group, it is found that with respect to the factor of leadership ($\bar{x} = 4.42$), leadership ($\bar{x} = 4.41$) and the organisation climate ($\bar{x} = 4.35$) are all equally placed as High. In the central region, the overall administration is placed at Highest ($\bar{x} = 4.53$) whereas the North ($\bar{x} = 4.31$) is revealed to be the region placed at the lowest ranking ($\bar{x} = 4.25$).

For the OBEC schools from the same province with relatively similar OUC to the particular PAO schools, it shows that, in general, the primary education administration is deemed as High ($\bar{x} = 4.39$). Upon considering each group, this reveals that the factor of good governance ($\bar{x} = 4.37$), leadership ($\bar{x} = 4.37$) and the organisation climate ($\bar{x} = 4.42$) are all placed as High which are similar to those of the PAO schools and those OBEC schools with similar students numbers. Noted that the West is now deemed and ranked as the Highest when it comes to the overall administration ($\bar{x} = 4.44$) while the East, on the other hand is ranked as the Lowest ($\bar{x} = 4.34$) (Table 1-3) Comparison of primary education administration between PAO schools and OBEC schools

with similar students numbers. From the analysis using the t-test method, it reveals that the primary education administration, in general, between the PAO and OBEC with similar amounts of students within the same province of the PAO school in question contain no significant difference, basing on the statistical value of 0.05. Upon individual assessment, it shows that the issues of good governance, leadership and the organisation climate as presented within both the PAO and OBEC schools, do not differ significantly, baring a significant statistic value of 0.05. Comparison on Primary education administration between PAO schools and OBEC schools with similar OUC. Upon comparing between the average mean of the overall primary education administration, run under the PAO and OBEC with similar OUC and within the same province of the PAO school in question, it is discovered that the two bare no considerable differences with significant statistic value of 0.05. None the less, the factor of good governance of the PAO schools ($\bar{x} = 4.47$) is levelled higher than its OBEC counterpart ($\bar{x} = 4.37$) with significant statistic value of .01.

If we take 2005 as the starting point of primary schools administration by the local administrative governments, the research titled ‘Opinions of the school administrators under Pattani Educational Service Area 2 regarding the readiness in transferring of basic educational institutions to the local administrative organisations’ by Nuyprim indicates that, at the

Table 3: Comparison on primary education administration between PAO schools and OBEC schools, with similar OUC

Administration	PAO/OBEC	No.	Mean	SD	t-values	p-values
Good governance	PAO	406	4.47	0.38	3.16	0.01**
	OBEC	203	4.37	0.38		
Leadership	PAO	406	4.39	0.41	0.56	0.57
	OBEC	203	4.37	0.42		
Organisation climate	PAO	406	4.39	0.37	-0.98	0.33
	OBEC	203	4.42	0.39		
Overall	PAO	406	4.42	0.26	1.31	0.19
	OBEC	203	4.39	0.30		

very least, the perceptions of certain executives see that the LAOs are ready to have the students transferred from OBEC, although the overall view is placed at low. This is in consistent with the results of 2007 National Test (NT) undertaken by students in 3rd grade, of which all PAO students’ performances are under the overall national standards of all education institutions (Office of the Education Council, 2010).

Yet, the studies of the evaluation on PAO education administration over the past decade all direct to positive potentials and possibilities. Uthumporn (2013) points out that after the transfer from the OBEC, in general, the overall academic directions are deemed to have improved to a certain extent, ranging from a small improvement to a substantial improvement. Plus, more and more students have enrolled each year. Nevertheless, the effectiveness evaluation of those schools which are transferred to PAO of Chiang Mai Province, reported by Vasuwattanaset and Kamnuansilpa highlights that the evaluations of academic management, budget management, human resource management, general management and the community including the parents are all improved with only one downfall presented with the students aspect which illustrates that, for certain schools, the effectiveness of the study still falls short of the standards. However, certain factors also signify and confirm that despite its downfall such an incident still possesses higher standards compared with prior transfers.

This is consistent with the evaluation results of the people’s satisfactions towards the PAO education administration, presented by Chulalongkorn University, Faculty of Political Science, (2013), by Kreuthep under the research project on the study of follow-up and results assessment of Thailand’s powers decentralisation which has been put forward to the ODLOC, Office of the Permanent Secretary, Prime Minister Office. The study demonstrates that the overall perception is placed between average to good, even with the case of PAO Nakhon Ratchasima province where 58 schools were transferred from the central government. Also, it was revealed that almost all the executives who have been transferred deem that “PAO” is not professional’ when

compared with the administration conducted by the central administration agency (Samranvong and Ratchakul, 2014). Such disadvantages with regards to the organisation structure designed to facilitate this particular task accordingly affect the quality of education generated from the PAO schools (Samranvong and Ratchakul, 2014).

CONCLUSION

The findings of this primary education administration survey ultimately show us the implied development of PAO vis-a-vis its educational challenges, for the very least, in primary education, stating that within roughly a decade after the transfer had been carried out, the local administrative agencies which were viewed as still not ready and had a lack of suitable structural framework, could become a success upon the overall primary schools administration and help render the primary education administration be to equally the same as those with specialised administration backgrounds, both in terms of the effectiveness and the efficiency to be exact.

Upon individual assessment, it reveals that PAO can significantly generate better primary education administration with regards to good governance than its OBEC counterpart, considering particularly the effectiveness generated. More importantly, when performing a regional assessment, the findings show that the overall primary education administration across the PAO schools in the East and the North East is better than its OBEC counterparts, both in terms of the effectiveness and the efficiency. Meanwhile, the PAO schools within the central and the western region outperform the OBEC schools, especially with regards to the effectiveness and with the North, none the less, when it particularly concerns the efficiency.

Ultimately, the results from the comparative examination on primary education administration can, to a certain extent, act as an assurance confirming that the transferring of powers from the central government to local administrative agencies which are ready to perform and carry out the tasks is a suitable direction that

Thailand needs to follow through and with which to continue. This is consistent with the recommendations proposed in the research study of Nigeria in which the researchers propose that the central government should allow local governments to take part in and be partly responsible for the primary education administration, whilst maintaining its control and giving out necessary budget supports needed for the upkeep vis-a-vis the overall national education standards (Olaniyan and Olabanji, 2008). This is because within only a period of 10 years, looking from the provincial basis, the local administrative organisations reveal that they fall short of specialisation compared to those possessed by the OBEC. Also, there were certain aspects that have not been taken into account in this analysis, that is to say, the level of schools' quality before the transfers. The findings from such event such as the collection of interviews which point out that almost all of the schools across the authority of OBEC contain below-standard results when it comes to the efficiency results. Several schools are being shut down due to an insufficient number of attending students. Yet, despite what has been said earlier, the overall administration of primary education remains above standards both in terms of the effectiveness and efficiency regardless of the targeted significant statistic value.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Similar to the previous study (Jermisittiparsert, Sriyakul, Pamornmast, Rodboonsong, Boonprong, Sangperm, Pakvichai, Vipaporn and Maneechote, 2016), notwithstanding the reexamination so as to pinpoint the dynamic of the primary education administration ability possessed by the PAO, including other relevant local administrative organisations, the comparative analysis that purports to analyse and identify the best appropriate size of local administrative organisations which would maximise the effectiveness and the efficiency is deemed highly as a challenge that would also benefit public policies, particularly in the aspect of powers decentralisation towards sustainable development.

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