

A Development Model of Schools of Quality for Secondary Schools in Lao PDR

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ABSTRACT

This research and development study, a development model of Schools of Quality for Secondary Schools in Lao PDR, was conducted by using quantitative and qualitative research methodologies and action research. The objective of the research was to construct a development model of Schools of Quality for secondary schools in Lao People's Democratic Republic. The research procedures consisted of three phases. Phase I was a quantitative research studied on the causal factors influenced success of Schools of Quality for Secondary Schools in Lao PDR; the samples of which were 116 secondary schools in the five UNICEF target provinces: Phongsaly, Luangnamtha, Saravan, Sekong and Attapue; and data were collected by using a questionnaire and analyzed by a structural equation modeling (Path Analysis), a statistical application LISREL and Pearson Correlation. Phase II was a qualitative research to construct a development model of Schools of Quality for secondary schools in Lao PDR by conducting a workshop for 20 professional specialists from educational, pedagogical and developmental fields who were selected by purposive sampling to comment on the constructed draft of the development model during focus group discussion and brain storming. The development model was then revised based on the experts' comments and recommendations and finalized for use in Phase III, which was an action research. The development model was implemented in the five secondary schools: Hmong Chao in Phongsaly, Nateoy in Luangnamtha, Kokpoong in Sekong, Nakoysao in Saravan, and Sethathirath in Attapeu for one academic year. The data collected from the pre-test and post test period were compared by using Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test.

Findings reveal that the influencing factors contributing to success of Schools of Quality for secondary schools, sorted from the highest to the lowest scores of coefficient, were leadership factor (0.37), teaching and learning factor (0.36), teacher factor (0.31), management (0.23), and participation of community (0.19), respectively. These factors were the influencing factors contributing to the success of Schools of Quality for secondary schools in Lao PRD at the statistical significant level of .05. Regarding construction of the development model of Schools of Quality for secondary schools, there were 18 activities to be implemented. For leadership factor, there were four activities which consisted of 1) training workshop on leadership for Schools of Quality approach, 2) performance review through feedback activities, 3) sharing best practice, and 4) coaching and mentoring by provincial and district education monitoring and supervisory support. For teaching & learning

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and the teacher factors, there were four activities: 1) training workshop on teaching and learning for Schools of Quality approach, 2) promoting local wisdoms teaching and learning through community support, 3) sharing lessons learned and exchanging experiences of teachers in organizing teaching and learning process of Schools of Quality approach, and 4) monitoring and supervisory support from provincial and district education. For management factor, there were five activities: 1) training workshop on school management for Schools of Quality approach, 2) school self-assessment, 3) school development planning, 4) school child seeking and mapping, and 5) monitoring and supervisory support from provincial and district education on Schools of Quality approach. For participation of community factor, there were five activities: 1) orientation training workshop on Schools of Quality approach, 2) school development planning, 3) school self-assessment, 4) school child seeking and mapping, and 5) supporting teaching and learning of local wisdoms.

The findings from the evaluation of the development model of Schools of Quality for secondary schools in Lao PDR are the following. The development model was implemented in the five target secondary schools. The baseline data collected before the implementation as the pre-test were compared with the data collected from the participating secondary schools after the implementation of the model for one academic school-year from September 2012 to July 2013. It was found that the post-test level of success of Schools of Quality in the five target schools was different from that of the pretest at the .05 level of statistical significance. This indicated that the result of implementation of Schools of Quality approach was statistically and significantly improved. It was concluded that after the five target schools had implemented the development model in their schools, their performances were better improved in accordance with the Schools of Quality approach.

Keywords : Development Model ; Schools of Quality; Influencing Factors to Success; Child-centered, Secondary Schools in Lao PDR.

Introduction

Lao People Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) is situated in Southeast Asia and bordered with China to the North, Vietnam to the East, Myanmar and Thailand to the West, and Cambodia to the South. Though Lao PDR is a landlocked country that is not bordering with any sea coastal areas, the Government of Lao PDR uses the term 'land-linked'. As the Southeast Asian region develops, the country is becoming a significant gateway to Southeast Asia from China, transit route between Vietnam and Thailand, with the main waterway, the Mekong River which is sharing a long border with Thailand - and linked by an increasing number of bridges, opening

up trade routes, boosting the economy and bringing ever-increasing exposure to the outside world.

Improvement of the quality and access to basic education is one of the key priorities of Lao PDR. For over the last three decades, Lao PDR has continuously made extensive progress in education system development, but it is still among the lowest in Southeast Asia and has not evenly been developed across the demographic and geographic areas. The Government considers education as the central factor of the human resources development and pays particular attention to developing individuals to perform good behaviors, be foreseeable and scientific prospective. This means to develop human resource to acquire knowledge, skills, creativity and

profession to develop a knowledge-based society, and to gradually develop local competence-based economy. As in both the 6th and 7th National Socio-Economic Development Plans 2006-2010 and 2011-2015 focus on improvement of the education of the whole population to concentrate on equitable access, quality, relevance and management of education. Increasing primary school attendance and literacy rates particularly for people in under-served areas, such as ethnic peoples, children with special needs and girls, is an important foundation step. Accessibility to quality secondary education has to be improved to raise the number of students entering and completing secondary education and hence going on to a third level education.

From Ministry of Education and Sports statistical report in school year 2011-2012 (MOE, EMIS Report. 2011-2012), there are 1,329 secondary schools nationwide with 488,143 school children attending. In secondary schools, the low enrolment rate (45.7%) and high drop-out rate (10%) indicate that only half of primary school children who completed schools continue their study in secondary school and many of them drop out before completing secondary education level. Also, the transition rates from lower secondary school to upper secondary school are low in rural areas and studies frequently note that girls from ethnic populations are the most disadvantaged in terms of student retention rates. With these indications, the major challenge is how Ministry of Education will be able to provide equitable access, relevance to student needs and context, quality education for the vulnerable and disadvantaged children in rural remote areas. Many schools, particularly those in remote areas and ethnic communities, have an insufficient number of

teachers, especially female teachers. Systemic barriers prevent young people in these areas from reaching the educational threshold to enroll in teacher training colleges. The recent addition of an extra year at lower secondary level, plus a new policy to be introduced that will set upper secondary qualification as the minimum entry requirement for trainee teachers, will most likely to compound the problem.

In order to improve education quality of basic education, Ministry of Education and Sports in collaboration with UNICEF Laos, has implemented the Child Friendly School or Schools of Quality in primary school level by piloting in three primary schools in 2007 and since then having expanded to 1,891 primary schools in the 11 target provinces. Through the Schools of Quality, Ministry of Education and UNICEF strive to achieve nationally and internationally set goals, in line with the United Nations Development Framework to support the achievement of increased and equitable access and to a quality basic education for Lao PDR by the year 2015. UNICEF has developed a framework for rights-based, child-friendly educational systems and schools that are characterized as inclusive, healthy and protective for all children, effective with children, and involved with families, communities and children

For a new country program cycle 2012-2015, Ministry of Education in collaboration with UNICEF Laos is interested in applying Schools of Quality into secondary education. This will be responded to improvement of quality basic education as defined in the National Education System Reform Strategy to achieve Education For All and Millennium Development goals by 2015 in the most educationally disadvantaged



provinces, particularly in Phongsaly, Luangnamtha, Saravan, Sekong and Attapeu. (Country Program Action Plan 2012-2015, UNICEF & MoES. 2011)

The Schools of Quality aim to create child friendly learning environments in schools, with a special focus on remote rural areas, as does it aim to achieve the targets set by the National Plan of Action for Education for All by the year 2015. The Schools of Quality also supports the vision of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child; each and every child should have an equal right to education, and an education of quality, and support development of his or her personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential. The Schools of Quality are a rights-based and child-friendly approach to improve quality of education.

So, the researcher was interested in studying what factors contributing to the development of Schools of Quality for secondary schools by constructing a development model for implementation of Schools of Quality for secondary schools in the target provinces that UNICEF Laos supported with an aim of raising enrolment rate, reducing drop-out rate and providing equitable access and relevance to students' needs and context, and enhancing effective teaching and learning environment for secondary school children in rural remote areas.

Objectives

The research objectives are to 1) study the factors contributing to the development of Schools of Quality for secondary schools, 2) to construct the development model of Schools of Quality for secondary schools, and 3) to implement and evaluate the development model of Schools of Quality for secondary schools Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Hypothesis

1. It was assumed that the key influencing factors contributing to success in implementing Schools of Quality consisted of school directors and leadership, teachers, students, community participation of community, pedagogical advisors, school management and administration, teaching and learning, and school environment and equipment.

2. Having implemented the constructed development model of Schools of Quality for secondary schools, the schools had better performance in promoting Child Rights, effective teaching and learning that was relevant to students' needs and context, and an environment that encourages learning, welcoming, gender-sensitive healthy, safe and protective.

Scope

The scope for this study is as follows:

1. Geographic Target Area: The geographic target areas for this study were secondary schools in the five UNICEF target provinces namely Phongsaly, Luangnamtha, Saravan, Sekong and Attapeu. There were 163 secondary schools with 81,500 school children.

2. The Research Phases: In terms of phases, the research is divided into three phases.

Research Methodology

The study is a research and development (R&D). The research methodology includes a quantitative, qualitative and action research methods. The research is divided into three phases:

Phase 1: It is a quantitative research which studies on what influencing causal factors contribute



to the success in implementation of Schools of Quality for Secondary Schools.

Population and Samples

1. Population: The unit of analysis for this research is a secondary school. As such, a population is a number of 163 secondary schools in the five UNICEF target.

2. Samples: By using Taro Yamane formula for calculating the sample size, the samples for this research were 116 secondary schools.

Research Instrument

The research instrument used in data collection in Phase 1 was a questionnaire that the researcher adapted and developed from questionnaires that other researchers used in their studies. Under a close supervisory support and consultation of the thesis advisors, the questionnaire was revised and modified to suit with the context of this study. The research instrument was examined on content validity, meaning and language terms used, and contextual relevance to find the item objective congruence (IOC) and to ensure that all of

the questions on five factors were correct and comprehensive in terms of theories and definition and had influence on the successful implementation of Schools of Quality for secondary schools by three relevant specialists. After having had been examined in both contextual and structural validity, the questionnaire had been tried out in 40 secondary schools that were not in the sample group of the research. The data were then analyzed for an item discriminating power by using Item Total Correlation technique to find a value of item correlation of total correlation score in each

individual dimension. The questions that met the criteria were then analyzed for a reliability of a whole set of questionnaire by finding Alpha Coefficient by using Cronbach's technique. The questionnaire was then finalized based on the advisor and specialists' comments and advice. The complete set of questionnaire was then printed and administered to the actual sample group for collecting data.

Data Collection

A request letter for collaboration was sent to Provincial Education Service of Phongsaly, Luangnamtha, Saravan, Sekong and Attapeu to seek assistance in coordination with secondary school directors in collecting data with directors, teachers, students and student parents' association community members.

Data Analysis

For data analysis in phase 1, the researcher grouped and recorded a score of each question by using a coding form. The data were then analyzed by a computer statistical package to test the temporary theoretical hypothesis research assumption. Descriptive method was used to describe the general information. The statistics used for analysis were mean, percentage, frequency, and standard deviation.

For the statistical analysis to test the research hypothesis was a structural equation modeling (Path Analysis) using a statistical application LISREL and Pearson Correlation to describe correlations of factors contributing to the successful implementing of Schools of Quality in secondary schools by defining a statistical significance at the level of .05.

Phase 2: It was a qualitative research in order to construct a development model for implementation of Schools of Quality in Secondary Schools.



The Target Group of Phase 2

The target group for phase 2 consisted of 20 professional specialists in educational, pedagogical and developmental fields. The target group was selected by the purposive sampling technique. The research instrument used was the research findings from phase 1. The researcher based on that result to construct a draft model for the selected specialists to comment on it.

Data Collection

In this phase, the data collection was done by conducting a workshop by using focus group and brainstorming approaches. The researcher summarized all of the comments, feedback and recommendations and revised and finalized the development model for implementing of the model in phase 3.

Phase 3: The implementation and evaluation of the development model of Schools of Quality for secondary schools.

Target Group of Phase 3

In this phase, it was the implementing and evaluation of the development model for implementation of Schools of Quality in secondary schools in the five UNICEF target provinces namely 1) Hmong Chao in Phongsaly, 2) Nateoy in Luangnamtha, 3) Kokpoong in Sekong 4) Nakysao in Saravan and 5) Sethathirath in Attapeu.

Data Collection

It was done by using the development model created in Phase 2 and implemented in the 5 secondary schools for ten months. The data collection was done in three stages as follows: stage 1 was prior the implementation or pre-test, stage 2

was during the implementation and stage 3 was after the implementation or post-test.

Data analysis

The pre-test and post-test data was compared by using Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test.

Result

1. The influencing factors contributing to a success in implementation Schools of Quality approach in secondary schools, sorted from the highest scores of influencing coefficient to the lowest score of influencing coefficients are leadership factor (0.37), teaching and learning factor (0.36), teacher factor (0.31), management (0.23), and participation of community factor (0.19) respectively. These factors are the influencing factors contributing to a success in implementation Schools of Quality approach in secondary schools in Lao PRD at the statistically significant level of .05 regarding to the research hypothesis test by using Multiple Regression Linear, LISREL and Pearson Correlation.

2. As a result from constructing a development model for implementation Schools of Quality approach in secondary schools, there are 18 activities to be implemented as the following details:

2.1 Leadership factor, there are four activities which consist of training workshop on leadership for Schools of Quality approach, performance review through feedback activities, sharing best practice, and coaching and mentoring through provincial and district education monitoring and support.

2.2 Teaching and learning and teacher factors, there are four activities which consists of training workshop on teaching and learning for

Schools of Quality approach, promoting local wisdoms teaching and learning through community support local wisdoms, sharing lessons learned and exchanging experiences of teachers in teaching and learning of Schools of Quality approach, and monitoring and supervisory support from provincial and district education.

2.3 Management factor, there are five activities which consist of training workshop on school management for Schools of Quality approach, school self-assessment, school development planning, school child seeking and mapping, and monitoring and supervisory support from provincial and district education.

2.4 Participation of community factor, there are five activities which consist of orientation training workshop on Schools of Quality approach, school development planning, school self-assessment, school child seeking and mapping, and supporting teaching and learning local wisdoms.

3. The findings from the evaluation of the implementation of development model for Schools of Quality in secondary schools in Lao PDR. The development model was experimented in the five experimenting target secondary schools. By comparing the result of the experimentation of the development model using the data collected before the experiment and the data collected from the experimenting secondary schools after the implementation of the model for one academic school-year from September 2012 to July 2013. The result showed that the level of success in implementation Schools of Quality approach in the five experimenting target schools statistically increased from before the experiment at .05 level of significance. This can be concluded that after the

five experimenting target schools adopted the development model in their schools, the schools had better performance for Schools of Quality approach.

Discussion

From the research findings, it was found that leadership factor is an influencing factor contributes to a success in implementation Schools of Quality approach in secondary schools and has an influential correlation coefficient score of 0.37. The leadership factor has an influencing effect and contributes to a success in implementation Schools of Quality approach which accorded to the findings in Pongsawat Wongpracha. (2000 : 221) conducted a study of the relationship between leadership behavior and performance of secondary schools in Sakon Nakhon province of Thailand and concluded that the leadership directly affected the performance of the secondary school. The findings are also in accordance with other research findings which are able to summarize that the school leadership contributes to school effectiveness and student achievement through actions taken by school directors to influence what happens in the school and in classrooms. It is concluded that leadership has an influencing effect contributing to the success of implementation Schools of Quality approach in secondary schools in the Lao PDR. This is in accordance with a number of studies on the effects of leadership style on school outcomes. The effective leadership style for implementation Schools of Quality approach in secondary schools in the Lao PDR is the transformational leadership.

The teacher factor has an influencing effect and contributes to a success in implementation



Schools of Quality approach in secondary schools in Lao PRD which is in accordance with the research findings studied by Medley. (1981) concluded that the teacher is the central figure in the implementation of the curriculum process, therefore the teacher is the key factor in determining the quality and successes of the studies program. The effective teacher is the one who plans the achievement of objectives and who executes his plans. Also, the teacher is responsible for creating classrooms that promote effective learning as well as evolving and adopting effective instructional strategies. The finding result on teacher factor influences the success of implementation Schools of Quality approach in secondary schools is also in accordance with the research finding from Reilly. (2000) which concluded that the effective teacher is the one who has good understanding of their learners as (i) learners have distinctive perspectives or frames of reference contributes to by their history, environment, interests and goals, beliefs and ways of thinking; (ii) learners have unique differences, including emotional state of mind, learning rates, learning styles, stages of development, abilities, talents and feelings of efficacy; (iii) learning is a process that occurs best when what is being learnt is relevant and meaningful to the learner and when the learner is actively engaged in creating his or her own knowledge and understanding by connecting what is being learned to prior knowledge and experiences; (iv) learning occurs best in an environment that promote positive interpersonal relationship and interactions and in which the learner feels appreciated, acknowledged and respected; (v) learning is seen as a fundamentally natural process; learners are viewed as naturally curious and basically interested

in learning and mastering their world. In conclusion, the teacher factor has an influential effect contributes to a success on implementation Schools of Quality approach in secondary school level in the Lao PDR. The research finding result is in accordance with the relevant research findings like Reilly. (2000) which concluded that the teacher is the key factor in determining the quality and successes of the studies program. For Schools of Quality approach, the teacher is the person who implements and promotes the child-centered or learner-centered teaching approach. The teaching and learning process will not be implemented effectively without the commitment and enthusiasm of school teachers. The school teachers are the ones who apply Schools of Quality teaching and learning approach into the real practice through inductive teaching by a combination of active learning and cooperative learning methods. Also, the school teachers are the persons who facilitate the learning process in both classrooms and outside of the classrooms. The school teachers applied a child-centered or learner-centered approach which was a combination of teaching and learning techniques or active and cooperative learning and inductive teaching in implementing Schools of Quality approach. It was observed that throughout the implementation period that school teachers and students had closer relationship; school students preferred teachers who assessed their learning by their group work assignment and learning from practicing over the testing of memorizing the facts and principles only. It was also observed that for some subjects like history, geography and educational social studies, school students liked and actively participated in the role playing-learning game for history, and study tour and camping. From

the experimenting in implementation Schools of Quality approach in secondary schools, it was observed that school teachers had direct effect on effective teaching and learning process as they were the persons who played the key role in facilitating and organizing the relevant teaching and learning activities for school students in the contextualizing manner. In conclusion, school teachers had an influencing effect contributes to a success in implementation Schools of Quality approach in secondary school level in the Lao PDR.

It was found that school management had an influencing effect with coefficient scores of 0.23 on a success in implementation Schools of Quality approach in secondary schools as the school management was a key process for providing administrative support in implementation Schools of Quality activities including human resource management, budgeting and financial management, promotion of public relation, inventory and property management..

The school management has an influencing effect and contributes to a success in implementation Schools of Quality in secondary schools in Lao PDR which is in accordance with the research result findings conducted by Prasamuha Boonchu Chutipanyo Boonwong. (2007: 96-97) which concluded that school management had influencing effects to school outcomes (e.g., school effectiveness, student achievement) in terms of facilitating the school instructional process, human resource development, promotion of community participation in school management planning process and supporting local wisdoms to teaching and learning process, and financial management.

The participation of community factor has an

influencing effect and contributes to a success in implementation Schools of Quality in secondary schools in Lao PDR. As a result finding from the research found that the participation of community had an influencing effect contributed to a success in implementation Schools of Quality in secondary schools at the correlation coefficient score of 0.19. The research finding result found was in accordance with the research finding results conducted by Prasit Latong. (2003) which concluded that community participation contributed to effectiveness of school outcomes on the dimensions of knowledge management system, student development, learning resource of local wisdoms, and supporting school development including school improvement planning. From the experimentation of implementation Schools of Quality, it was found that participation of community had an influencing effect on a success as the participation is another key factor for school development process including local community providing local wisdoms and expertise support in implementation Schools of Quality activities, and organizing child-centered or learner-centered teaching and learning activities, implementing school development process including school self-assessment and school child-seeking mapping activities, community involving in providing protective, safe and healthy school environment as well as providing inductive teaching and learning environment for school students. In conclusion, participation of community had an influencing effect contributes to a success in implementation Schools of Quality for secondary schools in Lao PDR.

Conclusion

The five influencing factors contributing to a success in implementation Schools of Quality



approach in secondary schools are leadership, teachers, management, teaching and learning, and participation of community. These factors are the influencing factors contributing to a success in implementation Schools of Quality approach in secondary schools in Lao PRD at the statistically significant level of .05 regarding to the research hypothesis test by using Multiple Regression Linear, LISREL and Pearson Correlation.

As a result from constructing a development model for implementation Schools of Quality approach in secondary schools, there are 18 activities to be implemented as follows:

1. Leadership factor, there are four activities which consist of training workshop on leadership for Schools of Quality approach, performance review through feedback activities, sharing best practice, and coaching and mentoring through provincial and district education monitoring and support.

2. Teaching and learning and teacher factors, there are four activities which consists of training workshop on teaching and learning for Schools of Quality approach, promoting local wisdoms teaching and learning through community support local wisdoms, sharing lessons learned and exchanging experiences of teachers in teaching and learning of Schools of Quality approach, and monitoring and supervisory support from provincial and district education.

3. Management factor, there are five activities which consist of training workshop on school management for Schools of Quality, school self-assessment, school development planning, school child seeking and mapping, and monitoring and supervisory support from provincial and district education.

4. Participation of community factor, there are five activities which consist of orientation training workshop on Schools of Quality approach, school development planning, school self-assessment, school child seeking and mapping, and supporting teaching and learning local wisdoms.

Of these 18 activities, there were four activities that were inter-related and needed involvement of all stakeholders including school directors, teachers and community representatives. The activities consisted of 1) school development planning, 2) school self-assessment, 3) school child seeking and mapping, and 4) monitoring and supervisory support from provincial and education on Schools of Quality approach. However, to what extent each stakeholder would be involved in each activity depending upon their roles and responsibility for which they were accountable for.

The findings from the evaluation of the implementation of development model for Schools of Quality in secondary schools in Lao PRD. The development model was experimented in the five experimenting target secondary schools. By comparing the result of the experimentation of the development model using the data collected before the experiment and the data collected from the experimenting secondary schools after the implementation of the model for one academic school-year. The result showed that the level of success in implementation Schools of Quality approach in the five experimenting target schools with statistically increased from before the experiment at .05 level of significance. This concluded that after the five experimenting target schools adopted the development model in their schools, the schools had better performance for

Schools of Quality approach.

Suggestion

This study has a limitation in terms of time and financial issues. The research focused only public secondary schools in the target provinces where UNICEF supported programs. Therefore, there should be more similar research on Schools of Quality approach in secondary schools in other different provinces as well as in private secondary schools. Also, the study on a development model of Schools of Quality for secondary schools that has effects on secondary education system, especially on school leadership and teaching and learning approaches which may not be sufficient for improving overall secondary education system.

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