Progressive educational development in Thailand: A framework for analysis and revision of curriculum development, classroom effectiveness, and teacher performance evaluations

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The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) is soon to become a reality for Southeast Asia. Thailand is, literally, at the centre of this radical change in politics, culture, business opportunities and, most especially, education. Never before has another change in the region ever forecast such a major impact on the Land of Smiles. *Equally, never before has Thailand faced an alteration of such magnitude and found itself at a major disadvantage. Countries throughout the region are making sweeping changes in their educational systems to try and prepare their coming generations with the skills and abilities needed to compete not only in the AEC but also globally. Thailand, however, seems to be moving in the opposite direction – most poignantly in adult higher education – thus severely disadvantaging young adults who are expected to impact and lead their country into the future. How can Thailand face the reality of the AEC and forego its own preconceived notions and prejudices so that true, lasting educational progress can be made, avoiding the knee-jerk response of saying something is being done without actually doing anything? What are the nuances of previous hindrances compared with progressive models for improvement? How can competency and quality be selectively and accurately measured for effective change and, again, avoid saying something and not doing anything? This paper covers such issues and establishes a framework for validating not the curriculums themselves but the manner in which curriculum is presented, utilized, and evaluated in a mode that is legitimate and productive for competing on the world stage.*

Keywords: education reform; adult education; Thailand; ASEAN; critical thinking; Asian education; professional education

INTRODUCTION

Problems with educational development in Thailand stem largely from the inability of those who are responsible for the improvement of the educational system to "step out of the box" and look at problems with a fresh perspective. As stated by Chulalongkorn University lecturer Assistant Professor Sompong Jitradab in *The Nation* news source: "this problem was not new and had plagued the country for nearly two decades" (Aramnet & Mahachai, 2013, para. 9). Young adults entering the college and university stage of their educational development are expected to impact and lead their country into a future

which sees Thailand as a member of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC); however, these student face significant challenge because their educational system seems to be taking a backward turn.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the causes of the problems and list actionable solutions. It reviews academic publications and supporting economic data to identify the factors influencing the current educational development of Thailand as well as the factors that should be taken into account to prepare the next generation of Thai learners to participate in AEC developments.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The relevant research and data for this report was obtained from journals, including online journals, available at the researcher's university of employment library. The journals are recognized ones pertaining to educational development in Thailand. As well, other resources reporting on Thailand's educational situation and statements by individuals associated with the issue are used; such as findings from educational institutions throughout Thailand concerned with the identification of critical areas of collegiate curriculum development, educational experts' reports on curriculum development, and data released by the World Economic Forum (WEF), Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), and various government administrators in Thailand. The paper begins with a listing of the findings and goes on to suggest a framework for improvement.

FINDINGS

The 2011 *Thailand Competitiveness* report presented by Dr Somchai Sujjapongse, Director General of the State Enterprise Policy Office, Ministry of Finance, highlighted a number of disturbing numbers concerning the quality of education in the Kingdom of Thailand (see Figure 1). Consistently, Thailand ranked at the bottom in all educational sectors throughout ASEAN countries: Singapore is ranked highest, followed by Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Malaysia (Sujjapongse, 2011). In 2012, the WEF released their standard report on the competitiveness of nations. Again, Thailand ranked at the bottom of the "ASEAN – 8", below Vietnam and Cambodia (Schwab, 2012). Both Vietnam and Cambodia have, historically, had lower rankings in nearly every category than Thailand (Chinnawongs, Hiranburana, & Wongsothorn, 2006; Ng, 2001; Pimpa, 2009; Richmond, 2007; Sangnapaboworn, 2003). This finding is especially confounding since Thailand has consistently provided more funding for educational development as a percentage of GDP than either Vietnam or Cambodia (Aramnet & Mahachai, 2013; Richmond, 2007; Schwab, 2012; Schwab, 2013).

Many professionals and experts in Thailand dispute those results (Intathep, 2013). However, when the WEF's findings are compared with those of the PISA study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the results are corroborated. The PISA study evaluated the scholastic performance on mathematics, science, and reading by 510,000 15-year old students across the globe (OECD, 2014). Out of sixty-five countries participating in the tests, Thailand ranked 50th place in mathematics, 48th in science, and 47th in reading (see Figure 2). These 15-year old schoolchildren who participated in the testing back in 2012 will enter college and university at the same time as the AEC begins.
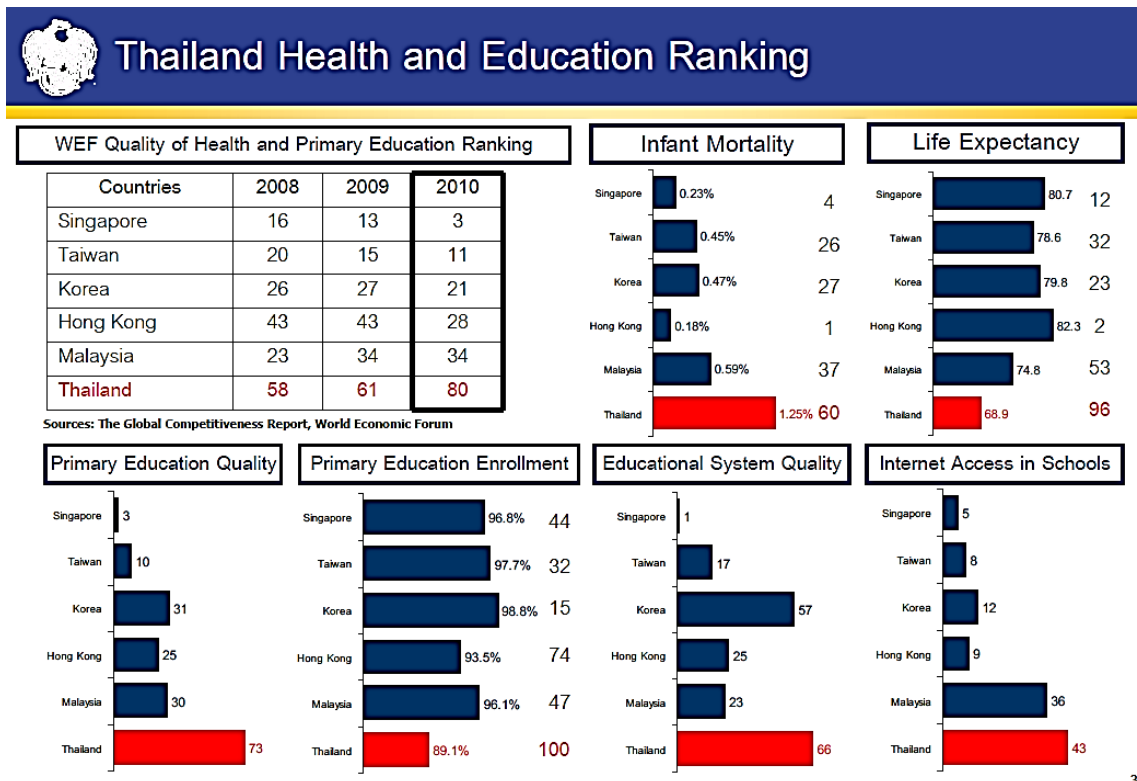
Thailand Health and Education Ranking

WEF Quality of Health and Primary Education Ranking

Countries	2008	2009	2010
Singapore	16	13	3
Taiwan	20	15	11
Korea	26	27	21
Hong Kong	43	43	28
Malaysia	23	34	34
Thailand	58	61	80

Sources: The Global Competitiveness Report, World Economic Forum

Infant Mortality

Singapore	0.23%	4
Taiwan	0.45%	26
Korea	0.47%	27
Hong Kong	0.18%	1
Malaysia	0.59%	37
Thailand	1.25%	60

Life Expectancy

Singapore	80.7	12
Taiwan	78.6	32
Korea	79.8	23
Hong Kong	82.3	2
Malaysia	74.8	53
Thailand	68.9	96

Primary Education Quality

Singapore	3
Taiwan	10
Korea	31
Hong Kong	25
Malaysia	30
Thailand	73

Primary Education Enrollment

Singapore	96.8%	44
Taiwan	97.7%	32
Korea	98.8%	15
Hong Kong	93.5%	74
Malaysia	96.1%	47
Thailand	89.1%	100

Educational System Quality

Singapore	1
Taiwan	17
Korea	57
Hong Kong	25
Malaysia	23
Thailand	66

Internet Access in Schools

Singapore	5
Taiwan	8
Korea	12
Hong Kong	9
Malaysia	36
Thailand	43

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Figure 1: Ranking of Thailand's educational level among ASEAN countries (Sujjapongse, 2011, p. 3)

Root causes

To understand the problems inherent in the Thai educational system, it is necessary to look at the root causes; basically, the bases of the problem have been prevalent for a long time and can be found in Thailand's culture, administration and competency.

Culture

Thailand is famous for its relaxed environment and cultural aspects; these are magnets for tourists and should be treasured. This relaxed attitude to life seems to permeate part of society and the level of responsibility for the quality of a particular action or project is usually given nominal adherence in order to minimize the level of accountability one faces (Chinnawongs, et al., 2006; Hallinger & Lee, 2010; Richmond, 2007). Although the Thai culture is beautiful in its own right, at some point reality must dictate changes in perspective if the most beautiful parts of the culture are to survive without forced foreign influence when economic conditions become desperate (Krachangvej, 2005; Lohitkul, 2005; Sangnapaboworn, 2003).

Maths			Science			Reading		
1	Shanghai, China	613	1	Shanghai, China	580	1	Shanghai, China	570
2	Singapore	573	2	Hong Kong, China	555	2	Hong Kong, China	545
3	Hong Kong, China	561	3	Singapore	551	3	Singapore	542
4	Taiwan	560	4	Japan	547	4	Japan	538
5	South Korea	554	5	Finland	545	5	South Korea	536
6	Macau, China	538	6	Estonia	541	6	Finland	524
7	Japan	536	7	South Korea	538	7=	Taiwan	523
8	Liechtenstein	535	8	Vietnam	528	7=	Canada	523
9	Switzerland	531	9	Poland	526	7=	Ireland	523
10	Netherlands	523	10=	Liechtenstein	525	10	Poland	518
11	Estonia	521	10=	Canada	525	11=	Liechtenstein	516
12	Finland	519	12	Germany	524	11=	Estonia	516
13=	Canada	518	13	Taiwan	523	13=	Australia	512
13=	Poland	518	14=	Netherlands	522	13=	New Zealand	512
15	Belgium	515	14=	Ireland	522	15	Netherlands	511
16	Germany	514	16=	Macau, China	521	16=	Macau, China	509
17	Vietnam	511	16=	Australia	521	16=	Switzerland	509
18	Austria	506	18	New Zealand	516	16=	Belgium	509
19	Australia	504	19	Switzerland	515	19=	Germany	508
20=	Ireland	501	20=	Slovenia	514	19=	Vietnam	508
20=	Slovenia	501	20=	United Kingdom	514	21	France	505
22=	Denmark	500	22	Czech Republic	508	22	Norway	504
22=	New Zealand	500	23	Austria	506	23	United Kingdom	499
24	Czech Republic	499	24	Belgium	505	24	United States	498
25	France	495	25	Latvia	502	25	Denmark	496
26	United Kingdom	494	26	France	499	26	Czech Republic	493
27	Iceland	493	27	Denmark	498	27=	Austria	490
28	Latvia	491	28	United States	497	27=	Italy	490
29	Luxembourg	490	29=	Spain	496	29	Latvia	489
30	Norway	489	29=	Lithuania	496	30=	Luxembourg	488
31	Portugal	487	31	Norway	495	30=	Portugal	488
32	Italy	485	32=	Italy	494	30=	Spain	488
33	Spain	484	32=	Hungary	494	30=	Hungary	488
34=	Russia	482	34=	Luxembourg	491	34	Israel	486
34=	Slovakia	482	34=	Croatia	491	35	Croatia	485
36	United States	481	36	Portugal	489	36=	Iceland	483
37	Lithuania	479	37	Russia	486	36=	Sweden	483
38	Sweden	478	38	Sweden	485	38	Slovenia	481
39	Hungary	477	39	Iceland	478	39=	Lithuania	477
40	Croatia	471	40	Slovakia	471	39=	Greece	477
41	Israel	466	41	Israel	470	41=	Russia	475
42	Greece	453	42	Greece	467	41=	Turkey	475
43	Serbia	449	43	Turkey	463	43	Slovakia	463
44	Turkey	448	44	United Arab Emirates	448	44	Cyprus	449
45	Romania	445	45	Bulgaria	446	45	Serbia	446
46	Cyprus	440	46=	Serbia	445	46	United Arab Emirates	442
47	Bulgaria	439	47=	Chile	445	47=	Thailand	441
48	United Arab Emirates	434	48	Thailand	444	47=	Chile	441
49	Kazakhstan	432	49	Romania	439	47=	Costa Rica	441
50	Thailand	427	50	Cyprus	438	50	Romania	438
51	Chile	423	51	Costa Rica	429	51	Bulgaria	436
52	Malaysia	421	52	Kazakhstan	425	52	Mexico	424
53	Mexico	413	53	Malaysia	420	53	Montenegro	422
54	Montenegro	410	54	Uruguay	416	54	Uruguay	411
55	Uruguay	409	55	Mexico	415	55	Brazil	410
56	Costa Rica	407	56	Montenegro	410	56	Tunisia	404
57	Albania	394	57	Jordan	409	57	Colombia	403

Figure 2: Results of PISA tests (PISA, 2014)

Thailand has a proud history of independence. However, oftentimes that nationalistic pride is a hindrance to social, economic, and educational influence from other cultures with more experience in progressive reforms. The hindrance is primarily caused by a lack of diversity in ideas and processes embedded in nationalistic narratives that guide reviews and what foreign ideals should be included/excluded (Rappa & Wee Hock An, 2006, pp. 1, 3). When some foreign initiative is adopted, it is usually something that appears to have had significant success in another country with apparently similar circumstances, and is thus adopted to solve a particular problem in Thailand, but the adoption is carried out without an evaluation of the initiative's legitimacy for the particularities of Thai culture (Sangnapaboworn, 2003).

Administration

Administrators in Thailand have a tendency to focus on maximizing profitability with short-term goals. However, greater profitability is more likely if planning is for the long-term and plans are adhered to. The focus on short-term profit focus continuously places educational institutions into time-consuming and costly capital expenditure to gain profit (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2000; Lauridsen, 2002; Richmond, 2007). The consequences are (Chinnawongs, et al., 2006; Ng, 2001; Pimpa, 2009; Richmond, 2007; Sangnapaboworn, 2003):

- Acquiesce to a more relaxed learning environment and learning expectations resulting from student complaints
- A more entertaining social networking experiences to meet student preferences as a replacement for academics
- Parental preferences based on prestige of the institution or cost savings of tuition programs rather than performance of the student
- Cultural stigma to perceived dealings with negative situations or language deficiencies
- Acquiesces to nationalistic tendencies negating foreign influence

English competency

Poor English competency in Thailand is a critical example of the need for improvement to enable the Kingdom to meet future challenges. Both the WEF and PISA tests are conducted in English, and, more importantly, article 34 of the *ASEAN Economic Charter* stipulates: "The working language of ASEAN shall be English" (Shimizu, 2011, p. 29). As stated by Richmond: "The educational methods commonly used in developing countries, particularly rote learning by students expected to be passive recipients of knowledge, are mostly ineffective at training professionals to think critically and creatively about the development needs of their nations" (Servatamorn 1997, cited in Richmond, 2007, p. 13). Students are expected to obey social norms rather than pursue academic excellence. They must remain respectful and not embarrass the teacher; they should avoid asking questions even if they do not comprehend the lesson (Hallinger & Pornkasem 2000, cited in Richmond, 2007, p. 50). In addition, there is a perception that English competency is only useful for obtaining employment (McVeigh 2002, cited in Richmond, 2007, p. 99).

These factors begin to explain the excessive presence, and resulting administrative acquiesce, of learner preferences to extracurricular activities that building greater levels of social networking through "stepwise" education in a guided and directed fashion

(Ajisuksmo & Vermunt, 1999, cited by Richmond, 2007, p. 56-57) rather than through cognitive and critical-thinking methods prevalent in Western cultures (McVeigh, 2002, cited in Richmond, 2007, p. 232). The Thai learner is inundated with so much "stepwise" learning that they are apathetic and passive to further valid academic pursuits that exercise their academic potential (McVeigh, 2002, cited in Richmond, 2007, p.232). As reported by Chadha, Frick, Green & Wang (citing Baer et al, 2007), a study of the literacy skills of 1,827 college and university students using the same standards as the US National Assessment of Adult Literacy (2003) guidelines, revealed that 23 percent of 2nd year college and vocational school students were proficient in English, and 38 per cent of 4th year college and universities students demonstrated proficiency. Seventy-five percent of 2nd year school students and 50 per cent of 4th year school students had inadequate skills for summarizing editorial writing.

One of main problems of Thailand's adult learning environment stems directly from instructors' mindsets concerning student evaluations; that is administrative competence is included in students' annual instructor performance evaluations. Thus, student evaluations often include irrelevant factors and teachers, who are inherently paranoid about loss of salary, benefits, and, even, their position, take notice. "Instructional Quality" scales measuring evaluation ratings have a high correlation between favourable student evaluations and favourable grades at the end of term (Johnson, 2002). Instructors who facilitate learning environments which took into account learner preferences for level of difficulty and socialization opportunities also received the highest approval ratings (Johnson, 2002, p. 14): for example, 30 percent of learners *expecting* a "B" grade or higher rated the course as "Good", and 43 percent of learners *expecting* to receive an "A" rated the course as "Excellent" by end of term (p. 14). Johnson (2002), from Duke University in the US, studied the comparative effects on received grade in nine teaching categorical items and found that in every category the "tendency of students to rate more highly those courses for which they received higher grades is nearly uniform" (Johnson, 2002, p. 15).

The problem, as stated previously, is that the numbers look great, the instructors are pleased, and the learners are satisfied, but the students' mastery of the subject material is non-existent (Chadha, et al., 2007, p. 14).

DISCUSSION

The need for the development of education in Thailand requires greater focus on the causes of students' learning barriers. To say that learners need to be more motivated or inspired is an easy response. The need is to deliver the required course objectives in a manner that learners can adhere to, as well as to adequately prepare them for their chosen career (Grace, Jacqueline, & Jared, 2008); both must be comprehensive and efficient.

Instructors

Operating under the assumption that the lecturer has the required qualifications and the institution in question conducted a thorough check of said qualifications, the key problem of instructor competence, therefore, lies in attitude and perspective. Individually, no instructor can be expected to conform to rigid standards of personality and expectancies, because every instructor is different and those differences are what bring richness and

creativity to the classroom (Fitzgerald, Kelly, Park, & Zha, 2006; Grace, et al., 2008; Kenneth, 2010). This paper identifies several issues that require attention:

Instructors' attitudes

The instructors' attitudes greatly affect the learning medium. Instructors' attitudes toward students are likely to affect what students learn, and the concept of a self-fulfilling prophecy can occur based solely on instructors' indifference or negative outlook/expectations toward students . . . a negative mindset (Fitzgerald, Kelly, Park, & Zha, 2006). Misconceptions regarding the level of competency of students' native cultures, then empathetically lowering expectancies with non-standard English, or native Thai (Grace, et al., 2008). Subsequent instructors' inability to create a truly welcoming atmosphere for students because of aforementioned misconceptions that may negatively affect learning, as well as a lack of a forum for discussion to address the linguistic challenges and cultural differences present in diverse classrooms (Kenneth, 2010).

Improving the attitudes of instructors

Kenneth (2010) notates that instructors with graduate degrees hold higher positive attitudes toward language and cultural diversity than instructors without such degrees, and must possess a concrete awareness of cultural differences and groups to work effectively with students from different cultural backgrounds. Fundamentally, multicultural knowledge should include an understanding of how knowledge itself is created, an understanding of how it can be viewed as a construction of society, and an understanding of how it is important to the hospitality industry (Kenneth, 2010). Once instructors have a better attitude, the stage is set for them to be critical of their own perspectives and of the subsequent impact it has on the learning environment.

Adult-Learning Facilitation

One of the primary issues with instruction lies in the use of pedagogical techniques in adult learning. To clarify: pedagogy is the use of child-based learning where the instructor is the centre of attention and expects the learners to follow his or her directives through repetition to prove coherence and comprehension. Pedagogy is not a useful teaching tool for adults since they do not pay as much attention to something without significant reasoning. Adult-based learning, andragogy, engages the learner to provide feedback to demonstrate their cognitive acceptance of the information. Facilitation is the act of helping to guide and move a circumstance along in specific directives, but with the learner being more proactive and participating in a manner that includes active feedback and original thought (Brookfield, 1986).

Performance Evaluation

Evaluations of teacher performance have a significant impact on not only the instructor's every-day performance but also the recruitment process of key talent. However, in Thailand, when questioning the individual teacher, the subject of performance evaluations is almost always shunned and dismissed as being invalid (Sangnapaboworn, 2003). This lack of valuation of student assessments of the instructors' performance is a direct reflection of the instructor's desire to remove the inclusion of student opinions of their performance in instructors' annual performance appraisals and contract renewals (Brookfield, 1986; Vandenberg, 2005). Student responses are critical to the progressive development of the curriculum and teaching environment but, too often, these evaluations

highlight inconsequential, invalid, irrelevant, or even redundant topics that end up having no constructive applicability (Calkins & Micari, 2010; Sangnapaboworn, 2003).

Invalidity of student performance evaluations

According to Sangnapaboworn (2003), the deficiencies in the Thai educational system are not the cognitive capabilities of the learners, but rather the complaints associated with the difficulty level of the subject from both learner and parent perspectives, as well as the subsequent acquiesce of the instructor's curriculum to learner preferences in order to foster a more favourable assessment at the end of the semester.

A comparison of second year and fourth year students' learning environments in Thai colleges and universities show deficiencies in students' performance evaluations in response to the grading assessments provided by lecturers. These studies indicate that students' responses are based on personal opinions reacting to negative grade results instead of on curriculum relevancy to their performance; the consequence is lecturer curriculum design that is more friendly to student expectations (Kenneth, 2010; Richmond, 2007; Sangnapaboworn, 2003). The need for radical change is apparent. Baer, et al. (2006) show a substantial link between a productive learning environment and grading assessments. The performance evaluations of the students based on their perception of the relevancy of the curriculum focuses the learning environment and grading, decreasing the chance of possible invalid responses due to personal bias or conflict between lecturer and student. Complementing this idea are the key factors for success seen in the Chadha, et al. (2007) report where the support of instructors – both inside and outside of the classroom environment, a placement of high expectations for self-study and grade results, and the integration of material in social applicability of the students' post-graduate futures promote a more effective educational experience. Both of the Baer et al and Chadha et al reports provide curriculum preparation and evaluation guidelines that can contribute to an effective model of radical change that is recommended to all learning adult institutions in Thailand.

The critical element to consider when including student assessments in teacher performance evaluations is the effect this has on the psyche of the teacher. Most instructors make significant personal and professional sacrifices to become masters of their respective subjects (Johnson, 2002; Sangnapaboworn, 2003), and to be subject to scrutiny of their jobs and careers at the *whim* of a learner is regarded as worrisome by most instructors, disturbing by some, and insulting by nearly all (Calkins & Micari, 2010; Chadha, et al., 2007, p.12; Johnson, 2002; Sangnapaboworn, 2003). Competition for attracting key talent will become an increasingly critical component to the individual institution's long-term success (Calkins & Micari, 2010, p. 15) but how can that institution attract talent if their performance evaluations are overly critical and inclusive of debunked and irrelevant student opinion? As Johnson (2002) points out: "As an increasing number of universities use student evaluations of teaching in administrative decisions that affect the careers of their faculty, the incentives for faculty to manipulate their grading policies in order to enhance their evaluations increase."

FRAMEWORK FOR IMPROVEMENT

The instructor needs to provide multiple avenues of communication for the students to feel engaged, but students must, themselves, actively engage in the learning medium

(Fitzgerald, et al., 2006; Kenneth, 2010; Pimpa, 2009; Richmond, 2007; Sangnapaboworn, 2003). There must be accountability in the grading that does not include supplemental testing. There must be clear accountability in the student's grade failings, regardless of whether the learner acknowledges their incompetencies or not. The recommended evaluation techniques for assessing a teacher's performance to improve the student's learning, as well as the administrative role in circumventing the cultural barriers to curriculum development are framed below.

The door swings both ways

The instructor must design the learning environment and mediums for teaching to include facilitation techniques and cognitive testing, but the student must find the motivation from within to learn. "Students must engage in solving those problems so that instructors can coach them and give guidance and feedback as needed" (Chadha, et al., 2007, p. 15), but the integration of the cognitive skills from that practice, guidance and feedback must be completed by the learner. Non-compliance should be considered a failure of the course and student grades should reflect non-compliance regardless if students like it or not.

The Likert scale and feedback

A Likert scale is predominately used for the psychometric testing of respondents' ratings of preference for the evaluation of an issue. Open-ended questions are an opportunity for respondents to post their opinion on issues or to provide more detailed explanation for an item not sufficiently expressed by the Likert scale question. Historically, the main issue with the use of a Likert scale questionnaire on teacher performance assessments by learners has been the bias in questions that encourages student to provide opinions on the appearance of the learning environment or the physical characteristics of the instructor. The curriculum and learning mediums are what should be the focus of the questionnaires, not the instructor's personality or personality nuances (Johnson, 2002, p. 9). Questions about the instructor's punctuality, appearance, linguistic factors, and personal habits and traits should be eliminated. Questionnaires should, instead, focus on nine specific categories (Johnson, 2002, p. 13):

1. Instructor concern for the subject
2. Encouragement of questioning
3. Instructor enthusiasm for the subject
4. Instructor availability outside of the classroom
5. Instructor rating compared with other instructors
6. Instructor communication coherence
7. Critical thinking exercises
8. Comprehensiveness of quizzes and examinations
9. Applicability of subject material to career or personal life

Vocabulary enhancement

Vocabulary development is the cornerstone of every subject's coherence and validity (Ng, 2001; Richmond, 2007), regardless if it is a subject of language, business, or other concentration in a learning environment where English is mandated by the aforementioned article 34 of the ASEAN Charter. Most experienced teachers will admit to using such techniques as multiple-choice testing, crossword puzzles, vocab-box plug-ins, etc. (Brookfield, 1986; Ng, 2001; Richmond, 2007), and, most honest teachers in Thailand will acknowledge that such tactics fail because they test memory and the

student's proclivity for cheating (Carter, 2014; Ng, 2001). More successful techniques take a set of vocabulary words studied in the learner's own time, followed by an in-class lecture in which each word is reiterated and explained by the lecturer both verbally and visually, and then cap-stoned with group or pair discussion exercises in which the key requirements for validity are the inclusion of the vocabulary word in question (Richmond, 2007). When followed with comprehension questioning on a quiz – open or closed is inconsequential – where the definition has been specifically paraphrased, then only the learner who has genuinely studied and understands that definition can correctly identify the correct corresponding vocabulary word (Brookfield, 1986; Ng, 2001; Richmond, 2007).

Comprehension questioning

Proficiency in grammar and spelling is important for cognitive responses, but what is more important is the ability to communicate effectively, using grammar and spelling that is understandable. Given enough time and practice, the learner can perfect skills in their chosen profession as the skills become necessary, but for the sake of learning in an adult setting, some flexibility that encourages more motivating learning exercises is recommended (Brookfield, 1986). Comprehension questioning is only as good as the level of participation demonstrated by the student. If students are discouraged or demotivated the learning opportunity reduces (Ng, 2001). Requiring a comprehensive answer to a complex question should include the use of the corresponding industry or subject jargon and be reflected confidently in short-answer or complete sentence formats.

Critical thinking

Developing critical thinking is an essential part of the learning process that begins with ensuring that vocabulary learnt through to comprehension questions (Brookfield, 1986; Ng, 2001; Richmond, 2007; Sangnapaboworn, 2003). The validation of comprehension of the vocabulary, followed by comprehension short-answers, is finally tested through critical thinking exercises, such as case studies analyses where the questions themselves are not guiding the student's responses in a suggestive manner, but take a cold case of a seemingly identifiable calibre and asking students for their thoughts on effective solutions (Johnson, 2002). Provided that the learner has used the corresponding vocabulary in a comprehensive manner in the same question and short-answer format, then success can be gleaned and confidently tested in a final examination scenario (Brookfield, 1986; Ng, 2001; Richmond, 2007; Sangnapaboworn, 2003).

Follow-up: Examination

Once the vocabulary, comprehension, and critical thinking skills have been presented, practiced, and produced, then the learning validation must be documented. This should be done in the form of an examination(s). Critical to this examination purpose is the use of correct testing methodologies, eliminating those methods that are established or easier for the instructor (Johnson, 2002). Multiple-choice questions should be avoided because learners can easily develop systems for cheating and only serve to test the students' ability to memorize or guesstimate. This can also be said for gap-fill exercises, vocabulary-box questioning, crossword puzzles, matching exercises, and picture association, which are all valid practice mediums in a pedagogical setting (Ng, 2001). For adult learning validation, they serve no other useful purpose than to relieve the workload of the

instructor or faculty member committing the grading duty (Johnson, 2002). A proper examination will include the following components:

- Vocabulary comprehension using the same technique of paraphrasing learned definitions and requiring the student to identify the correct vocabulary word without prompts of any kind, or through presenting the vocabulary word and asking the student to write the corresponding definition – though this latter exercise should be reserved for learner groups with more advanced levels of English comprehension in whatever subject they are studying using the English language.
- Short-answer questions requiring the same use of vocabulary identification as for complex answering systems but, in examinations, the questions should be fewer but combine related concepts to test the students' ability for comprehension and adaptation.
- Critical thinking exercise, such as case study analysis, similar to the form presented in individual unit comprehension quizzes is crucial, as it takes the aforementioned skills of vocabulary and short-answer forms and puts them into an independent exercise of a situation and requires adaptation of vocabulary and complex thinking to solve the case study scenario's problems. For examinations, the case study analysis should include more questions than in-class exercises, and require demonstration of capacity to adapt vocabulary.

Follow-up: Grading rubric

A significant contributor to educational development is the need to upgrade and improve the method and rating of how the students are graded. Previous grading scales have been too generous, typically in favour of the pressure from performance evaluations that result in a low ranking for the entire Thai educational system. Table 1 provides a model of the grading rubric in use for meeting international standards, with measureable success in Thai classrooms:

Table 1: Grading scale rubric: Course: 902237 International Human Resource Management

95 – 100	=	A+
90 – 94	=	A
85 – 89	=	B+
80 – 84	=	B
75 – 79	=	C+
70 – 74	=	C
65 – 69	=	D+
60 – 65	=	D
0 – 59	=	F

Critical to this effort is the final term assessment that is devoid of the traditional considerations of grading for attendance, participation, uniform adherence, and discipline. These are important aspects to student evaluations, but at no point should an adult learner receive cognitive component grading for wearing the correct clothing or showing up for class.

Curriculum

Most curricula in Thailand are adapted from international curricula but have been, typically, presented in learning modes that were ineffective for cognitive assurance, or

moulded to acquiesce to learner and parental demands. Some aspects of the curriculum require specific attention: namely there is a need to exclude culturally preferred subjects in favour of subjects that have more practicality and usefulness on an international scale, especially for the upcoming AEC. What has been highlighted throughout this paper is the impediments brought about by Thai culture to educational development. Cultural necessities, however, should not be ignored and those that are concurrent with their mode of analyzing and integrating should be enhanced. Nevertheless, previous attempts at including predominately "Thai Wisdom" (Sangnapaboworn, 2003) in educational reform may have been unbalanced and overseen by individuals susceptible to cultural and nationalistic bias. While Sangnapaboworn's assessment of maintaining culturally sensitive values is commendable, the patterned cultural response mechanisms are devoid of permitting cognitive adaptation, such as cultural bias to avoid negative issues, cultural bias to avoid questioning established doctrine, and cultural bias to attentive detail for facilitation techniques.

SUGGESTIONS

The development of education in Thailand has two possible options:

1. Collaboration: This idea suggests that each program should be developed as a collaborative effort, with individual instructors assigned to develop specific programs based on their experience teaching the subject and qualifications for which they were hired in the first place, but all coordinated under one mutually designed vision. This development effort should be overseen by one individual to ensure curriculum outline adherence but follow the outline devised by the group.

   Potential Problems:
   (1) Existing issues with certain instructors, including demonstrated reluctance to participate in previous curriculum improvement efforts. When collecting information for this paper, the author faced reoccurring objections with rationales such as perceived insufficient time or, more commonly, simple laziness.
   (2) Additional problems of varying skill sets in documentation and computer usage abilities, as well as a lack of desire to communicate with other instructors, makes uniformed appearance and content of revised material extremely difficult, and most likely not possible.

2. Singularity: This is the concept that the entire curriculum using English as a medium for instruction be designed/revised by one or select group of instructors capable of working together with one vision, and without hesitation or negative mindsets. It guarantees efficiency and uniformity, as well as completion on a timely basis.

   Potential Problem: Should one, or even a select group, be elected to perform this task? To carry out this option requires a significant reservation of the instructors' workloads and teaching schedules (6-10 months estimated), ignoring most other teaching duties.

Plutarch said: "What we achieve inwardly will change outer reality." This means that in order for us to improve circumstances we must start with ourselves. We must change that which is at fault if there is to be true progress, and sometimes that means looking at those faults in earnest regardless of how difficult they may be. The consequence of failing to do this and opting for traditional responses that sound better than they are will continue the downward spiral that has landed Thailand at the bottom of the central ASEAN members.

CONCLUSION

This paper has highlighted several critical issues of cultural bias and historical nationalistic tendencies that have contributed to the lack of progressive development of the Thailand's educational sector. Changes to curriculums to make them more creative and cognitively focused are possible but instructors face problems and disadvantages, as well as a lack of competency and training in how to do this. This paper recommends that each instructor participate in facilitation techniques to understand how to change their instructional practices, with specific emphasis on utilising andragogy techniques (e.g. converting classroom methodologies from closed, recall questioning to open, creative questioning). The proclivity of the learner in the Thai culture is to regard difficulty with disdain. However, true fostering of a progressive, andragogy-based learning environment can only come from (1) imposing internationally-acceptable curriculum, (2) expecting and maintaining strict adherence to rigid grading expectations, (3) providing relentless mediums for continued communication inside and outside of the classroom, and (4) showing the learner precisely how the data will improve their lives and careers (Chadha, et al., 2007, p. 12).

What is required will mean a significant increase in work and attention required by the instructor, but the future of the country's progress demands more effort from the instructor than ever before. It is important that the administrative staff support the autonomy of the instructor in the classroom and ensure that the instructor's adherence is to the academic results; that is, a results-driven learning environment rather than an evaluation-based one.

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