

A model for promoting democracy by using the corporate culture of secondary school student councils in North-eastern Thailand

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Abstract – *This research aims to investigate the history of secondary school student councils in North-eastern Thailand (Isan), to study the present conditions and problems of secondary school student councils in Isan and to study a model for promoting democracy by using the corporate culture of secondary school student councils in Isan. The study area encompassed Kalasin Province, including Somdetpittayakom School in Somdet District and Yangtaladwittayakarn School in Yangtalat District, Mahasarakham Province, including Sarakhampittayakhom School in Muang District and Kantarawichai School in Kantarawichai District, and Khon Kaen Province, including Kallayanawat School in Muang District and Nampong Suksa School in Nampong District. This research employed interview, observation and focus groups as data collection tools with a purposive sample of student councils in secondary schools in Isan. Data was verified and validated using a triangulation method and analyzed by descriptive analysis. Research results show that the student councils in the secondary schools of Isan were established to promote democracy among youth. Students gained knowledge, understanding of the democratic system, experience in student administration and governance by students for students. It was also found that student council activities in secondary schools give students opportunities to know about their roles, acceptance, respect rights and duties, use intellect to solve problems, have faith in the democratic system, develop morality and ethics and preserve and disseminate traditions and culture according to the principles of Dharma. Current problems with student councils include no student interest in duties and no relationship between the elected leaders and their constituency. Selfishness, dishonesty and ignorance are the causes of non-transparent school councils with no responsibility, no response to student needs, lack of rights, justice and effectiveness, lacking of creative ideas and no vision. It was found that principles of Dharma should be incorporated into a model to promote democracy by using corporate culture of secondary school student councils. These include courtesy, discipline and gratefulness to the nation, religion and the King. Problems should be discussed and solved in the appropriate way.*

Keywords – *Corporate culture, democracy, model, promotion, student.*

INTRODUCTION

Democracy is one of the processes used for ruling a state or country whereby people are able to take part in governing themselves [1]. The form of ruling must maintain rights and fairness, legal justice and public sovereignty and use reason democratically. Nowadays, Thailand is governed as a constitutional monarchy. The Thai constitution (2540 B.E), section 41 stipulates that people will have more freedom in political participation by using tools to develop good character, proficiency, morality, ethics, discipline, responsibility, the environment, transparent politics, democracy and fairness [2].

Thai democracy is visible in many social institutions, such as cultural institutions, economic institutions, families and schools [3]. The families and schools are the institutions that have important roles to instil good, democratic values in the youth because the family institution is the first place children learn and it is the institution with the longest lasting relationship to the children [4]. Schools are institutions that provide knowledge and promote democracy for students, especially in basic education. They focus on developing learners to be able to develop their quality of life and readiness to help society. They also train students to be good citizens in a democratic society governed by the

King. Teachers can impart knowledge of the democratic process to students and the school years constitute the appropriate period of time to promote character and democratic ways. It can be said that democracy promotion relies on the school, which, after the family, is the starting point [5].

To instil democratic ways in all Thai people, elder members of society can be good role models. Democratic understanding should be promoted at school, especially good attitudes and understanding of the democratic system [6]. Learning and practice of democracy is enhanced by having democratic general policies in schools, which is an important foundation of the Ministry of Education policies [7]. Activities must be provided in schools to make students knowledgeable, understand and think of values of a democratic system ruled by the King. Schools should have student committees in order to provide opportunities for students to practice as democratic-minded members of society and learn democratic theories in real life situations [8].

Corporate culture is one aspect of society maintained when there is interaction and aims between groups of people. The corporation has a structure, rules and character that are transmitted to its members in their roles, relationships, activities and objectives. The members follow the corporation and its aims in order to uphold the corporate culture [9]. Corporate culture is very important for the development of man-management, which in turn is the greatest productive resource to create culture. Man-management is the tool to make people work better with power and will, systematically and efficiently by making them confident to continue working towards the corporate solution. Good man-management helps solve problems and respond to the group's need [10]. Therefore, corporate culture is a social adhesive that would benefit inclusion in student councils.

A student council is an elected body of students whose purpose is to represent their classes. The council of students is an important mechanism to help students develop democratic values and spirit. These bodies go a long way to making good citizen for the society and nation. Student councils give students opportunities to learn leadership roles and duties, accept the ideas of others, experience responsibility, practice self-discipline, consider public opinion, understand how democracy functions and how they can be a part of democratic systems in appropriate and peaceful ways [11]. Student councils also promote democracy among

youth. Students gain knowledge, understanding of the democratic system, experience in student administration and governance by students for students. Student council activities in secondary schools also give students opportunities to know about their roles, acceptance, respect rights and duties, use their intellect to solve problems, have faith in the democratic system and develop morality and ethics. Students are also provided with learning opportunities that focus on teaching Thai values and how to be a good citizen [12]. From the outset, student councils promote student rights and duties by filling ranks through a democratic election. Everyone can vote and elect their chosen representative. Students experience the democratic process in the student election model and choose chiefs, level leaders, club presidents, student committee members and student councillors [13].

In a position of responsibility towards students at a secondary school, the lead researcher was aware of the importance of democracy promotion to youths in North-eastern Thailand. Therefore, this investigation was designed to examine the secondary school student councils of Isan.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research aims to investigate the history of secondary school student councils in North-eastern Thailand (Isan), to study the present conditions and problems of secondary school student councils in Isan and to study a model for promoting democracy by using the corporate culture of secondary school student councils in Isan.

METHODS

The study area for this qualitative investigation encompassed Kalasin Province, including Somdetpittayakom School in Somdet District and Yangtaladwittayakarn School in Yangtalat District, Mahasarakham Province, including Sarakhampittayakhom School in Muang District and Kantarawichai School in Kantarawichai District, and Khon Kaen Province, including Kallayanawat School in Muang District and Nampong Suksa School in Nampong District. The samples included 18 key informants, 54 casual informants and 18 general informants, who were all selected by a purposive sampling technique. This research employed interview, observation and focus groups as data collection tools. Data was verified and validated using a triangulation method and analyzed by typological analysis according

to the three aims of the research. The results of the study are recorded in the following descriptive analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research results show that the student councils in the secondary schools of Isan were established to promote democracy among youth and evolved from a teacher-led system to a student-led governing body. Students gained knowledge, understanding of the democratic system, experience in student administration and governance by students for students. Ultimately the council teaches individuals how they can be part of the democratic system.

It was found that student council activities in secondary schools give students opportunities to know about their roles, acceptance, respect rights and duties, use intellect to solve problems, have faith in the democratic system, develop morality and ethics and preserve and disseminate traditions and culture according to the principles of Dharma. Members of the student council have a duty to maintain and develop the reputation of the school, Thai culture and the monarchy.

Current problems with student councils include no student interest in duties and no relationship between the elected leaders and their constituency. Occasionally there have been cases of council candidates cheating to win the election. Selfishness, dishonesty and ignorance are the causes of non-transparent school councils with no responsibility, no response to student needs, lack of rights, justice and effectiveness, lacking of creative ideas and no vision. Good conduct during elections includes students lining-up to vote in queues and honouring the result of the election. Strong, high-performing councils agree on decisions, orders and promises. In general, the students participate and help each other to do activities at school, at home and in their communities. Good behaviour includes helping friends and guardians do work, participating and helping people on special occasions or at community festivals and walking in a straight, orderly line while walking to school and returning home. Members of the student council were found to have good decision-making skills and were able to discuss and solve problems in an appropriate way.

From the study of conditions and problems of student councils in the secondary schools of Isan it can be claimed that the purpose of the student council establishment is to provide student representatives. These individuals can organize activities and give ideas to administrators about school activities. This is one

way to instill habits and teach democratic processes, as well as giving students experience with leadership, accepting other ideas, taking responsibilities and solving problems appropriate ways.

It was found that principles of Dharma should be incorporated into a model to promote democracy by using corporate culture of secondary school student councils. These include courtesy, discipline and gratefulness to the nation, religion and the King. Problems should be discussed and solved in the appropriate way. Courtesy, unity and intellect are the skills that members of the student council need to work in a democratic model. Students should help each other, follow the school rules, be well-disciplined, have good manners and be grateful to the nation, religion and the King. The students in the successful student councils of secondary schools in Isan stood in queues, respected the rights of others and honoured one another. Whenever there was an argument, order or promise, students came to an agreement and did well. As for unity, the students participated and helped each other to do activities at school, home and in their communities.

CONCLUSION

This research aimed to investigate the history of secondary school student councils in Northesatern Thailand (Isan), to study the present conditions and problems of secondary school student councils in Isan and to study a model for promoting democracy by using the corporate culture of secondary school student councils in Isan. This research employed interview, observation and focus groups as data collection tools with a purposive sample of student councils in secondary schools in Isan. Research results showed that the student councils in the secondary schools of Isan were established to promote democracy among youth. Students gained knowledge, understanding of the democratic system, experience in student administration and governance by students for students. It was also found that student council activities in secondary schools give students opportunities to know about their roles, respect rights and duties, have faith in the democratic system and preserve and disseminate traditions and culture according to the principles of Dharma. Current problems with student councils include no student interest in duties and no relationship between the elected leaders and their constituency. It was found that principles of Dharma should be incorporated into a model to promote democracy by

using corporate culture of secondary school student councils.

RECOMMENDATION

Following the outcome of this investigation, the researchers wish to make some recommendations for secondary school student councils in Isan. The findings of this study indicate that a model of democracy promotion should include three principles of Dharma: courtesy, unity and intellect. The good behaviors identified in this study should be instilled and practiced when students are young, not only at school but also at home, so that democratic values and spirit can be developed in order to promote good citizenship in the society and nation.

Further research might be conducted by teachers or academics using corporate culture in the secondary school councils in other parts of Thailand. There should be extra courses of democracy promotion at all levels in order to let students learn, take part and evolve. These could help provide more experiences for further promoting democracy.

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