

The Influence of Education Philosophy Upon High School

Students' Performance in Bangkok Metropolitan

อิทธิพลของหลักปรัชญาการศึกษาต่อผลสัมฤทธิ์ทางการศึกษา

ของนักเรียนในเขตกรุงเทพมหานคร

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Abstract

Educational philosophy is the guiding principle for education administration. It is the way educators perceive and interpret the world. Hence, they organize the administration of teaching and learning accordingly. The way teachers teach depends on the way they believe in the truth of the world. Educational philosophy is categorized into 5 taxonomies namely Essentialism, Perennialism, Progressivism, Social Reconstructionism, and Existentialism.

In Thailand, many researchers supported one more philosophy, namely, Buddhism based on Buddhism religion which is pervasively adopted in Thailand. Essentialists believe that learning should be performed through memorizing the materials of subjects and traditional knowledge and wisdom are deemed valuable. Perennialists believe that educators should teach the fact about nature. Progressivists believe in the process of knowledge creation. Reconstructionists aim to educate learners with the knowledge to change the society. Existentialists believe that learners have freedom to choose what and how they learn. Buddhism philosophy believes that education should assist people to think logically and help the society. This research aimed to investigate the educational philosophies high school principals use and to assess the influence of educational philosophy and students' performance, specifically GPA. Samples consist of 559 principals of schools in Bangkok under the jurisdiction of the Office of the Basic Education Commission in Thailand. The samples were asked to identify the educational philosophy they were using. Moreover, average GPAs of all students in the respective school were collected as the measure of students' achievement in each school. One-way ANOVA was utilized to investigate the influence of education philosophy upon student's achievement. Results suggested that Buddhism educational philosophy yielded lowest GPAs. School followed Existentialism yielded highest GPA followed by Social Reconstructionism, Essentialism, Progressivism, Perennialism, and Buddhism philosophies respectively. Tests of statistical significance revealed that Existentialism and Social Reconstructionism philosophies yielded better results than other philosophies.

Keywords: Educational Philosophy; Student's Achievement; Bangkok Metropolitan; High School

บทคัดย่อ

ปรัชญาการศึกษาเป็นสิ่งที่นำการจัดการศึกษา นักการศึกษาและเข้าใจโลกจากแนวทางของปรัชญาที่ตนเชื่อ ดังนั้นจึงจัดการเรียนการสอนตามหลักปรัชญานั้น ครูอาจารย์ทำการสอนตามแนวทางที่ตนเชื่อเกี่ยวกับความเป็นจริงของโลก ปรัชญาการศึกษานั้นแบ่งออกเป็น 5 แบบคือ ปรัชญาการศึกษาสารัตถนิยม (Essentialism) นิรันดรนิยม (Perennialism) พิพัฒนาการนิยม (Progressivism) ปฏิรูปนิยม (Social Reconstructionism) และอัตถิภาวนิยม (Existentialism) นอกจากนี้นักวิชาการในประเทศไทยยังยอมรับหลักปรัชญาพุทธปรัชญาการศึกษา (Buddhism) เพิ่มขึ้นอีก 1 ปรัชญา เนื่องจากประเทศไทยยอมรับพุทธศาสนากันอย่างกว้างขวาง สารัตถนิยมนั้นเชื่อว่าความรู้เกิดจากการจำความรู้และภูมิปัญญาที่ถ่ายทอดสืบต่อกันมา นิรันดรนิยมเชื่อว่าควรสอนความรู้เกี่ยวกับธรรมชาติ พิพัฒนาการนิยมเน้นที่กระบวนการเรียนรู้มากกว่าเนื้อหาการเรียนรู้ ปฏิรูปนิยมเน้นการเรียนรู้เพื่อปรับเปลี่ยนสภาพสังคม อัตถิภาวนิยมเชื่อว่าผู้เรียนมีอิสระในการเลือกสิ่งที่ตนต้องการเรียน และพุทธปรัชญาการศึกษาเชื่อว่าการศึกษามีเพื่อทำให้ผู้เรียนคิดอย่างเป็นตรรกะและช่วยเหลือสังคม งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาหลักปรัชญาการศึกษาของผู้อำนวยการโรงเรียนมัธยมตอนปลาย และเพื่อศึกษาอิทธิพลของหลักปรัชญาการศึกษาที่มีต่อผลการเรียนของนักเรียนกลุ่มตัวอย่างประกอบด้วยผู้อำนวยการโรงเรียนมัธยมศึกษาตอนปลาย จำนวน 559 คน ในเขตกรุงเทพมหานครที่สังกัด สำนักงานคณะกรรมการการศึกษาขั้นพื้นฐาน กลุ่มตัวอย่างตอบแบบสอบถามที่ออกแบบมาเพื่อจำแนกหลักปรัชญาการศึกษาของผู้ตอบแบบสอบถามส่วนผลสัมฤทธิ์ของนักเรียนคิดจากคะแนน GPA (Grade Point Average) หรือคะแนนสะสมเฉลี่ย โดยนำคะแนน GPA ของนักเรียนทั้งหมดในแต่ละโรงเรียนมาเฉลี่ยรวมกันเพื่อใช้เป็นคะแนนสัมฤทธิ์ผลของนักเรียนแต่ละโรงเรียน งานวิจัยนี้ใช้การวิเคราะห์การแปรปรวนแบบทางเดียว (One-way ANOVA) เพื่อศึกษาความแตกต่างระหว่างคะแนนสัมฤทธิ์ผลของนักเรียนภายใต้ผู้อำนวยการที่ใช้หลักปรัชญาต่าง ๆ ผลการวิจัยพบว่า หลักพุทธปรัชญาการศึกษาให้ผลที่ต่ำที่สุด โรงเรียนที่ดำเนินการศึกษาภายใต้หลักปรัชญาอัตถิภาวนิยม (Existentialism) มีผลสัมฤทธิ์สูงที่สุดตามด้วยปฏิรูปนิยม (Social Reconstructionism) สารัตถนิยม (Essentialism) พิพัฒนาการนิยม (Progressivism) นิรันดรนิยม (Perennialism) และพุทธปรัชญาการศึกษา (Buddhism Philosophy) ตามลำดับการทดสอบระดับนัยสำคัญทางสถิติพบว่า อัตถิภาวนิยมและปฏิรูปนิยมนำไปสู่ผลสัมฤทธิ์ทางการศึกษาที่ดีกว่าปรัชญาการศึกษาแบบอื่น

คำสำคัญ: ปรัชญาการศึกษา; ผลสัมฤทธิ์ทางการเรียน; กรุงเทพมหานคร; มัธยมศึกษา

Introduction

Learning results in knowledge. People can retain and accumulate information learned. This information can be compiling and selected for utilization in an appropriate situation. Although a handful of variables create knowledge (Lockett, Kerr, & Robinson, 2008), formal and informal education is one of the essential instruments to cultivate knowledge and perceptions of people. Alauddin & Ashman (2014) performed a multivariate analysis of variance on data obtained from a leading Australian university and reported students' beliefs and attitudes towards learning varied based on their study philosophy. Hence, it is important that educators understand major philosophy in order to organization the teaching and learning process appropriately.

Thinkers of the world have been examining the fact of the nature and propose their conclusion regarding the truth about the world. However, their conclusions varied. Likewise, educators seek to examine fact regarding the essentials of teaching and learning in order to come up with the constitution of good teaching and learning approaches (Henniger, 2004). Educator's philosophies toward the "good" teaching and learning approaches lay the basis for the design of the curriculum and teaching and learning systems. There

are various educational philosophical thoughts. Unfortunately, there are sparse research papers on educational philosophy in Thailand. Most of the research papers in Thailand regarding philosophy describe the application of education philosophy in the organization of teaching and learning, for example, Panorum (2016) described the application of various education philosophy in one high school in Buriram province; Ruenglertboon (2006) compared the educational philosophy under the sufficiency economic system with western taxonomies; Wongduen (2015) examined the utilization of education philosophy of the sufficiency economy among schools in Srisaket province.

Research Objective

This paper aims to investigate major educational philosophies used by educators in Thailand and test the relationship between educational philosophy and students' performance. An application of philosophies suitable for the modern world is essential to the learning motivation of students. A better understanding of the issue could help to enhance the development of teaching and learning process suitable for the modern world for Thai students.

Literature

Philosophy

The Greek coined the word *philosophos* which means "love of wisdom" (Harold, 2004). People seeking wisdom was called Philosophers. Four branches of studying philosophy were classified namely Metaphysics, Epistemology, Logic and Axiology (Ozman & Craver, 1999). Metaphysics branch aims to determine what is real and what is not. In other words, Metaphysics investigate what is real and what is the truth of the world. Epistemology raises questions about knowledge and knowing. An important question is how knowledge is created or how do people know what we know and whether what we know is true or not. Logic is a branch of philosophy that focuses on the systems of reasoning and argument in order to find a conclusion about knowledge. Lastly, Axiology branch relates to the examination of ethical and aesthetic values. All of these philosophical branches are related directly to knowledge, and hence, education.

Philosophy refers to the study about the ways people seek knowledge and wisdom. Education is founded from the root of philosophy. Early philosophers such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle were great teachers who established schools to teach about knowledge and wisdom. Modern education system is deeply rooted in the ancient philosophers' approach towards knowledge and wisdom.

The discipline of education has adopted various philosophies or schools of thought: Essentialism, Perennialism, Progressivism, Social Reconstructionism and Existentialism (Bernard, 2006). In Thailand, because Buddhism is the major religion guiding the Thai nation for more than 700 years (Komolsevin, Knutson, & Tanchaisak, 2011), another educational philosophy was adopted the educational perspective based on Buddhism (Wongthamma, 2012). It is not surprising that the religion would influence the people's mindsets and their beliefs, and also the beliefs about education system. The Buddhism's teaching covers a magnitude of issues including educational approach. The discussion of Buddhism in this paper looks at Buddhism as a philosophy guiding the ways people do things i.e., manage the education system not as a religion. Recently, based on the late His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej's sufficiency economy theory, Thai educators are adopting a new approach towards education aiming at sustainability and sufficiency (Oxford Business Group, 2016).

Essentialism is a philosophy that believes there is an ultimate truth in the world. This nature or essence maintains constant (Mautner, 1996). Human seeks to learn this Truth. Perennialism believes that the world is unchanging and permanent. What was truth in the past is still the same today. Classical thoughts should be maintained (Kneller, 1971). Progressivism believes that the world is constantly changing. Truth at a moment in time might not be true in the future. People are different and obtain knowledge in different manner. What is true for one person may not be so for others. Social Reconstructionism believes that the society must make significant changes in how it operates and that the schools are one of the best agents for implementing the transformations needed (Webb et al., 2000). Existentialism believes in self-identity and the responsibility of choice (Solomon, 2005). The philosophy views each person as an individual with the freedom and responsibility of their own rather than having the same essential core set of universal characteristics (Webb et al., 2000). Buddhism believes in the development of the mind against superficial greed through reasoning and the maintenance of harmony in the society.

Educational Philosophy

Education process was classified based on perspectives of educators (Christopher, 1999). These perspectives were derived from the basic above mentioned philosophical beliefs. Educators with certain perspectives would manage and administer the teaching and learning process as well as curriculum based on their philosophical beliefs.

Henniger (2004) concluded that educational philosophy was composed of the study of 4 components: the beliefs about teaching and learning, perceptions of students, an understanding of knowledge, and the determination of what worth knowing. Educators with different philosophy would approach these four components in different manners. So, they were used as the frameworks to study different schools of philosophy in education. Each school or perspective paved the way educators approach the components.

Essentialists believe that teachers should be strict with students and students need to be disciplined to work hard. Teachers are considered the center of learning to motivate students. Learning should be performed through memorizing the materials of subjects. Traditional knowledge and wisdom are deemed valuable.

Perennialists believe that all students learn and grow in similar ways. Fact about nature is the major content for learning. Teachers should order and articulate the teaching process properly. Wisdom and knowledge are created through experience and age. The elders have accumulated wisdom and dispensed knowledge to students. Materials worth learning are traditional subjects. Teachers are the elders who distribute knowledge to students.

Progressivists believe that each student are different and has a unique set of needs and interests. They are active and self-motivated. Teachers should serve as a facilitator for learning. The best ways for students to learn is from active involvement. Knowledge is constructed from what students see, hear and do through their interaction with people and things. Progressivists emphasize the process of knowing rather than the materials themselves. Teachers should figure out the topics that would interest the students.

Reconstructionists believe that students would form the future. They are capable of changing the society. Teachers should emphasize the democratic models and excite students about the needs for social

change. Students should learn skills in life and become the change agents in the society. Materials related to the understanding of social justice and equity is important as well as strategies to implement social change.

Existentialists believe that each student is an individual and they have freedom to choose. Individualized educational experiences should be promoted. Teachers have the responsibility to demonstrate the importance of discipline in pursuing academic goals. Teachers should supply information for students so that they could discover who they are as individuals. Individual curriculum should be designed to help students understand selves and life's meanings.

Buddhism philosophy suggests that education is the development of people to be logical, tolerate, and able to analyze information in order to think and behave righteously towards others in the society. Perseverance is valued for learning.

Methodology

This study focused on schools in Bangkok. A list of high schools was obtained from the Office of the Basic Education Commission in Thailand. 1000 high schools were randomized through computerized program. A Questionnaire was mailed to the school's principals. The data collection instrument consisted of 3 parts. First, demographic data of the respondents were elicited. Second, description of each education philosophy was given to the samples. They were asked to select an education philosophy they perceived as matching their beliefs the most in order to group them into each educational philosophy taxonomy. Third, although several aspects could be used to measure students' performance, this study used schools' test scores to measure students' performance. Average grade point average of the highest class of the school was used as the indicator for students' performance. 559 sets of usable questionnaires were obtained. Data were cleaned and edited. The average grade point averages (GPA) were categorized by philosophical group and One-way ANOVA analysis was performed in order to compare the students' performance under each taxonomy of education philosophy.

Results

The samples consisted of 105 (18.8%) male and 443 (79.2%) female principals. The majority belongs to the 36-50 age groups (74.4%) and the rest was in 20-35 age group (25.6%). The majority of the principals was classified as utilizing Buddhism educational philosophy (354 persons, 63.3%) followed by Progressivism educational philosophy (141 persons, 25.2%). The third group was Perennialism educational philosophy (32 persons, 5.7%). 11 people (2.0%) reported they were Essentialism, 11 (2.0%) Social Reconstruction, and 10 (1.80%) Existentialism. The frequencies and percentages are shown in table 1.

Table 1

Classification of principals based on the taxonomy of educational philosophy

	Frequency	Percent
Buddhism	354	63.3
Progressivism	141	25.2
Perennialism	32	5.7

Table 1 (cont.)

	Frequency	Percent
Essentialism	11	2.0
Social Reconstructionism	11	2.0
Existentialism	10	1.8

Significant Chi-square test between gender and belief revealed that male and female used different philosophical approaches (Chi-square = 28.796, $p < .05$) (table 2).

Table 2

A Comparison of male and female principals using different educational philosophy

	Male	Female	Total
Buddhism	61	282	343
Progressivism	44	97	141
Perennialism	0	32	32
Essentialism	0	11	11
Social Reconstructionism	0	11	11
Existentialism	0	10	10
Total	105	443	548

Note: There were 11 cases which the respondents did not identify gender.

Chi-square test between age and belief also revealed that principals in different age groups had different philosophical approaches (Chi-square = 48.951, $p < .05$) (table 3).

Table 3

A comparison of principals in different age group using each taxonomy of educational philosophy

	Age 20-35	Age 36-50	Total
Buddhism	255	99	354
Progressivism	119	22	141
Perennialism	21	11	32
Essentialism	11	0	11
Social Reconstructionism	0	11	11
Existentialism	10	0	10
Total	416	143	559

The investigation of the philosophical beliefs also yielded indifferent results in mark of students ($F = .012$, $p > .05$) (table 4). Average GPA's of students classified by philosophy were displayed in table 5. Post-hoc analysis using LSD procedure is shown in table 6.

Table 4

One-way ANOVA test for the students' marks classified by philosophical beliefs

ANOVA					
GPA					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3083.156	5	616.631	7.282	.000
Within Groups	46824.986	553	84.674		
Total	49908.142	558			

Table 5

Descriptive data of students' GPA's classified by philosophy

Philosophy	N	Average GPA
Buddhism	354	76.1370
Progressivism	141	79.3079
Perennialism	32	78.7956
Essentialism	11	82.6700
Social Reconstructionism	11	86.2800
Existentialism	10	86.3000
Total	559	77.5990

Table 6

Differences in students' GPAs based on philosophical taxonomy

Philosophy	Philosophy	Mean Difference	Std.Error	Sig.
Reconstruction	Perennial	0.299375	3.21617	.020
	Progressive	0.278882	2.88066	.016
Existential	Perennial	0.300175	3.33370	.025
	Progressive	0.279682	3.01131	.021
Buddhism	Existential	-0.40652	2.81725	.021
	Progressive	-0.12684	0.91636	.001
	Reconstruction	-0.40572	2.81725	.000
	Existential	-0.26132	2.95070	.001

Discussion and Conclusion

Most of the samples reported they used Buddhism educational philosophy. It is very likely that they are Buddhists and follow Buddhism beliefs; hence, they perceived the description in the Buddhism philosophy matched their beliefs so they reported they follow Buddhism philosophy. Buddhism beliefs had an influence on the approach they administered their schools.

Male and female principals reported different beliefs. Probably, the significant result might be due to the data that no males reported they were Perennialism, Essentialism, Reconstructionism, and Existentialism while some females reported the beliefs. Differences between principals aged 20-35 and 36-50 age groups might also be due to the zeros among the groups.

Different educational philosophy yielded different levels of achievement. Existentialism resulted in statistically significant higher GPAs than Progressivism and Perennialism respectively. Social Reconstructionism resulted in higher GPAs than Progressivism and Perennialism respectively. However, Existentialism and Reconstructionism were not different in GPAs. This implies that either one matches the learning styles of students, though Existentialism yielded a little better result than Reconstructionism. Both perceive students are the center of learning and focus on motivating students to learn by themselves. This is different from Progressivism which also center on individual students but Progressivism leave students to motivate themselves. It is evident that students involved in this study did not like to motivate themselves. Teacher's allowance of students to think on their own, supply the students with information and encourage them to study yielded better results. In this regards, experiential learning (Kolb, 2015) seems to be suitable for Thai students. Leal-Rodriguez and Albort-Morant (2018) performed an experiment with Spanish students and supported the influence of experiential learning practices upon academic performance. Students liked group works and were more enthusiastic and motivated in getting involved in group activities. Hence, it resulted in better performance. Guardia, Gentile, Grande, Ottaviano, & Allegra (2014) proved that game-based learning improved students' achievement in similar manner.

An interesting and important insight is discovered in this research project. The results also revealed that Buddhism educational philosophy yield significant lower GPAs than Existentialism, Reconstructionism, and Progressivism respectively. Average GPA under Buddhism philosophy was lowest among all. Buddhism philosophy suggests educators to emphasize tolerance and perseverance in the administration of teaching and learning. While most principals had this perspective, it resulted in the lowest achievement among the philosophies. It is very likely that students in the modern world do not share similar perspective with the principals. In other words, the leadership's perspective did not match the followers.

Suggestion and Recommendations

Findings from this research project support the utilization of Existentialism and Reconstructionism in which students are allowed with freedom to think and to choose their own ways of learning. Curriculum should be designed to reflect individualized learning and aims at creating self and life's meaning. The proportion of male principals was rather low compared to female in this study which might affect the result (105 vs. 443 or 19.16% vs. 80.84%) future research project should use quota sampling to obtain equivalent numbers between male and female principals. Furthermore, a research project should elaborate more on the mechanism of the above mentioned philosophies in attaining high performance results.

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