

HOW TO IMPROVE INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION IN THAILAND : A REVIEW OF LITERATURE.

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ABSTRACT

Thailand has launched its 20-Year National Strategy, a national development plan consisting of six areas, and human resource development is one of them. It is certain that education is one of the keys to developing human resource. In the present, there are still many problems with Thai education system which need to be solved and teachers undeniably play an important role in developing the education system into a more efficient one. In addition to that, problems in relation to teachers have continuously arisen. Although many policies aiming to support and solve educational problems have been implemented by the government, these problems cannot be permanently solved. This research study examines initial teacher education in Thailand and abroad in order to present its relevant factors which affect initial teacher education and to present this version of initial teacher preparation model in developing teacher training in the near future. The factors influencing initial teacher education are divided into two groups: internal and external factors. External factors are as follows: (1) governmental policies involving initial teacher education, (2) initial teacher preparation system and standard, and (3) stakeholders' needs while (1) initial teacher preparation objective, (2) initial teacher preparation curriculum, (3) initial teacher preparation instruction (4) initial teacher preparation profession practice, and (5) initial teacher preparation support are internal factors. It is undeniable that initial teacher education is directly affected by both internal and external factors.

Keywords: Teacher education, Initial teacher education

INTRODUCTION

Thailand is a country located in Southeastern Asia and it has a mixed economic system combined with centralized economic planning and government regulation. Last year, Thailand has launched its 20-Year National Strategy which is expected to help the country to achieve sustainable development and it is crucial for Thailand to have clear directions for long-term development. Referred to as the "6-6-4 Plan," the 20-year national strategic plan comprises six areas, six primary strategies and four supporting strategies. The six areas include (1) security, (2) competitiveness enhancement, (3) human resource development, (4) social equality, (5) green growth, and (6) rebalancing and public sector development. In addition, the four supporting strategies involve (1) infrastructure and logistics system development, (2) science, technology, research and innovation, (3) urban, regional, and economic zone development, and (4) international cooperation for development. As for education, it appears to be part of human resource development.

Since 2015, Thailand has invested about 50,000 billion Thai Baht in education with 4% of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) making it the country with the highest investment in education. For this particular reason, Thailand's education system is worth paying attention to. Although Thailand has invested a lot in education, the quality of its education is not as high as it should be and many of its educational problems cannot be solved still. With that

being said, its education cannot compare with others' at an international level. For instance, Thailand participated in the evaluation of the PISA (Program for International Student Assessment)—a project in the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) in 2015. The results showed that the average score of Thai students was lower than those from other countries in ASEAN while Singapore had the highest score. Moreover, Vietnam was one of very interesting countries. Its GDP is generally lower than Thailand's and its investment in education is only half of what Thailand invests, but, at PISA, Vietnamese students scored higher than Thai. Therefore, it can be summarized that despite Thai government's strong capital investment in education, the quality of education in Thailand has not improved.

According to a research study, Thailand faces one particular problem in education. It's reported that Thailand's education does not lack resources, but there is a lack of an effective use of those resources. One of important factors leading to this problem is the quality of teachers. Fundamentally, teachers play a very important role in education, and if the quality of teachers is improved, then educational problems can possibly be solved with the help of these qualified teachers. As a matter of fact, every government in Thailand pays attention on teacher education, especially on initial teacher education and their key focus is always on the improvement of the quality of initial teacher education. During the first half of the 20-year period, that is 2009-2018, there was an urgent education reform and the "new teacher committee" was appointed. It was pointed out that teachers need to continuously learn, that the value of this profession should be raised, and that the initial teacher education should be more systematic and procedural.

From the research background, it's shown that teachers are very important in every country's education, and education is a mechanism that drives the country. Therefore, if educational problems need to be solved, initial teacher education should be taken into a consideration. Moreover, the study of factors which influence initial teacher preparation can be one methodology which helps to efficiently develop and solve the problem of initial teacher education. The research objective is to investigate influencing factors of initial teacher education by studying existing and successful initial teacher preparation from different countries. Based on teacher professional development perspectives, this research study also identify how Thailand's initial teacher preparation should be like.

METHODOLOGY

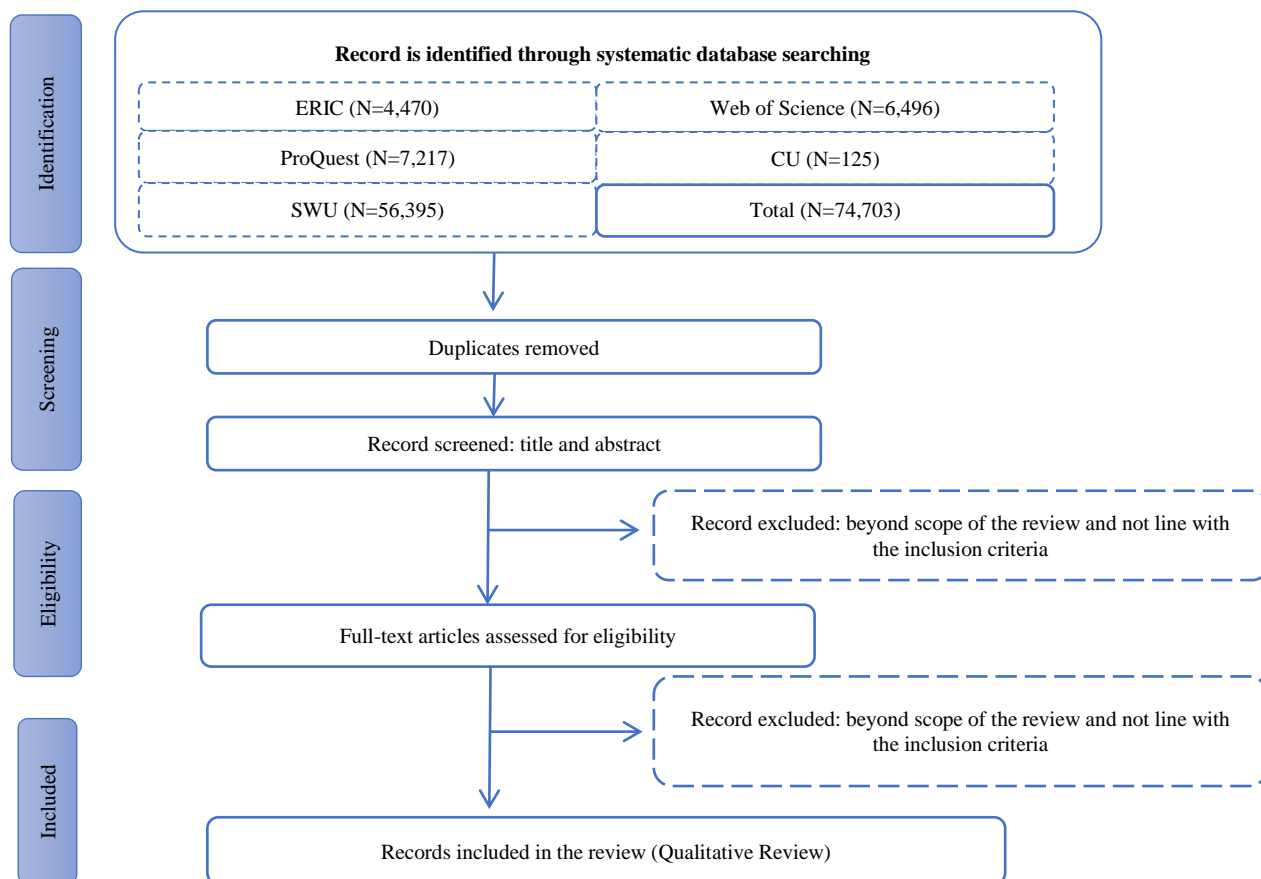
1. Literature review methodology:

All literature was collected in the period of January 2009-December 2018 and, in March 2019, a last check of evidence was performed.

- The ERIC, Web of Science, ProQuest, CNKI, Chulalongkorn University databases and Srinakarinwirot University databases were used to collect data for the following keywords: initial teacher education, initial teacher preparation, initial teacher preparation in Thailand, pre-service teacher, pre-service teacher preparation and pre-service teacher in Thailand.

- Selection process: (1) studies focusing on pre-service teacher, (2) studies reporting on outcome of pre-service teacher research in scope of pre-service teacher in Thailand and (3) publications from 2008-2017.

The figure below shows procedures for reviewing relevant literature.



2. Text analysis:

After reviewing a lot of books, journals, and dissertations containing the following keywords: initial teacher education, initial teacher preparation, initial teacher preparation in Thailand, pre-service teacher, pre-service teacher preparation and pre-service teacher in Thailand, the researcher then analyzed the data in order to identify factors influencing initial teacher education and came up with another version of an initial teacher preparation model which can be used in a further research study aiming to develop an efficient initial teacher education in the future.

RESULTS

1. Initial Teacher Education at an International Level

Many countries have moved their initial teacher-education programs towards a model based less on academic preparation and more on preparing professionals in school settings, with an appropriate balance between theory and practice and collaboration among teachers as a key aspect. More flexible structures of initial teacher education can be effective in opening up new routes into the teaching career, without compromising the rigor of traditional routes. The stages of initial teacher education, induction and professional development need to be interconnected to create a lifelong learning framework for teachers. In many countries, teacher education does not just provide basic training in subject-matter knowledge, pedagogy related to subjects, and general pedagogical knowledge; it also seeks to develop the skills for reflective practice and on-the-job research. Increasingly, initial teacher education tends to emphasize developing the capacity of teachers in training to diagnose student problems swiftly and accurately and to draw from a wide repertoire of possible solutions to find those

that are appropriate to the diagnosis. Some countries provide teachers with the research skills needed to enable them to improve their practice in systematic ways. In addition, some countries have moved from a system in which teachers are recruited into a larger number of specialized colleges of teacher education, with relatively low entrance standards, to a relatively smaller number of university-based teacher-education colleges with relatively high entrance standards and relatively high status in the university.

Moreover, initial teacher education has been discussed from wide range of perspectives. Some research studies focus on initial teacher education structure and curriculum, some on field experiences and coursework and the interplay between them, some on the learning experiences of student and teachers, and some on initial teacher preparation model (Darling-Hammond, Newton, and Wei 2010; Flores 2016; Townsend 2011). In a recent review, it's shown that the structure of education is not only shaped by history, cultural and economics, but increasingly dictated by politics (Craig 2016). Therefore, a more systematic analysis of initial teacher preparation model is needed in order to fully understand its rationale and aims as well as its outcomes. This encompasses, thus, the analysis of the goal of school curriculum itself, the conception of the teacher as a professional and teacher role in curriculum development (Flores 2016).

Finland where education is an integral part of Finnish culture and society, and teachers enjoy great respect and trust (Sahlberg, 2010). All training is based in one of the eight universities, begins with an undergraduate course and is supported by scientific content and educational research methodologies. The entry level for most permanent employment as a teacher is a master's degree, with an expectation of independent research, which means that training can take from five to seven years. Pre-school and kindergarten teachers have a bachelor's degree. In Finland, training focuses on developing 'pedagogical thinking skills' and combines subject strengths with pedagogical method and educational theory. Although each university has autonomy, every department of education has a detailed and binding strategy for improving its teacher education programs. Candidates progress from basic to advanced and then to final practice, with their major teaching practice usually taking place in special Teacher Training Schools that are governed by the universities and which operate similarly to normal public schools. Responsibility for induction and continuous professional development are devolved and programs are more variable in quality.

In Singapore, initial teacher training is focused in the National Institute of Education (NIE) which is part of Nanyang Technological University. Since 1971, it has been the monopoly ITT provider and has a governing body chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education. 12 academic groups oversee the organization's management structure which supervises the delivery of undergraduate, postgraduate, diploma and higher degrees in education as well as leadership development programs. NIE has adopted and refined a Teacher Educational Model designed to transform the planning, delivery and evaluation of their programs. The model has values, skills and knowledge components, and reflects the Ministry's competency framework. It emphasizes putting learning at the center of the teachers' work, having high expectations and standards and transmitting a strong drive to learn, and teachers making a commitment to their own professional development (NIE, 2009). Recent reviews in Singapore suggest that trainee teachers need a stronger dose of pedagogical knowledge as well as subject strength (NIE, 2011). NIE also pays a lot of attention to the theory-practice gap in training teachers. It provides a good grounding in school practice and encourages school-based inquiry or research. Moreover, the emphasis is increasingly placed on the value of experiential learning. There is a customized program of mentor training. Like in Finland, teaching is actively promoted as a high-status profession.

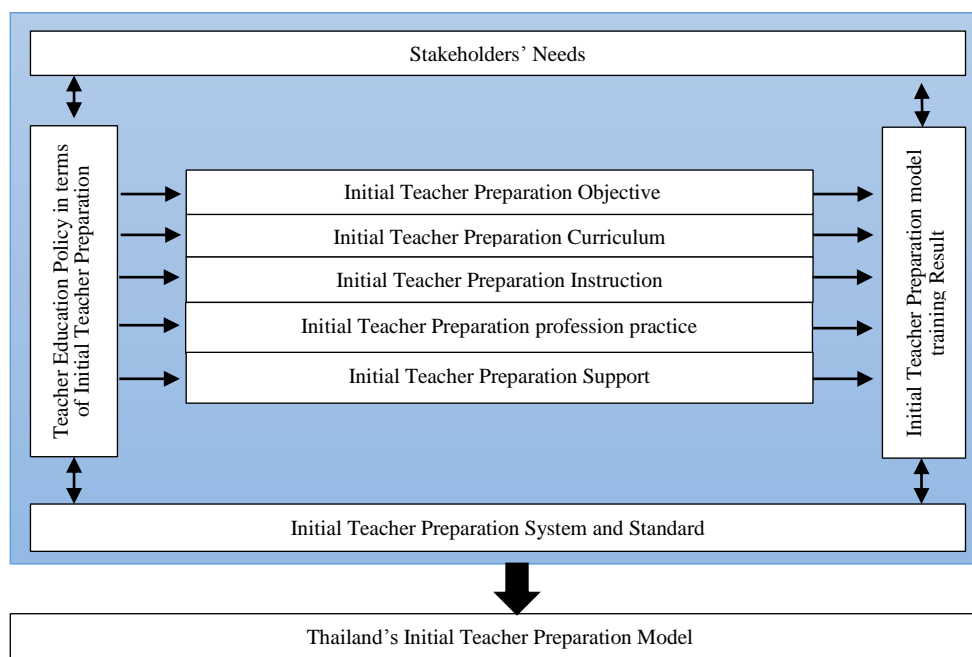
Musset identifies several features common to advanced initial teacher training systems: a balance of provision addressing subject-matter (content knowledge), teaching

techniques (pedagogical knowledge) and practical school experience. Musset describes the variety that exists in terms of initial teacher training organization, for example, in the existence of traditional (undergraduate and postgraduate route) and new models (alternative pathways) of initial teacher training provision, in the variety in institutional characteristics, in the variety in course length, and in the existence of concurrent (teaching academic and pedagogical knowledge simultaneously) and consecutive (teacher training after an individual has already gained a strong body of subject knowledge) programs. The report makes several recommendations for reform which include increasing coherence between the education received by teachers and what actually happens in the classroom, seeing teacher education as a continuum, acknowledging the importance of CPD, closer cooperation bonds between different education providers, supporting new school-based programs, and making teacher education more flexible.

Musset also conducted a literature review examining the characteristics of different national systems. She concludes: “A complete teacher education combines strong subject-matter and pedagogical knowledge, the ability to collaborate with diverse actors (students/colleagues/administrators), and the capacity to continue developing these skills and to understand the in-depth context of the schools in which they teach. Teacher education programs should be designed as an incentive to bring the right people into teaching and to make it adequate to the country’s specific needs, depending on the quality and the quantity of future teachers that it is considered suitable.” A fuller literature review was undertaken by Menter et al. (2010) to support the Donaldson review of teacher education in Scotland (Donaldson, 2011). The authors include a helpful characterization and outline of teacher education approaches in Scotland, Australia, Canada, England, Finland, France, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Norway, Singapore, South Korea, USA and Wales. They comment on the fragmented nature of the research but point to a number of important findings including variation between countries as to the degree to which responsibility for standards and expectations are devolved.

2. The Factors Influencing Initial Teacher Education

After studying factors influencing initial teacher education, two types of factors can be identified: internal and external factors. External factors comprise (1) governmental policies involving teacher education, especially those involving initial teacher education, (2) initial teacher preparation system and standard which significantly characterize and lead future teachers to certain directions, and (3) stakeholders’ needs as stakeholders ranging from those at a national level to those at schools can establish whether or not their needs are met by initial teacher education at that certain period of time. The quality of initial teacher education is directly affected due to the fact that teachers are often not trained based on the needs of stakeholders. Moreover, there are also internal factors influencing initial teacher education which are (1) initial teacher preparation objective, (2) initial teacher preparation curriculum, (3) initial teacher preparation instruction, (4) initial teacher preparation profession practice and (5) initial teacher preparation support. The model below shows that both internal and external factors are interrelated and all of them affect initial teacher education. If initial teacher education systems are analyzed based on this model, Thailand’s initial teacher education system can possibly be more efficiently developed; however, a further research study on this must be carried out.



CONCLUSION

According to the result, it can be seen that initial teacher education of a certain country is a step in education which can directly affect the country's education system. It is certain that some educational problems may be solved with the help of qualified teachers. However, for decades, efficient initial teacher education has been problematic. Along with the initial teacher preparation model presented in this article, a further research study can also be conducted based on the above-mentioned factors in order to develop most suitable and most efficient initial teacher education for Thailand.

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