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Healthy Schools Promotion : An Experience in Thailand

Prawit Erawan ^{a*}^a*Maharakham University, Maha Sarakham 10400, Thailand*

Abstract

The promotion of health education in schools has been operated continuously in Thailand with expecting to enhance a healthy society based on the definition of health under the new trend “A comprehensive and integrated health and social dimensions of body, mind and soul into a lifestyle linked and interrelated the human relationship with a physical and social environment”. This research aims to remove the lessons on building health and well-being to children and youths in schools from nine development projects, and then to determine a platform of healthy schools in order to provide a framework to supporting the improvement of healthy children and youths in the context of schools in Thailand and to make it going in the same direction.

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1. Introduction

A school is a strategic organization to develop the young people of the country with the characteristics that the society expects. The process of developing the student characteristics of the school is instructional course management by the school (Hopkins, 2001). In addition, the supports from other organizations outside the school in the development projects aim at supporting the development and learning process in school, and these projects are intended to develop children and youths together. Only the target or focus on development varies according to the mission and target of the organization.

For Thailand, the efforts to promote health education in schools for healthy students are under the organization frame of the Ministry of Education together with the Thai Health Promotion Foundation and they are trying to promote a state of perfect happiness achieved in four dimensions namely; physical, mental, social and intellectual. In

* Prawit Erawan. Tel.: +66-81-975-4319; fax: +66-43-721-764.

E-mail address: prawit.e@msu.ac.th

the past 10-year period from the year 2013, the Thai Health Promotion Foundation has provided funding to various partners for development projects in schools aiming to change the healthy enhancement behavior of children and youth groups. There are nine major projects that have been funded and over 1,000 schools have participated. The targets of the projects are classified into two major groups as follows:

The first group are system-based projects that aim to help the school management and healthy learning management systems, such as the Healthy Schools Network (HSN), Healthy Literacy for Children, Youths, and Family Educational Network (HL), Development and Management of Scouting Activities to Enhance Life Skills (SELS), Development of Royal Police Cadet Academy to Healthy Promotion Organization (RPCA), and so on.

The second group are issues-based projects for students both in the classroom and outside the classroom, such as the Development of Integrated Learning Systems: Life Skills and Sex Education (LS), Health Promotion for Thairath Wittaya School (HPT), Non-smoking Schools Network (NSN), Youth Justice (YJ), and Empowering Children and Community (ECC), and so on. These projects support the development of schools, based on some healthy issues focusing on campaigns to address specific issues such as drinking, smoking, violence, or sex. It is not developed as a whole school approach that is to enhance the health of both the learning and teaching in physical and mental health, as well as the lifestyles of teachers and students in the school context.

However, even if these projects are testament together, the conceptual framework development, the main target of the project, the development strategy, the innovations for the project including the target groups for the development of both the schools and teachers or students may be different or similar. Therefore, the analyses and syntheses of the entire projects as well as the platform of the word a “Healthy School” together will give an overview of healthy promotion in school, development strategies, and innovations with clarity and can be used as an approach to supporting work in the future.

Nomenclature

HSN	Healthy Schools Network
HL	Healthy Literacy for Children, Youths, and Family Educational Network
SELS	Scouting Activities to Enhance Life Skills
RPCA	Royal Police Cadet Academy to Healthy Promotion Organization
LS	Life Skills and Sex Education
HPT	Health Promotion for Thairath Wittaya School
NSN	Non-smoking Schools Network
YJ	Youth Justice
ECC	Empowering Children and Community

2. Overview of a Healthy School

The Thai Health Promotion Foundation (2003) has described that “health” must have a broader meaning that over passes the traditional definition of health as health is being “diseases-free” and diseases are “germs that can be eliminated with vaccines and drugs only.” A new definition of health as health being “a comprehensive and integrated health, both physical, mental, social and spiritual with their dimensions of lifestyle interconnected and interrelated in human relationship with the physical and social environment.”

The concept of the healthy system of the world firstly was placed on the motto of materialism. The definition of health is inclined to deal with physical management that keeps looking at human, nature and society fragmented and completely dissociated, inventing medical technology and public health to overcome the illness and death but making oppression and suffering to the human and making conflict imbalances in healthy system. To provide healthy modules in terms of individualism is not enough to understand the truth of health because a healthy system in fact is connected and highly integrated within the human body system and has interrelations with natural environments. All things are linked as a causative factor to each other that may cause "health" or "suffering," in the

individual, family, office, community, organization, society, ecology and cosmology. The Thai Health Promotion Foundation (2003) therefore defines the term of health as a state of perfect happiness both physically, mentally and socially, consisting of 1) physical health: the ability to work and live appropriately to the age and individuality, 2) mental health: having a delightful mood and feel happy and blessed, not stressed, being sensible and having ideas appropriately to the age, individuality and environment, 3) psychological health or “spirit”: happiness arising from understanding the nature and the truth of life and of the universe, creating wisdom and loving desire for things to be happy, and 4) social health: the ability to interact with others and their social environment happily, obliging, following the set up regulations, showing empathy, forgiveness, generosity and tolerance to coexist.

For development in school, Hopkins (2001) summarized the lessons for school development in the past that should emphasize on three parts including 1) ways to develop the school corporate putting emphasis on healthy corporate judged by the corporate effectiveness, 2) interventions to develop school staff holding a “man” as the core theme for the school associated with the lives of teachers and students, and 3) school development has to be a specific context, diagnosing conditions within each school and surveying data back to the proof of the efficiency of the development strategy. In Thailand, the research by Erawan (2004), studied and synthesized projects on the development of management systems and learning processes in the context of the health in schools of Thailand, totaling 14 projects since 1994. We can classify the objectives of healthy building into 4 aspects. It is a platform of the word “health in school”, namely 1) healthy students, 2) healthy school, 3) healthy environment, and 4) healthy social community.

The main principles to follow in the development of healthy building in a school are 1) students achievement focusing on cognitive skills, 2) empowering over the participants to enhance inspiration to increase awareness of responsibility, to strengthen skills, and to release academic freedom and liberation to the school, 3) research-based and theory support over the teaching, learning, and school development with strong empirical support strategy or development programs, 4) distinctive context as school development should not adhere to “The only strategy available to all organizations”, that intervention must be designed properly, 5) the potential to be natural, to focus on sustainability and to provide a learning society that the teachers have to create and to establish a professional network, 6) incentives for teachers inquiry and reflection on the ongoing work, 7) to have a strong and eager performance, 8) to have a strategy to process in systematic extra inserts through the concept of action research as well as corporate development, 9) external supports and the centralization or decentralization as well as a policy conducive to the operation, and 10) having implemented the system, both horizontally and vertically to encourage the power of creativity to transform from within the school and society (Owens, 1987 ; Hopkins, 2001).

3. Statement of the Problem

The process of school development is to attain the objective that healthy schools need common standards, and to work to achieve an elevated status in healthy achieving in a school on problems solution, healthy risk factors through integrated work both within and outside the school to improve qualification of children and youths appropriately. Therefore, this research aims to share and to learn work on healthy achieving for children and youths in school, to form a standardized model of healthy schools, and to support the process of healthy achieving for children and youths going in the same direction.

4. Methods

This process of creating components and characteristics of healthy school platform was conducted in 3-steps:

1. Remove the lessons through 2 focus groups with the 9 project managers and 9 participants engaged the development of healthy school in school context funded projects supported by the Thai Health Promotion Foundation totaling 9 projects as shown in Table 1 and answer the following synthesis scheme on various issues; (1) the concepts employed in the school development (2) the objectives regarding the healthy development in a school (3) strategies employed in the development (4) tools/innovations employed in the projects (5) school/target groups for development (6) results of the projects that can be utilized including cognitive innovations, persons with expertise, and a network of people working in different areas.

2. After brainstorming, participants will have to find common characteristics of the word “Healthy School” through affinity diagram technique as the following steps:

- ✓ Each participant features indicators of a healthy school according to his own experiences on a small piece of paper. (We can imagine one sheet of unlimited metrics).
- ✓ Each small piece of paper is stick on the board along with arguing behavior indicators written on a small paper of its own. Then the other participants together comment on behavior indicators on small paper sheets if they agree with it and on a separate sheet of paper if they disagree with it.
- ✓ The group of characteristics are rearranged after considering the relevant characteristics or relationships and put together with the component of a healthy school for a draft.

3. Examined the validity of components and characteristics of a healthy school by the 8 experts who are committees of the Thai Health Promotion Foundation. The draft of components and characteristics of a healthy school is presented to those experts for discussions as well as verification of the components and common characteristics of a healthy school in the last step.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Components and common characteristics of a Healthy School

There are 5 components of a Healthy School including 1) happy students, 2) happy organization, 3) happy environment, 4) happy family and 5) happy community. All five components are related and affecting each other as a Healthy School aims to achieve “happy students” through adjustment, risk factors reduction, structure and system management for the school, environment, family, and community as a safe place and promotion of student health and well-being in both social and physical, mental, intellectual fields. And there are 30 common characteristics as shown in Table 2.

Table 1. Target groups and development issues in each project.

Projects	Target Groups	Development Issues
1. Health Literacy: HL for Children, Youths and Family through Educational Network (HL)	-107 Primary and secondary Schools	-Develop process of learning activities in schools to enhance students for health literacy. -Pushed the work by network system of stakeholders with schools
2. Development of Integrated Learning Systems: Life Skills and Sex Education (ILS)	-235 private vocational schools	-Support the teaching of sex education appropriate to their ages and social condition for knowledge, understanding and skills on sex education rightly. -Support the activity management outside classroom to learning by themselves.
3. Development and Management of Scouting Activities to Enhance Life Skills (SELS)	-26 Primary and secondary Schools	-Develop a process of scouting activities to enhance life skills by providing instruction manuals and teaching materials for scouting subject for the teachers. -Develop curriculum on training teachers teaching scouting by inserting life skills method of teaching in the contents.
4. Non-Smoking School Network (NSN)	-All schools over the country	-Campaign for all schools to provide facilities and atmosphere for smoke-free; teachers, staff, and students not to smoke by a vocal teacher and student network campaigning.
5. Healthy Promotion on Thairathwitaya School (HPT)	-101 Thairathwitaya schools (schools supported by Thairath Foundation)	-Develop integrated learning units on health from kindergarten to grade 9. -Support schools to campaign for teachers, students and parents to treat healthy behavior modification through 6 principles, namely, diseases-free, emotion, well-being, vices, food and exercise.

6. Development of Royal Police Cadet Academy to Healthy Promotion Organization (RPCA)	Royal Police Cadet Academy of Thailand	-Develop Police Cadet students' capacity for taking the lead in promoting health called "Smart Hero". -Promote public policy for health by schools through the development of knowledge and innovations integrating healthy promotion as parts of the course and also published in the local community and country as health promotion network.
7. Youth Justice (YJ)	40 secondary schools	-Develop curriculum and learning activities to achieve knowledge, skills, attitudes of the students to understand the cultures, customs, law and the role of a good citizen in public bureaucracies. -Promote the establishment of the Center for Academic Model to provide promotional activities of conformity, unity, drugs precursors including drinking, smoking and ways of resolving disputes.
8. Healthy Schools Network (HSN)	183 primary and secondary schools	-Develop an internal quality insurance system for health in schools. -Promote integration into the schools network in a peer using Benchmarking Process and knowledge Management as tools.
9. Empowering Children and Community (ECC)	45 primary and secondary schools under the Northeastern Area	-Encourage students to learn and practice skills in agriculture as a safe food source of school and extra income of students. -Promote school conditions for health such as setting up stadiums, cooperative stores for selling only safe food to students and communities, etc.

Table 2. Components and Common characteristics of a Healthy School.

Components	Common Characteristics	Projects
1. Happy students	1.1 The academic skills with the full development potentials 1.2 The life skills without alcohol, smoking, drugs, games, gambling or sexual behavior problems 1.3 The healthy skills 1.4 The rights to be treated equally 1.5 The sense of duty citizenship 1.6 The consciousness of conservation 1.7 The ethics and morality	All of projects
2. Happy organization	2.1 Good corporate leading, administrator and school board define policy through student-based policy, accountability and teamwork. 2.2 Strong teachers, understanding goals, work committed, focusing students and being a model 2.3 Learning process aiming at students' outcomes, fulfilling their potentials and linking community problems 2.4 Considering the rights, equality and respecting differences and human dignity 2.5 Friendly atmosphere and good corporate cultures 2.6 Known and accessible to the students individually, managing a system of assistance and care to students 2.7 Encouraging students to participate in activities and participating in activities designed by themselves. 2.8 Safety place, protection of risk factors, and student's behavior modification on sex issues, drugs, alcohol, smoking, gambling, violence, accidents,	ILS, NS, HPT, RPCA, and HSN

	consumption of food and snacks and drinks misuse	
3. Happy environment	3.1 Organizing school environment and premises clean and safe and fit for health 3.2 Using available resources efficiently and cost effectively 3.3 Maintaining and protecting the environment 3.4 Managing nutrition, sanitation and environment rightly	NS, HPT, and HSN
4. Happy family	4.1 Having relationship of family members with caring support, love, and affection 4.2 Having sufficient life living factors 4.3 Reducing risk factors for family safety from violence, drugs, gambling, alcohol, smoking, and sexual abuse 4.4 Setting and spending time together efficiently 4.5 Parents as role models in life living 4.6 Parents perceived, communicated, and cooperated with the school in assistance and care and development of students	HL, ILS, and ECC
5. Happy community	5.1 Having a surveillance system joining the school to prevent the students' problems 5.2 Being a role model to students in the practice of law and civics 5.3 Mobilizing resources to promote education management together with schools 5.4 Collaborating with teachers in learning management and solving student's problems together 5.5 Having the lifestyle of conservation of local cultures and community resources	HL, RPCA, HSN, and ECC

5.2 Characteristics of a Healthy Student

The results showed that a healthy student has 7 characteristics including academic skills, life skills, healthy skills, rights to be treated equally, a sense of duty as a citizen, consciousness of conservation as well as ethics and morality. Academic skills being created in a student mean learning skill created by the individual through practices in learning resources both inside and outside the classroom with a good decision-making process based on analyzed and experimented data as well as cooperative learning in groups to develop social processes with current and future significances. The learning management consists of 1) reception means to “receive” data, information and a variety of knowledge from learning resources or teachers, 2) comprehension means that a student can see the meaning and the relating of things perceived from various kinds of learning resources by being able to analyze, identify, link, and explain reasonably, and 3) transformation means that authentic learning must make changes in a student including conceptualization, values, and behaviors. In addition, a student has to develop life skills as a social and psychological capacity to adapt to other people and environment appropriately in order to lead a normal life and to survive in society, to build his own analytical and creative thinking, self-awareness and empathy, making relationship and communication, decision making and problem solving, coping with emotion and stress, as well as self-actualization and social responsibility (Erawan, 2007; World Health Organization, 1993).

Regarding to health literacy is that a student must have knowledge and understanding of health, healthy practice, understanding the development of physical and sex of both woman and man and knowingly or advertising information in society. Besides, the student needs to have rights of being treated equally in terms of 1) rights for survival, 2) rights for protection, 3) rights for development, and 4) rights for participation, in operating activities of schools practicing gender equality (Erawan, 2001; UNICEF, 2004). It is including a sense of being a good citizen, consciousness of conservation that is an attitude and value in consumption as well as nature-friendly lifestyle. And finally, the student has ethics and morality, commitment to helping others and society with a volunteered mind.

5.3 Platform of a Healthy School

Table 2 shows the Platform of the development of the school as a healthy school. Aiming at achieving happy students, it must be performed in four parts simultaneously according to Figure 1, which are to develop school, environment, family, students and the community around the school for health.

Firstly, to develop a healthy school is done by adopting good corporate, administrators and school board with student-based policy, accountability and teamwork. There is also the need to develop teachers to understand the target, to be committed to work, to focus on students and to be a good model for students. Then, there are the aims at a learning process focusing on students' outcomes and full potentiality. What to teach has to be closely linked with community issues, rights and equality promotion, respects for differences and human dignity, creation of a friendly atmosphere and good corporate cultures, having access to student information system individually, and management of assistance and care student system. In addition, it is also necessary to promote activities outside the classroom to engage students in thinking, activities designed manually, to manage the school as a safety place, to protect risk factors, and to resolve student behaviors about sex, drugs, drinking, smoking, gambling, violence, accidents, consumption of food, snacks and beverages misuses. Moreover, schools need to have assistance and a care student system apart from teaching that the assistance and care student is a promotion of development, protection, and problems solution of all students. It is depending on the school management system and with coordination with families, communities and outside agencies, that the happy student program is not caused by being taught only in the classroom, but also by the assistance of the care student system of the school as well as by characteristics of a healthy school. Finally, the school encourages students to do activities manually with extracurricular activities as well which affect the characteristics development of the students as well.

Secondly, the school must have a healthy internal environment. It means that the school environment must be managed by keeping premises clean, safe, and conducive to health. Available resources, such as water, electricity, fuel, etc. and also the process of environmental protection and care including nutrition, sanitation, and environmental hygiene must be used efficiently and at the best cost. The characteristics of healthy environment are made by the actions of people both positive and negative. If the people in school are healthy, and especially conscious on preserving the school's materials and utilities, their actions will be positive and friendly to the environment and they will be environment friendly with each other.

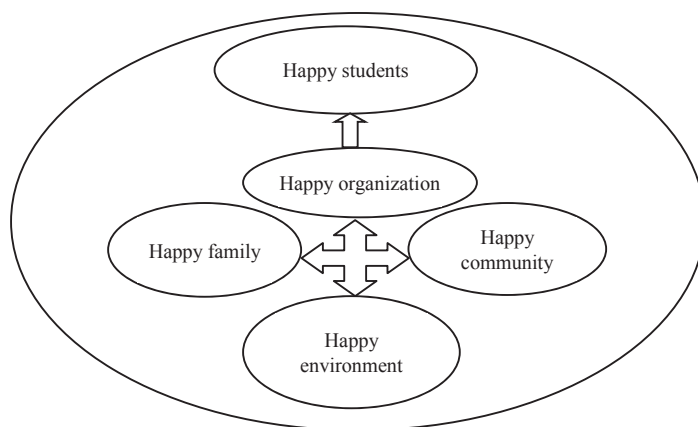


Fig. 1. Healthy School Platform

Thirdly, the school must work with students' families to encourage the student family relationships of family members for caring support and caring love, sufficient life living factors, risk factors reduction and for keeping families safe from violence, drugs, gambling, drinking, smoking, and sexual abuse and also have timing and quality time together. Parents are role models in the life living and awareness of communication and cooperation with the school in assistance and care as well as development of the students.

Finally, communities surrounding the school need to work with the school to link the surveillance system to prevent the students from problems. It is including the units transferred students having problems at school that can not be solved, encouraging people in the community as role models to the students in the practice of law and civics, mobilizing resources to promote education together with schools, collaborating with teachers in learning management and learning solutions together. In addition, there are lifestyles of conservation of local cultures and community resources, particularly, the use of chemicals in agriculture and community lifestyle cherishing the environment for the children.

However, the lessons in the school development of the nine projects are consistent with the fact that success factors in the development are composed of administrator, teachers, school culture, and of the support of the policy from the Ministry of Education. Erawan (2008) found that success factors in the development of the school are four factors including 1) management team of academic leadership with teachers learning together, 2) teachers with knowledge, skills, and motivation doing a good job, 3) school culture that focuses on the results of the work, an atmosphere of cooperation, mutual respect, and 4) academic supports and resources of external organizations. Therefore, the development of a Healthy School must take these success factors into account.

6. Conclusions

The target of healthy development in school context shows a substantial part of the definition of “health” that the Thai Health Promotion Foundation has tried to explain: that it must have a broader meaning that bypasses the traditional definition of health being “diseases-free” and diseases are “germs that can be eliminated with vaccines and drugs only”. It supports a new definition of health as being “a comprehensive and integrated health and social dimensions of body, mind and soul into a lifestyle linked and interrelated to the human relationship with the physical and social environment”.

The result of removing the lessons of the projects that aimed at developing health in a school shows five components of health including happy students, happy organization, happy environment, happy family, and happy community that become the scope of the term “school health”. The characteristics of a happy student can not only be explained in a broader scope than a strong student or a good mental health student, but also include the rights to be treated equally which is a quite interesting issue because of the privilege and practice. It is the dignity of people called “the people with dignity” that permits to consider healthy people as well. By the way, a healthy school would reflect from the relationship of the parties and arising out of everyone in the school, and not only from one individual.

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