Organization of Early Childhood Education Based on Montessori Approach in Thai Social Context

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Abstract

The purposes of the research and development project were to study appropriate ways to implement the Montessori method in the Thai social context and to present ways to implement the method for the school administrators and those who were interested in the method. One model school, Kornkaew Nursery School and the 4 network schools were selected for study: Amnuaysilpa School, and Pranantanit Kindergarten in Bangkok, Pierra-Navin Child Care, Ayutthaya Branch and Naresuan Palau Border Patrol Police School in rural area. The samples studied were 5 school administrators, 24 teachers/caregivers and 68 parents from the five schools. Five research tools were used: The School Fundamental Data Survey, The Record Form for Supervision and Follow-up of the Montessori Teaching, The Interview Form for Administrators, The Interview Form for Teachers/Caregivers, and The Questionnaire for Parents were used for data collecting. The Montessori method was implemented and the data was collected from May to October 2000.

The resulted showed: (1) the appropriate way to implement the Montessori method is to study the fundamental information regarding to the social context of the school; (2) 5 models from 5 schools which can be really implemented for the preschool children; and (3) the results from the Interview and the Questionnaire showed that the administrators, the teachers/the caregivers and the parents of five schools were satisfied and confident with the method of teaching.

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INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the 1999 National Education Act in Thailand, the Office of the National Education Commission (ONEC) encouraged all sectors, public and private providing education for the children at all levels based on National Education Guidelines.

“Education will be based on the principle that all learners are capable of learning and self-development, and are regarded as being most important”.

To serve this guideline, ONEC encouraged public participation from all sectors in moving towards the success of educational reform in line with the 1999 National Education Act. All educational institutions had been cooperating among themselves and with other agencies concerned. The priority commitment was educational reform, particularly the reform of learning.

Funds were provided by ONEC for a number of researches to study the most suitable ways for the education of young children in Thai social and cultural contexts. Five studies funded by ONEC emphasized the review and application of different approaches for child development in Thailand as follows: Montessori, Waldorf, Highscope, Reggio Emilia and Whole Language.

The Montessori method was invented by an Italian physician, Dr. Maria Montessori (1870-1952). This method is an individualized educational approach which aids to develop the child’s abilities to the fullest extent while celebrating and enhancing his or her uniqueness and cultural background (Barron, 1992, p. 268). Neubert’s study (1992, p. 57, 64) found that Montessori teachers perceived the overall goals of the Montessori method to include: independence, develop child’s potential, self-confidence, learning at one’s own pace, curiosity/creativity, self-respect, respect for others, self-control, concentration and joy of learning. These goals are congruent with 2 main sections in the 1999 National Education Act of Thailand. This is one reason why the Montessori method was chosen to be one approach of early childhood program to implement in Thai social context.

The purposes of the research project were to study the appropriate ways to implement the Montessori method in Thai social context and to present ways to implement the method for the school administrators and those who were interested in the method.