

“Giving Back To Community” - Project of Education
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Background, Problem and Solution

Inequality between urban and rural areas is apparent everywhere in Thailand. Bangkok is far more developed and civilized than any other part of the country, attracting smart people to this city. As a result, poverty and advancement gaps between Bangkok and other areas are large, which is the cause of many national conflicts such as the 2010 political protests of the people from the countryside against those from Bangkok.

One of the reasons for this inequality gap is Thai education. Children are not taught enough in recognizing their importance in the community. They have to realize that they will become the main population in their town in the future. Therefore, if they do not help develop their hometowns, the town will never progress, and the inequality gap between these towns and Bangkok will increase.

What they can do is that when they finish their higher education elsewhere, they can come back to their town and become leaders in a specific area using their expertise. For example, if someone wants to be a police officer and goes to Bangkok to receive such an education, he can become a captain or an inspector to oversee other police officers in the town. He not only gets a better job opportunity than a normal officer in Bangkok, but he also helps other officers by instructing them from what he has learned. If most people realize this issue and give back to their own communities, all these towns will develop since we have more resource to do so. Eventually, the gap of inequality between urban areas and the countryside will diminish restoring Thailand to the “land of smiles” again.

Goals

1. To develop an adapted curriculum and suggest new types of student assessment for teachers to use regarding social and environmental issues within a community
2. To provide communities with the solution of a particular issue through the students’ event
3. To inspire high school students to love and have pride in their own town, which will in turn make them want to become hometown leaders.
4. To present the idea of community and harmony to students, college volunteers and teachers through the project

Local Partners

I contacted both of them to confirm that they will help me with my project.

1. Naresuan University Secondary Demonstration School, Phitsanulok, Thailand: the high school location of the project.
2. Faculty of Medicine, Naresuan University, Phitsanulok, Thailand: the college where I will get volunteers to help me with the project.

Plan of Action

The first phase of our project will occur in the spring. I will contact the local high school to set suitable date of the project. The project should last about six weeks. Then I will figure out a place to live near the school and how to travel to the town from Bangkok.

Three days before the actual project, I will focus on introducing the project to everyone who will help me; mostly faculties and college volunteers. This will be a good time to get to know each other since we will have to work together for at least six weeks. I will start talking to teachers about the idea of a new curriculum and the type of student assessment to give them an overall picture of the vision and goal for the students. Also, I will tell college volunteers about what to do, the philosophy behind it and how we will translate the idea into practical activities for the students.

For the first week of the project, I will give an introduction of the project to high school students and tell them that they will eventually create their own event by the end of fifth week to promote one community issue. They will think about possible issues they would want to address, through their events. The second week will be time for the students, as one group, to decide which issue to address through a vote. They will then start

researching to acquire more information about the issue, like what current organizations are addressing this issue, the obstacles they face and the ways to overcome these obstacles.

In the third week, they will decide on the event to address their chosen issue. It could be a social enterprise such as a business where the profit will benefit the community, a fundraiser to raise money for a charity, a volunteer event or a campaign to raise awareness of a certain issue.¹ I have to remind that all activities with high school students will take place in the afternoon after school because schools in Thailand continue through the summer. We will also teach high school student the introduction to statistics, so that they will have an important tool when they start researching for the specific topic and how to present those numbers. For example, they will be able to present a bar chart of the percentage of homeless people in their town. In addition during the first three weeks, we will have a field trip at the end of fourth week to relevant organizations in the local area, so that students will see how an actual organization works and learn how to create a successful event. Examples of these organizations in Phitsanulok are Universal Foundation for Persons with Disability which is responsible for people with disabilities and Wat Potiyan School which takes care orphans and low-income children.

The fourth week and most of the fifth week are used to plan the event. They will be divided into subgroups which are responsible for different aspects of the event. Some people will work on budget related issues, while others will work on marketing and publicity to promote their events. Each student will have an important role for the event. At the end of fourth week, we will have a field trip to a local organization to inspire students to work hard and see how others that are working on these issues.

The weekend of the fifth week will be a time for an actual event. All the works that they have done for five weeks will give the result on that day. Everyone will help each other during the event. During the planning, I will tell them to set a success criteria, so students will be able to know whether the event is successful. For the last week, students will have a chance to reflect upon themselves, their event and the whole project. That way we can improve our curriculum to correspond with their needs. Each individual will then be assessed and receive a written evaluation about their performance and personal development throughout the project. Finally, we will have time to share our experience to one another and celebrate all the hard works.

Short Term Effects

1. The student event will directly affect their community regarding the issue in which the students choose to address.
2. High school students will learn more about their civic rights and responsibilities for their community.
3. Teachers will learn about different types of assessments for different subjects. Their participation in the event will lead them to develop other possibilities for assignments, such as an invention, or other kinds of writing assignments.

Long Term Impacts and Sustainability

1. College volunteers will learn about their own community. They will be the first generation who want to help improve their community followed by high school students.
2. Teachers will be provided with this new curriculum of the project so that they can do a similar project to other students in the school. This will not only affect the students in the project, but all students in the school.
3. College students who are volunteers in the project will be encouraged to create similar projects with other high schools or within their university since this curriculum is suitable for both high school and college students. This will spread the project throughout the town.

My Qualification

Since I am Thai and have lived in Thailand for eighteen years before coming to the United States, language and cultural differences are not something that I have to worry about for this project. When I was a junior in Thailand, I volunteered at a middle school in the Southern part of Thailand to create a science camp for students there. I really like working with teachers and high school students. Now, I am a student in the UChicago Career in Education Professions (UCIEP) program, which provides me with resources involving curriculum, other educational materials, and advice that I need for the project.

¹ Giving Nation - A Project of the Citizenship Foundation, <http://www.g-nation.org.uk/>