

Democratic Political Socialization of the 5th and 6th Graders under the Authority of Dusit District Office, Bangkok

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Abstract—This research aims to study the democratic political socialization of the 5th and 6th Graders under the Authority of Dusit District Office, Bangkok by using stratified sampling for probability sampling and using purposive sampling for non-probability sampling to collect data toward the distribution of questionnaires to 300 respondents. This covers all of the schools under the authority of Dusit District Office. The researcher analyzed the data by using descriptive statistics which include arithmetic mean and standard deviation. The result shows that 5th and 6th graders under the authority of Dusit District Office, Bangkok, have displayed some characteristics following democratic political socialization both inside and outside classroom as well as outside school. However, the democratic political socialization in classroom through grouping and class participation is much more emphasized.

Keywords—Democratic, Political Socialization

I. INTRODUCTION

THAILAND had transformed its governmental system from absolute monarchy to democracy on 24 June 1932. It was the shift of absolute power from the monarchs under monarchy system to the citizens under constitutional democracy. In Thailand, constitutional monarchy is exercised in which the king's power is subsided under the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand; this gives a chance to the people to participate in ruling the country [1] The main principles of democracy include 1) sovereignty belonged to all people or come from the people, 2) civil rights and civil liberties, 3) the rule of law, 4) centralization of power under the parliament system, separation of the power and counter balance [2]. To summarize, since people can rule themselves, all people have rights and freedom, and are equal under the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand. Democracy will adhere to majority in order to resolve problems or any matters. However, it is necessary to listen to the minorities or consist of these characteristics – 1) power belongs to the people, 2) every individual participates in the country's administration, 3) administration must adhere to the majority, 4) every individual has rights and freedom, and 5) every individual are equal [3] During the last decade, democracy had influenced the political participation of the people to develop into the network participation. Therefore, the achievement of democracy is based on the level and characteristics of Thais' political

participation.

Nevertheless, to achieve the development of democracy, learning through political socialization is a must. Different characteristics and levels in political socialization are based on each individual such as the groups of people from the grassroots, middle class, and upper class. The process of political socialization also affects the construction of political culture in the country. However, Thai society has a unique identity; it, hence, has a steady pattern of social or political socialization that is different from other countries. It is the process of socialization and Thai tradition that clearly influence the political culture [4] To learn, exercise the rights, and maintain the principles of constitutional democracy is the civic responsibility that enacts in the Thailand's 2007 constitution.

Therefore, in order to develop the democracy for Thai people, it is essential to teach about democracy since early childhood. Educational institution is an institution that provides knowledge, skills, and experiences as well as socialization to the students. Moreover, democracy should be included in the school activities and course curricula [5] To gain sufficient knowledge and understanding on democracy within the scope of textbooks used in primary schools, there must be the consideration over two issues which are 1) teaching the students about democratic way of life which includes rights, freedom, equality, reasons, responsibility and tolerance toward the others' opinions, and 2) teaching the students about political institutions which include parliament, constitution, and election. [6] The textbooks containing largest amount of democratic content are the ones used by 5th and 6th graders. Grade 3-4 textbooks are second, following by grade 1-2 textbooks as the third. This reflects the educational process in Thailand that uses grade 5-6 textbooks as a tool to socialize the students in terms of politics [6] Thus, the target group in this research is the 5th and 6th graders.

The researcher is interested in studying the group of students in grade 5 and 6 under the authority of Dusit District Office, Bangkok in which there are 9 schools in total. These schools are located in the capital city where the political institutions such as government house, parliament and political party offices are located. All of these are the symbols of democracy. If the students are socialized properly, this could be the great foundation for political development in the future.

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II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objective is to study the characteristics of the democratic political socialization process of the 5th and 6th graders under the authority of Dusit District Office, Bangkok.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The population in this research is 1204 5th and 6th graders under the authority of Dusit District Office, Bangkok (Department of Bangkok Metropolitan Education Administration, 2010). The researcher calculated the size of sample according to the Taro Yamane's formula [8], and then collected data from 300 samples by using a stratified sampling for probability sampling in order to have enough samples from each school. Moreover, the researcher interviewed the samples selected by random sampling technique which relies on non-probability sampling with the use of purposive sampling. There are 9 interviewees who are school administrators and/or teachers who are teaching in Social Science, Religion, and Culture Department from 9 schools. Afterward, the researcher analyzed the data extracted from questionnaires with descriptive statistics. This includes arithmetic mean and standard deviation used for describing the fundamental data of each individual student. The study is a qualitative research using descriptive analysis of the interviews with school administrators and/or teachers who are teaching in Social Science, Religion, and Culture Department or teachers who teach Social Studies from 9 schools in Dusit District Office, Bangkok. The scale of the level of political socialization in which the mean ranges from 2.34-3.00 (High), 1.67-2.33, (Medium), and 1.00-1.66 (Low).

IV. RESEARCH RESULTS

The majority of 5th and 6th graders under the authority of Dusit District Office have a medium to low degree of political socialization (mean = 2.28). The statement with the highest mean is "to give an opportunity to express one's opinions in class" (mean = 2.67). The second highest one is "to participate in the activities that promote democracy at school such as student council election" (mean = 2.65), following by "to participate in decision-making process when working in group" (mean = 2.62), respectively. The lowest rated statement is "to follow the political news from radio" (mean = 1.81). These are summarized as below.

TABLE I

THE LEVEL OF DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION ACCORDING TO THE OPINIONS OF THE 5TH AND 6TH GRADERS UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF DUSIT DISTRICT OFFICE, BANGKOK

| Political Socialization | Mean | S.D. | Level |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| 1. To have a chance to choose the program according to their needs | 2.59 | 0.51 | High |
| 2. To have a chance to express one's opinion about politics in family | 2.30 | 0.71 | Medium |
| 3. To have a chance to explain when being scolded by fathers, mothers or parents | 2.20 | 0.64 | Medium |
| 4. To give a chance to students to express their opinions in class | 2.67 | 0.51 | High |
| 5. To talk about the national situations in class | 2.28 | 0.64 | Medium |
| 6. To participate in the activities that promote democracy at school such as student council election | 2.65 | 0.51 | High |
| 7. Students and groups of friends talking about national situations | 1.97 | 0.67 | Middle |
| 8. To participate in decision-making process when working in group | 2.62 | 0.53 | High |
| 9. To follow the political news from television. | 2.51 | 0.62 | High |
| 10. To follow the political news from newspaper | 2.16 | 0.65 | Medium |
| 11. To follow the political news from radio | 1.81 | 0.70 | Medium |
| 12. To follow the political news from internet | 1.95 | 0.75 | Medium |
| 13. To participate in the activities that promote election | 2.21 | 0.75 | Medium |
| 14. To participate in social activities such as youth volunteer anti-drug program | 2.29 | 0.71 | Medium |
| 15. To sing the national song at 18.00 o' clock | 2.31 | 0.77 | Medium |
| Total | 2.28 | 0.30 | Middle |

The characteristics of the democratic political socialization process of the 5th and 6th graders under the authority of Dusit District Office, Bangkok directly or indirectly embedded in activities can be found within inside and outside classroom activities at school. Inside classroom, there is the socialization process embedded in textbooks, storybooks, the content of every subject from every department, group work, news analysis and discussion, opinion's expression, class president election, proverbs and motto. At school, there are also student council election, campaigning for votes, making the notice board that is full of democratic content, instructing students in front of flagstaff in the morning, scouting activities, sport's day and other activities. Outside the school, there are observation of direct experiences of local/state's election, field trips to parliament, field trips to government house, and campaigning for votes when nearby communities have elections.

Moreover, from the interviews with the school administrators and/or teachers who are teaching in Social Science, Religion, and Culture Department, some interesting issues are concluded as follow:

1. School administrators and/or teachers who are teaching in Social Science, Religion, and Culture Department try to integrate the course description with the knowledge acquired from outside classroom and real situations. They also encourage the students to talk about political news in order to criticize rationally and bring the students to some field trips.
2. School administrators and/or teachers who are teaching in Social Science, Religion, and Culture Department try to create an activity for promoting the role of good citizens

for the students. These activities are related to the role of good citizens and self-confidence in class, for example, an activity that promotes the development of children's awareness to be confident, dare to think, express and take an action, realize of civic duty, be public-minded, and ready to help other people. Role playing outside classroom such as student council election, class president election, political mimic, and community services both at home and school encourage the students to have volunteer spirit.

3. The activities that promote democracy at school are student council election, class president election, and being well-behaved under the rules of the school.
4. Most of the school administrators and/or teachers who are teaching in Social Science, Religion, and Culture Department emphasize the political socialization through the use of textbooks. In particular, teachers add some democracy-related and political content to class activities. Furthermore, there is also political socialization through additional activities and the integration of civic duty and democracy to the contents.

V. DISCUSSION

The political socialization from the viewpoint of 5th and 6th graders under the authority of Dusit District Office, Bangkok in overall is rated as medium (mean = 2.28), especially the items that relate to "to give a chance to students to express their opinions in class" (mean = 2.67) because students tend to spend time in classroom together with a friend in the same age, so they are likely to have a chance to exchange their opinions. This also includes the sufficient opportunity to express one's opinions when doing an activity in class each day. Therefore, when there is a group work, the students tend to tolerate the others' opinions. Teachers usually offer some chances for the students to express their opinions and participate in educational activities more than staying outside the class. These encourage most of the students to take an action and participate in decision-making process when having a group work. The democratic political socialization outside classroom is embedded in student council election and class president election. Moreover, the students tend to choose what to watch on television by themselves when they are at home, and always follow the political news on television. Moreover, student is rarely interested in following the political news via radio. It was rated as lowest (mean = 1.81). When considering the whole image, students tend to have a medium level of democratic political socialization; this is relevant to the result of a research written by [7] which is called "the Political Socialization of College Students: Research in the Case of Vocational Students in King Mongkut's University of Technology North Bangkok". The result shows that there are 4 aspects of the political socialization of vocational students in King Mongkut's University of Technology North Bangkok which are family institution, educational institution, peer, and mass media; they were rated as medium in overall as well.

VI. SUGGESTION

1. Educational institutions (schools, in particular) should promote students to identify their roles properly since primary education in the form of democratic socialization correctly and continuously according to the law and Thai culture. This should be prioritized and integrated to every subject through the socialization inside and outside classroom. There should be some activities toward the use of team work (group of friends), educational participation, and internet technology as well as radio for following news or other educational purposes.
2. Family institution (home) and educational institutions (school) should cooperate with each other to diffuse knowledge and understanding about Thai politics, constitutional monarchy, corruption, and the current situations through any kind of mass media. When students are curious about something, fathers, mothers, parents or teachers should explain, discuss, and give some rationality appropriately. The information should be factual and reasonable without any prejudice or bias.
3. Students should pay more attention to the politic news by talking with friends and their own families or asking teachers and so on because, nowadays, most of the students rarely/occasionally pay attention to politic news and political movement.

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