

# Participatory Management and Essential Demands for Vocational Training Centres in the Southern Border Area of Thailand

Wittaya Katechoo<sup>a</sup>, Malai Tawisook<sup>b</sup>, Piyapong Sumettikoon<sup>c</sup>, <sup>a,b,c</sup>King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang, Faculty of Industrial Education and Technology, Ladkrabang, Bangkok 10520, Thailand, Email: <sup>a\*</sup>[kwintaya@yahoo.com](mailto:kwintaya@yahoo.com)

Technology has been changing the world and today's society and it dominates the transformation of vocational-technical education. Advanced vocational training is vital in producing skilled workers that are needed for the success of a modern workforce in their specific work fields. In the Southern border provinces of Thailand, access to a higher quality of education and the opportunities is slim and slow in progress and further complicated by political disputes. This research studies participatory management and the essential demands for its potential application in vocational training centres in such areas to affect development beneficial cooperative learning processes, curricula, and education outlets by focusing on areas of collaboration, communication, motivation, decision-making, and decentralisation.

**Keywords:** *Education, Participatory management, Essential demands, Vocational training, Cooperative learning, Curriculum, Decision-making, Communication, Collaboration, Motivation, Decentralisation.*

## Introduction

The National Education Plan of Thailand for 2017-2036 defines the national framework of qualifications, goals, and direction for educational management aims to provide equal access and opportunities for its citizens to the quality of education. To produce a labour force that fits the demands of the labour industry, the state oversees education as a medium to produce intellectual capital with potential skills in the industry: workers who can live and integrate harmoniously in the community. In amidst progress in the 21st century, education plays an



important role in forming and maintaining the nation's advantage in competition and its capability to excel in the world's stage. This competitive edge needs the development of a workforce possessing the necessary skills to advance research and innovation and to meet the needs of the labour market following both national 20-year and Thailand 4.0 strategies. Compared to academically tracked students, there is a higher number of students in vocational schools and the proportionately higher number of Science and Technology learners compared to those in social sciences. Furthermore, the necessity for more specialised skills to thrive in the modern era. To meet the market, the number of vocational and higher education institutions should be increased, and these institutions must provide sufficient, relevant and high-quality programs to provide more skilled graduates. There is a significant necessity for research and innovation that supports the creation of this more competent, efficient and value-added workforce to boost national advancement.

The outburst of violence and the ongoing turmoil in Thailand's southern border area in 2004 is affecting the country's economy, society, education, culture, and security. Guidelines need to be established for the development of administrative agencies to resolve the problems of Thai Muslims in the three southern provinces, particularly the concerns on education. Public institutions must enhance educators' competency and expertise in the field of education while doing away assistance systems, and the administration must concentrate on not just progress to education in response to the labour market but also on generating knowledge and perception for families and generations. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education should take away the policies that simply suspend "problem" students. While an unruly individual certainly affects the education of others, the Ministry can make considerable use of suspension policy for parents to partake in the improvement of the student's behaviour as opposed to simply dismissing him or her to become a future burden of the community.

This involvement of the community in the educational institutions in the studies of participatory management has processes available which constitute motivating elements for collaboration between the institutions and families, with shared goals and vision, directed to a process where participation of the school community in the construction and implementation of the educational policy project becomes a key factor for success (Murillo et al., 2007).

Problems caused by the crisis in the region resulted in the Ministry of Education, through the Office of the Vocational Education Commission, establishing vocational training centres in the southern border provinces. Beginning operations in 2010, 22 centres were founded under the supervision of the Office of the Vocational Education Commission in the Special Development Zone of the Southern Border Provinces. They aim to improve vocational education, offering vocational certification, high school diplomas, and short-term vocational training according to the demands of the people to generate income in the area and to increase the standard of labour skills, as well as building opportunities for young people in remote



areas to access vocational education. It can potentially increase the number of vocational students demanded in the labour market in the Asian Economic Community Period.

Giving the youth in distant areas access to vocational education helps determine the region's unemployment and poverty crises by creating jobs, generating income, and thereby decreasing the violence in the southern border provinces. The principles of the participatory management strategy to be used by the vocational training centres in the southern border provinces involve collaboration, communication, decentralisation, initiative, and decisiveness. Their purpose in connection with the PDCA cycle of planning, preparing, monitoring and acting in each component of participatory management of vocational training centres in the southern border provinces will increase effectiveness (Tague, 2004) and provide opportunities in which all sectors can participate. This research examines the aspects of situations encountered by vocational training centres in the southern border provinces and aim to understand the potential for participatory management to make operations in these institutions more efficient and sustainable.

## Literature Review

For this study, literature, and research relevant to the concepts of participatory management, the Deming quality cycle, and vocational training centres were reviewed and synthesised. Stakeholders have long hoped for significant participation in the decision-making and fulfilling of ideas. Studies have shown that people are increasingly demanding participation in the creation of science and technology and it is, therefore, necessary to consider aspects of the process in measuring the quality and success (Rowe & Frewer, 2000) and the design of public participation processes that can demonstrate the effectiveness (Bryson et al., 2013).

In terms of educational and training institutions, educational leaders must evaluate both internal and external factors to solve problems and create decisions to enhance the capability of the organisation with effective public participation parents, communities and other relevant stakeholders can provide valuable and complex insights as well as gain useful knowledge about the institution. Thus, educational leaders can increase social capital while stakeholders can participate effectively in institutional activities, building trust between the public and educational institutions (Poynton, Makela & Haddad, 2014).

Ernest L. Boyer, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, has this to say: We can and must help every student learn about the technology revolution, which will dramatically shape the lives of every student. And it is here that the industrial arts educator has a crucial role to play (American Industrial Arts Association, 1985).



As for students, there is a notable need for counselling and vocational education to bridge the gap between pupils and academics. A majority of academic students report limited or moderate levels of career-related activities, and opportunities for various careers paths to begin during the study must be presented to students along with communication and interpersonal skills so that graduates may have a better chance at success working with others (Rojewski, Lee & Hill, 2014).

Participatory management is a management process with an emphasis on mutual thinking and decision making and at its core values cooperative decision-making, with workers within the organisation having the right to authority over and capability for making decisions. Successful and efficient operations should be the shared goal of everyone within the organisation. Therefore, all workers should be able to engage in planning the course of operations and work processes. Besides, participatory management is an opportunity for workers within the organisation to measure and make decisions, which leads to the development of more effective operations and also supports internal motivation for workers. Used as a cooperative school management concept, participatory management is a medium that leads to management success, resulting in efficient, high-quality and valuable school performance. In cooperative management, affiliated parties such as deputy directors, department heads, teachers and staff must have actual and active participation and the authority to make essential decisions. Participatory management is an administrative approach that focuses on decentralisation and democratised decision making in determining the organisation's goals and its success in subsequently achieving such goals. Managing academic institutions by decentralising decision-making concerning organisational goals is the key to increasing efficiency (Levin & Schrum, 2014).

Of the above concepts, the research regards participatory management as a decentralisation of power for all individuals in an institution to foster collective thinking and decision-making to mutually determine the direction for the operations within the organisation and its goals. Therefore, participatory management can be an effective tool towards successful management of academic institutions to have the highest levels of quality and efficiency, with vital core components being collaboration, communication, motivation, decision-making, and decentralisation.

Collaboration means working effectively with others to achieve common goals (Goleman, 1995). It is a dynamic framework within which both dependency and equality are supported with the exchange of resources between two or more collaborators (Welch & Tulbert, 2000) and is both a process and an outcome that can be managed by stakeholders to solve complex problems. A collaborative process involves synthesising different perspectives to better understand underlying problems, resulting in the development of an integrated solution that is superior to individual views and cannot be achieved by just one person or one department

(Gardner, 2005). Thus, collaborative organisations will have effective coordination and have more opportunities to take advantage of various perspectives and create synergy (Beyerlein et al., 2003).

Communication involves a whole range of processes, encompassing ways through which we affect one another, not just through speaking and writing, but also through behaviour and other less tangible means (Weaver, 1979) resulting in different levels of understanding. As such, communication is not always overtly done through spoken and written language and does not always have clear intent (Ruesch & Bateson, 1951), but is a mutual understanding of information between different parties (Schramm, 1978).

Motivation compels people to make efforts toward meeting certain goals and is a catalyst for positive increases in behaviour, activities, and actions (Domjan, 2003).

As defined by Barnard (1938), a decision considers options and leaves only one option. Decision-making in organisations defines parameters, governs processes and ultimately determines forward momentum.

Participatory management requests for decision-making to be decentralised and hence democratised, assigning administrative authority from the central hierarchy to local people. This grants localities the opportunity to run their own businesses, utilities, education, culture, environment and so forth and must be guaranteed through provisions under the law. Decentralisation has several distinct benefits as it not only alleviates the federal government's responsibilities but further promotes participation in self-government on the regional level.

To maintain the highest levels of quality, efficiency, and adaptability, the PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle is commonly used in organisations as a template for processes. Developed by William Edwards Deming based on the concepts of Dr W.A. Shewhart, a statistical process controller at Bell Laboratories in the United States, PDCA was implemented as a quality control measure in Japanese industry and became known as the Deming Cycle and can be applied to the administration and operation of processes with four steps as follows: Plan, Do, Check, and Act (Lertthairakul, 2011).

The PDCA cycle has also come to be known by many other names, such as the PDSA cycle (Plan-Do-Study-Act) and the Shewhart cycle, which is an endless cycle repeated for continuous development (Tague, 2004). However, they are essentially synonymous as concepts of a quality cycle used in the development and functioning of an organisation. The PDCA quality cycle is like an organisation's operational framework, with emphasis on planning, execution, assessment, improvement, and development (Pietrzak & Paliszkiwicz, 2014).



To sum up, Plan-Do-Check-Act is a repetitive four-step management model used for continuous process improvement. It stimulates continuous improvement of processes, prevents the process from recurring mistakes and fosters teamwork through brainstorming and problem-solving techniques.

### **Conceptual Framework**

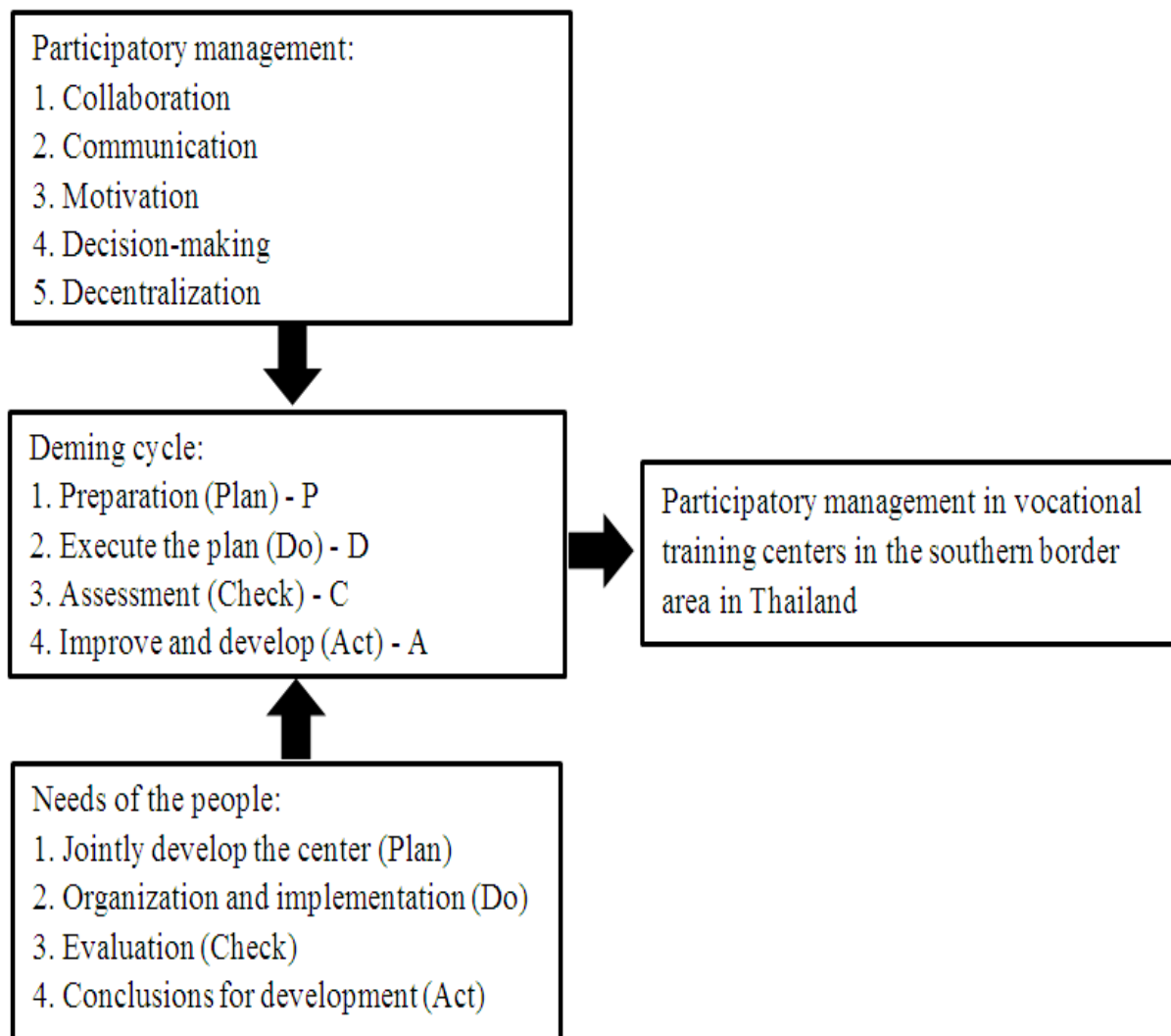
As a structure for this study, the researcher examined guidelines and requirements for the administration of vocational training centres in Thailand's southern border provinces as pertinent to current times as well as the near future, including the following theories and principles.

Likert's primary research into participatory management revealed a number of relevant concepts. Supervisors need to listen to comments and suggestions of subordinates, in addition, to drive them to work efficiently and in peace. The communication system within the organisation must be free and flexible. The organisation's goals and processes must be open and clear in order to allow for decisions to be made appropriately and in an informed manner. There should be sufficient delegation of work among co-workers to encourage participation and problem-solving. Furthermore, management must recognize the importance of staff development and provide training to ensure quality and accomplishment (Likert, 1961).

The Indiana Labor and Management Council (ILMC) (1985) recently discovered that employee participation increases productivity, work quality, worker satisfaction, employment security, and organisational flexibility. Participation enhances the degree to which a member takes pride in his/her job, and feels a personal responsibility for the outcome of the work.

The approach to participatory management can further transform the attitudes of workers and motivate them in many ways. The work environment and level of participation should hold more informal characteristics and to make goals. Therefore, supervisors should also establish for workers individual goals within the organisational goals and enable them to have more choices to choose what is personally valuable. Workers will exercise more control and responsibility if there are more motivation and independence, making them more diligent (Bryman, 1986).

**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework of the research



### Research Tools and Methods

The group research was used to study the needs of administrators of the vocational training centres in the southern border provinces. The synthesis of the participatory management approach for vocational training centres in the southern border provinces consisted of representatives from 22 centres located in the provinces of Songkhla, Satun, Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat. The sample group used in the research to integrate the management guidelines including study the needs of participants in the administration of the vocational training centres in the southern border provinces consisted of 168 respondents (administrators, instructors, and students) from vocational training centres in the concerned region and a variety of fields and subjects. Concerning the study of participatory management for vocational training centres in the southern border provinces, nine skilled experts with an expertise in the areas of training, policies, operations, management, and professional



education related to vocational training centres in the southern border provinces were surveyed in non-directive and open-ended interviews personally conducted by the researcher and using cumulative summarisation methods in presenting issues to the experts.

For the first step, the synthesis of participatory management approaches resulted from the study and the analysis of previous research and concepts related to participatory management and examination of variables from a centre group of 9 experts, 5 are college directors from such centres and the remaining 4 have expert knowledge in participatory management. A sample group of 168 people was then chosen from the representatives from half of the 22 aforementioned centres comprising the research population to study the needs of the participants in vocational training centres in the southern border provinces in the second step. The research tools used in this step consisted of a checklist compiling general information, and both a rating-scale and open-ended questionnaire. To create appropriate tools, the research studied concepts, theories, and pertinent literature in order to draft tools based on the conceptual framework devised for the study. Questionnaires were vetted by 5 experts to consider the content validity and find the consistency index (IOC), which was 0.86.

In the second step, the interpretation of data regarding general responses of respondents was performed using frequency and percentage, while the mean and standard deviation were used for the analysis of data regarding participation management. For criteria for average interpretation, ranges of 4.50-5.00 reflected the highest level of demand, 3.50-4.49 reflected a high level of demand, 2.50-3.49 reflected the medium level of demand, 1.50-2.49 reflected a low level of demand, and 1.00-1.49 reflected the lowest level of demand.

## **Results**

The results of the study in participatory management practices and guidelines for vocational training centres in the southern border areas in the areas of collaboration, communication, sharing of responsibilities, motivation and decision-making are as follows:

In terms of collaboration, responses showed the need for better-defined guidelines for the improvement of such vocational training centres based on the context identities of the areas where each training centre is located. There is also the need for the creation of targeted curricula to offer new courses making use of local wisdom in education parallel with the location of each training centre. To this end, guidelines for teachers and staff in knowledge and use of local wisdom teachers are necessary as well.

Furthermore, interest and safety need to be given to the facilities and surrounding areas of the vocational training centres to secure them as important and profitable places based on the identity of their communities. Alternative planning and purchases of local media and



equipment linked to local materials should be determined and regularised to assist in the development and prosperity of surrounding economic areas.

In terms of communication, answers indicated the need for community-centred means and mutual public association planning with the locals. Here can be obtained by publicising the activities of the vocational training centres and setting a higher profile as a beneficial presence in local communities through public relations activities to raise awareness of different programs of benefit to local society, culture, and business. Public relations should act as a role in the recruitment of competent teachers who understand different local cultural issues and who must be able to work as a well-integrated part of the communities they serve. The acquirement of local equipment and supplies must also be publicised and approved, as the use of local materials and resources will assist the surrounding 'area's economy.

In terms of motivation, responses indicated the necessity to persuade teachers and other personnel to form policies that include community participation in stimulating the development of vocational training centres. This involves initiatives to encourage local development, to find out modernised curricula using local identity to build opportunities for people native to the area and to obtain material supplies originally from the local area to improve the economy of the immediate community. Sufficient support must also be given to improving structures and facilities to be sufficient for customers and communities must be permitted to engage in such development systems.

In phases of decision-making, responses indicated the need for planning, development, operational and policy decision-making to positively and meaningfully involve all stakeholders concerning the vision and development of the vocational training centres. Decisions on curricula and course selection should consider the views and needs of people in the local community to determine the stability of modernisation, globalisation and local wisdom and values. Decisions about the facility and site planning should assist the public and be in line with the particular demands of the local area and decisions of resource procurement should prioritise resources, products, and materials already available in the local community to promote the economy of said community. Acquirement of such resources from outside areas should only occur if they cannot be found locally.

In terms of decentralisation and partition of power, responses indicated the need for participation in devising and policy formulation, enabling all stakeholders to actively become a voice and role in decentralised management and administration and to be able to recommend avenues for the goals and development of the vocational training centres. This includes co-determination of curriculum and participation in curriculum development following the area's modern needs and resources while using local knowledge, in association with planning for the development of buildings and facilities to meet the needs of the local



community. This plays a role in the determination of qualifications of teachers and criteria for their use of local knowledge in their teaching to encourage community involvement. Community representatives should be taken in as a member of various committees of each vocational training centre to engage in the process of organisational planning and administration as well. A participatory management approach for vocational training centres in the southern border provinces of Thailand under the Office of the Vocational Education Commission can provide many benefits.

## **Conclusion**

The general population in the southern border provinces, especially in remote areas, require reasonable access to educational opportunities, particularly in professional, or vocational, education. The Office of the Vocational Education Commission acts as the central means for providing outlets for such education although currently there are only 18 vocational schools in the area and their capacity is insufficient to enough service the number of people living in related communities. Residents of distant districts and areas encounter obstacles such as inconvenient transportation infrastructure and dangerous conditions resulting from uncertainty in the area. These communities desperately need the establishment of educational agencies to provide vocational training to create opportunities for access and personal betterment by introducing new technologies and stable, modernised careers. Raising the professional skills and incomes of the local workforce will create sustainability in these communities, which in turn could potentially ease existing tensions.



## REFERENCES

- American Industrial Arts Association. (1985). *Technology education: A perspective on implementation*. Reston, VA: Author. 3-6
- Barnard, C. (1938). *The functions of the executive*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Beyerlein, M., Freedman, S., McGee, C. and Moran, L. (2003). *Beyond teams: Building the collaborative organisation*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass / Pfeiffer.
- Bryman, A. (1986). *Leadership and corporate culture*. *Management Decision*, 24(6), 50-53.
- Bryson, J., Quick, K., Slotterback, C. and Crosby, B. (2013). *Designing public participation processes*. *Public Administration Review*, 73(1), 23 -34.
- Davis, K. and Newstrom, J.W. (1985). *Human behaviour at work: Organisation behaviour*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Domjan, M. (2003). *Principles of learning and behaviour, 5<sup>th</sup> edition*. Belmont: Thompson / Wadsworth.
- Gardner, D. (2005). Ten lessons in collaboration. *The Online Journal of Issues in Nursing*, 10(1), 1-9.
- Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Lertthairakul, W. (2011). The philosophy of discerning PDCA. Retrieved March 1, 2013 from [http://business.east.spu.ac.th/admin/waaa\\_file/A37322PDCA.pdf](http://business.east.spu.ac.th/admin/waaa_file/A37322PDCA.pdf)
- Levin, B.B. and Schrum, L. (2014). Lessons learned from secondary schools using technology for school improvement. *Journal of School Leadership*, 24(4), 640-665.
- Likert, R.Z. (1961). *New pattern of management*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- MURILLO, F. Javier et al. (2007). *School qualification: a new approach*.
- Pietrzak M. and Paliszkievicz J. (2014). Framework of strategic learning: The PDCA cycle. *Management* 10(2), 154.
- Poynton, J., Makela, C., and Haddad, D. (2014). *Organisational training and relationship building for increasing public participation in a public school district*. *Administrative Issues Journal*, 4(1).Development. (2014) ISSN: 2239-5938



- Rojewski, J., Lee, I. and Hill, R. (2014). Participation patterns of Korean adolescents in school-based career exploration activities. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 15(3), 473-432.
- Rowe, G. and Frewer, I. (2000). Public participation methods: A framework for evaluation. *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, 25(1), 3-29.
- Ruesch, J. and Bateson, G. (1951). *Communication: The social matrix of psychiatry*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Schramm, W. (1978). Cross cultural communication: Suggestions of the building of bridges. In: *New perspectives in international communication, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*. Honolulu: East-West Communication Institute.
- Shagholi, R., Hussin, S., Siraj, S., Naimie, Z., Assadzadeh, F. and Moayedi, F. (2010). Current thinking and future view: Participatory management a dynamic system for developing organisational commitment. *Procedia social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2(2010), 250-254.
- Swansburg, R.C. (1996). *Management and leadership for nurse managers, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*. Boston: Jones and Bartlett.
- Tague, N. (2004) *The quality toolbox, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*. Milwaukee: ASQ Quality Press.
- The Indiana Labor and Management Council, Inc. (1985). *To promote worker involvement through vocational training and education*. (Contract No.17-85-3-2). Indianapolis, IN.
- Weaver, W. (1979). The mathematics of communication. In: Mortensen, C. (Ed.), *Basic Readings in Communication Theory*. Harper and Row. Originally published in *Scientific American*, 181(1).
- Welch, M. and Tulbert, M. (2000). Practitioner's perspectives of collaboration: A social validation and factor analysis. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 11(3-4), 357-378.