

Sharing Professional Viewpoint
Support for Thai Teachers of Language, Mathematics and Science

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1. Introduction

Many countries have a basic policy to provide learning opportunities to all children regardless of their backgrounds. However, differences in backgrounds are actually very significant. These include parents’ occupations and educational levels, even their home possessions. These have been shown to be predictors of performance in reading, mathematics and science, for example (Ikeda, 2022).

It is important to find ways to bolster the educational achievements of children attending schools, particularly those in small towns and rural areas. These schools have difficulty in attracting and retaining qualified teachers.

This Viewpoint article presents some facts about the need to provide additional support for teachers.

2. PISA

The PISA test (Program for International Student Assessment), was created to measure the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students in reading, mathematics and science. The tests draw upon the content which can be found in curricula across the world (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2022).

In 2018/19, some 600,000 students, representing about 32 million 15-year olds in some 79 participating countries, completed that year’s assessment. Thailand’s 15-year olds came in at 63rd out of 68 nations (OECD, 2022).

In the same year the scores on Thailand’s own end-of-year tests revealed similar results. The average scores for all children were all below 50%. However, these results were not completely unexpected for several reasons (Me, 2020).

An earlier study carried out by the Thai government’s own testing department revealed that the teachers of mathematics, science, and computer studies failed the same tests which their students had taken (ASEAN Now, 2010).

National Test Scores of Thai Teachers 2010

Thai Language	Mathematics	Sciences
42.2%	25.4%	29.2%

These results revealed a large deficit in teachers’ knowledge of the very subjects they were assigned to teach. It would take years to correct these imbalances before they

could be minimised. Incidentally, since the 2010 report there has been no follow-up study of teacher competencies. However, the results as such have prompted the Ministry of Education to take an urgent action on in-service training programs for the basic education subject teachers concerned on a national scale. There have also been discussions on the issue of the suitable type of the national test—be it achievement- or placement-based. So far, the Thai public has not heard of a concrete solution.

3. Internet Resources for Teachers

The COVID 19 pandemic has led to the creation of an enormous number of on-line learning resources for children and their teachers who have been assigned to teach subjects for which they are not qualified nor confident. These same resources can be used by parents who have time and interest in home schooling.

Videos provide many positive features for learners and their teachers. At a basic level, children get to hear voices which are different from their teachers. Different voices can increase children's attention spans. Professional videos normally incorporate visuals such as photos, charts, and even sound effects, which can enhance understanding and retention of the material being taught (Salines, 2019).

When watching a video students are hearing correct pronunciation of terminology and expanding their listening vocabulary, for example. Although watching videos is a passive activity it provides a 'balanced learning experience' (Young, 2022).

4. Training Workshops

Training in the use of videos as supplements to teachers' daily lessons is essential. Not only would it provide teachers with new skills but also greater confidence. The training could be in the form of hands-on workshops. These should be at locations easily accessed, such as the local area offices of the Ministry of Education. Perhaps teacher training colleges should also provide the next generation of teachers with practice in the use of Internet resources.

If these suggestions were to be adopted, reading and writing Thai language should be given top priority. The ability to read and write one's own language is essential for obvious reasons.

Additionally, it would be important to invite the cooperation of Internet suppliers to upgrade the quality and reliability of their services especially to rural schools nationwide.

5. Selecting Videos to Support Teachers of Key Subjects

Selecting videos for use in the classroom should as much as is possible involve the teachers themselves. It can give them a sense of 'ownership'. The normal 'top down' type of decision making should be avoided wherever practical (Suarez-Alvarez, 2021).

In the case of video-enhanced lessons in mathematics for older children it is recommended to include basic knowledge about money, including fake money. In the case of science lessons, it is recommended that teachers should include videos which focus on protecting the natural environment.

6. Readers of *RICE Journal*

Readers of *Rice Journal* are invited to share their viewpoint on this topic of 'ensuring a more level playing field for all students'.

7. The Author

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