CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study has sought to analyze the impact of the 1992 educational reforms on the system of primary education in Thailand and to study the perceptions of the students, teachers and school administrators regarding the changes brought about by the reforms. The 1992 reforms brought about significant policy changes in the Thai educational system. The official aims of the reforms were to make the Thai children better equipped to face the rapidly changing times, to train them in vocational skills, to enable them to compete in the job market and all above to make them into responsible citizens of the country. This study found that though the 1992 reforms have been successful to a large extent in achieving their stated goals, some inadequacies remain both at the policy-making and implementation levels.

In the Thai education system, there is a hierarchy of administrative and managerial functions. The National Primary Education Commission is the apex body for making policies and development plans for education. Under this body there are the Provincial Primary Education Commission, the District Primary Education Commission and the School Cluster Committee. Besides this, there is a separate body for Bangkok city, i.e., the Bangkok Metropolitan Primary Education Commission (BMPEC) under the control of the National Primary Education Commission. Each level has its own office serving as its secretariat, which performs the secretarial work of its commission and is headed by a Secretary General or Director. Their function is to establish communication among different levels regarding educational planning. The lower commission conveys their proposals to the higher commission for acceptance. Appointments of directors or other authorities proposed at the lower levels need approval at higher levels. This hierarchy shows the inter-linkages between the component of the school system in terms of administrative and managerial aspects.

The inter-linkages in the educational system ensure that major policy decisions taken at the national level are transmitted to the school level through the intermediary layers of the administrative structure. The formulation of policy takes place at different levels depending on the subject matter and its sphere of applicability, i.e.,
whether the policy deals with a topic of national importance or with one of only local relevance. The lower level committees, especially at the school or school-cluster level are empowered to take decisions on local issues that need quick and ready solutions and these have to be in line with stated national or provincial level policies. So far as implementation of policies is concerned, the school level committees play a major role, under the supervision of the higher-level committees. While a well-structured edifice exists for the purpose of efficient administration of primary education in the country, its effectiveness depends upon the will and dedication of those who are entrusted at various levels with the tasks of formulation and implementation of educational policies.

The principal has to perform a pivotal role in the school management system. Earlier, the principals took more classes and did not have a strong hand in school management. After the implementation of new education system, the principal has to play a major role in the school’s management and the decision making process. Principals and vice-principals are given more responsibility for school management rather than teaching work. The improvement of the school depends upon the principal’s skill of public relation and communication with supervisors, teachers, and with the community as well as with the parents of the students. Thus the principal plays a multifaceted role in management work.

The new education system gives the principal the two responsibilities of teaching and school management. They, therefore, often have to face severe problems of time management. Besides the time constraint, the principal sometimes finds himself in a difficult situation because of his lack of training and experience in management work. The recruitment of the principal depends on the seniority among the teachers. There is no formal training programme for managerial work before the recruitment as a principal. As the principal is directly responsible person for management work, there is more chance of conflict between the principal and the teachers if there is any problem.

Before the 1992 reforms, the Ministry of Education formulated the curriculum, which was mandatory for the whole country. The curriculum was based more on theoretical ideas and gave less emphasis upon practical skills. Optional subjects were not a part of the curriculum. The earlier policies put little emphasis on the use of
modern technology and equipment in the teaching learning process. The classroom process was teacher oriented and did not adequately address all aspects of student development and of the social significance and utility of education. The principal of school had very limited power of educational management, and the district and provincial authorities controlled the financial and managerial system. The power of policy making lay solely in the hands of the Director General at the level of the central government, and with the Governor or Chief Educational Officers at the provincial level, and decisions made at higher levels were communicated to the lower ones and to the individual schools through the committees at four levels: National, Provincial, District and school cluster in the pre-1992 period.

The 1992 reform has made the Thai education system student-oriented and the pupils have become the central focus of the schooling process. The teaching activities prescribed in the curriculum including the use of modern teaching equipment are geared to ensure better development of the students' knowledge and capabilities. The teachers motivate students to express and to pursue their interests in different subjects and supervise them in these activities. The students therefore become involved in more useful activities and are more proficient in their basic skills. In the post reform era the classroom has become more practice oriented. The schools have been equipped with modern teaching learning equipment such as TV, radio and video-player.

The present day education system in Thailand is based on the primary educational reform of 1992 aiming at the decentralization of educational management and the enrichment of individual wisdom, thinking, mind and morality, making education a fundamental right for all and giving more emphasis on basic education. The reforms have led to a crucial change in the Thai education system and serve as the basis of long-term educational policies. The process of educational reforms has come to be regarded as a key component of the overall developmental activities and has largely been successful due to the determination to achieve better results on the part of the rulers and the willing cooperation of those involved in the teaching-learning process, including the educational administrators, the teachers, the students and their guardians. There is a process of constant retrospection and re-evaluation of
policies and achievements that enables the policy-makers to devise better means for
the dissemination of socially useful knowledge and skills among the people.

There is a constant process of retrospection of the working of the educational
reforms in order to examine whether they have been able to achieve their desired
goals. The experiences of people at various levels who are involved in the educational
process either as planners, administrators, teachers, students and guardians can
provide valuable clues regarding the efficacy of the reforms as well as their opinions
regarding the fulfillment of broader social goals through the educational system.

The reforms of primary education brought about a considerable change in the
administrative structure of primary education in Thailand. It manifests, in particular,
the Government’s attempt to strike a right balance between the decentralization of
administrative powers to the local, on the hand, and the control of the central
government on the other. Past experience has shown that neither the centralized
administration from 1948-1966 nor the delegation of administrative powers to the
local authorities over the past several years have proven effective as administrative
bases for tackling the problems of primary education management. With this in mind,
the authorities have adopted a new administrative structure combining both factors,
supported by a compact and more representative structure network right from the
national level through to the local level.

The new administrative system differs from its predecessor, where the power
of decision-making lay solely in the persons of Director-General at the central
government level, or Governors or Educational Chief Officers in the provinces,
mainly in its decision-making process which is channeled through the committees
formed at its four levels of administration, i.e. the national, provincial, district and
school-cluster levels. At each level the committee comprises representation of various
categories of people who are either directly involved in primary education
development in their own right, e.g. government officials of related agencies, elected
representatives of primary school teachers and resource persons. The representation is
designed to guarantee involvement of all parties concerned, thus ensuring a well-
balanced decision-making process at each level.
The major asset of the 1992 administrative system lies in the more realistic and decentralized distribution of administrative powers as well as in the balanced decision-making process at each level, aimed at achieving greater relevance, economy, efficiency, equity and quality in primary education management. The committee at each level of the administrative structure is entrusted with functions deemed appropriated and suited to the nature, the scope and the capacity of its responsibilities.

The role of the committee at each level differs to a certain extent in areas of emphasis in activities. The National Level Committee is concerned with the formulation of national primary education policies and development plans, budget allocation, standard setting concerning academic requirements, school building and expenditures, and appointment of Directors of Provincial and Bangkok Metropolitan Primary Education. The Provincial Level committee has as its task the consideration and approval of all activities undertaken in the province concerning implementation of policies and plans, budget allocation, academic and personnel matters.

At the district level, the committee coordinates and provides approval for all activities undertaken in the district, recommends and provides basic information concerning work plans, budgetary, academic and personnel matters for submission to the provincial authorities for consideration and approval. The school-cluster level committee is concerned with mutual cooperation and support, both physical and intellectual, for the improvement and effective operation of all activities of the schools in the cluster, submission of recommendations concerning work plans, budgetary, academic and personnel matters to the district authorities for submission to the provincial authorities. Each committee is served by its corresponding secretariat assigned to the central government, in the provinces, districts or school-clusters, depending on the level of the committee.

In the Thai education system, there are three major sources of financial support for the school management i.e. government grants, public donation and the school’s earnings. The government as well as the society gives strong support for the cause of public interest. Thailand being a Buddhist country, people are generous to help the schools for the sake of the society.
After the 1992 reform of primary education policy in Thailand, the schools' financial management is handled by the school principals. They get money from different sources. The Thai government makes allocates money through its budgetary planning that is done every 5 years. The government mainly supports the purchase of teaching materials through its development plans and sanctions budget for lunch programme to every school. The principals get different kinds of project from the government for the development of their schools. The government supports the teachers' training programmes. Some schools get support from foreign governments for some specific courses or programmes, like Japanese Government's help for moral class in APUS in Phichit province.

The principal gets public support through donation from rich individuals, parents of the students and non-government organizations whenever the government budget is insufficient for management of the school. The school authority informs the parents of the students or makes an announcement through radio for public help and the society is quite ready to offer help, as in the case of APUS. In 1973 when APUS faced financial shortage to establish school buildings, it got 200,000 Baht as donation from the public. Again, in 1981 the students’ parents donated an amount of 250,000 Baht to build a new school building. In 1983, the government financed the construction of a 3 storied school building with an amount of 3,650,000 Baht. In the rural areas the society is willing to give a helping hand for the public interest but the donation amount is less. Thus the school principals get financial support for the smooth running of their schools from the government, the students and parents as well as individual donors.

SUMMARY AND FINDING

This study focuses on primary schools in the Thai Education System after the 1992 Educational Reforms. The special emphasis is on curriculum, teaching-learning process and educational management. It compares the primary schools in the Phichit and Suphanburi provinces. Towards this end, the attitudes and opinions of administrators, teachers and students in the two provinces are examined in detail.

An earlier study made by the researcher had compared the pre-1992 and post-1992 curricula in Thailand focussing on vocationalisation/ skill orientation at the
primary level in Phichit province with the objective of assessing the post-1992 primary level education system. The study had found that the political will and determination on the part of the Royal Thai government has been a key factor in promoting primary education in the country and has contributed to the success of Thailand’s campaign for achieving universal primary education. While many of the reforms have been successfully implemented, others have met with a limited degree of success, and some are still in need of practical application.

In the present doctoral thesis, the researcher attempts to find answers to some of the questions raised in the M.Phil dissertation, and find reasons to explain lacunae, if any, in the new curriculum and its implementation process. It also presents a comparative study of the three aspects mentioned above in Phichit and Suphanburi provinces of Thailand. The reason for the comparative study is that Suphanburi is an urban and industrial province having sugar, shoes, melamine crockery factories. On the other hand, Phichit is an agriculture-based region where only farming is prevalent. Therefore, the curriculum implementation ought to be different. Hence, the study will try to see how the curriculum caters to the local needs.

The students studying in Suphanburi province or the nearby capital city are likely to get more information, news, and have more access to technology, etc. than those who study in a rural area like Phichit province. So Phichit and Suphanburi provinces have been selected for this study to enable a comparison between a rural and an urban area. It is also found that the budgetary allocation for education in Suphanburi (Baht 82,465,862) is more than in Phichit (Baht 60,180,686) (Thailand 2000). This would mean that the level of educational infrastructure is expected to be better in Suphanburi than in Phichit. The comparative study between Phichit and Suphanburi provinces is also vital to give an insight into the difference in curriculum content and its implementation.

The objectives of the study are to study the differences in the curriculum, the teaching-learning process in class VI and the educational management of the government schools in Phichit and Suphanburi provinces. The selected schools from Phichit province are Anuban Phichit Urban School (APUS) and Thalor Phichit Rural School (TPRS), and Suphannaphum Suphanburi Urban School (SSUS) and Dangchang Suphanburi Rural School (DSRS) from Suphanburi province.
Chapter two throws light upon the historical background of the Thai traditional system of education and discusses the factors influencing primary education reform in Thailand. The educational system in Thailand has evolved over an extended period of time with the constant and dedicated patronage of the monarchy, which had realized the importance of mass education as a means of national development. In recent times, efforts have been made to universalize primary education among the Thai citizens, to promote the quality of education, and to adapt the educational curriculum, teaching methods and educational administration to the changing requirements of modern society.

Chapter three attempts to provide a synoptic view of the administrative set-up of the primary education system in Thailand and a detailed picture of the four schools that have been selected for the purpose of this study. The sample has been taken from four government schools in Phichit and Suphanburi provinces, two from each province, with one from urban and the other from a rural setting. This sample includes a total of 184 students, 44 teachers and 11 administrators. It is found that considerable amount of autonomy has been bestowed on the school committee under the educational reforms programme in order to enable each school to formulate its own policies to cope with the problems affecting it at the local level. The study found the impact of the free education policy of the government of Thailand in Phichit and Suphanburi provinces. It also seeks an answer to the question of how far the Thai government has been successful in implementing the policy providing free compulsory primary education. The questionnaires administered in the four schools in Phichit and Suphanburi provinces provide a fair idea about the policy and its implementation.

Chapter four looks at the socio-economic status of the students' families and their urban/rural residence. The relative affluence and better educational background of the parents in the urban areas as compared to the rural areas and the better facilities available in the urban schools find reflection in many of the responses provided by the students to the questions regarding educational qualifications, income and occupation of the parents, amount of pocket money provided to the students, etc. The socio-economic status (SES) has been found to be a major factor that decides enrolment in school, the choice of optional subjects and preferences.
Province wise differences are not very striking in the socio-economic status (SES) of the parents of the students. However, the case is different if the rural and urban schools are taken up separately in the two provinces and it is quite significant. The socio-economic status of most of the parents of the students in urban schools is higher than those parents in the rural schools. While comparing the rural schools in the two provinces, the socio-economic status of most of students’ families in Suphanburi is higher than those students’ families in Phichit province.

In Thailand, as most of the parents are working, and the children have to help themselves at home. Most of the families in Thailand do not employ servants and so all the members of the household share the housework. Same questions were asked to crosscheck if the values instilled and taught in the schools was observed and practiced by the students when left on their own with no supervision. It is found that both in the urban and rural areas, TV-watching is a popular home pastime activity among students. The number of students who play computer games is more in urban areas than in rural areas because these games are available easily whereas in rural areas the students play generally outdoor games.

So far as the activities of the students in the free time are concerned the lowest number of the students in the rural schools of Phichit province are able to play games in their free time. This may be because they help in the household work. Those in the rural areas may also be helping with sibling care, helping on the farms, etc. They may be helping on the shop as a shopkeeper, or help in making purchases for the shop from the market, or helping their sibling to do homework and spend time for tuition. All these are time consuming activities. In the urban areas the students may not be engaged in such time consuming activities.

Chapter five highlights new curriculum in the 1992 Educational Reforms. It has been received favourably by the administrators, teachers and students as they provide the students with capabilities that would enrich their lives and enable them to perform well in the workplace in future. The teaching learning process has become student-centric focusing on the needs and abilities of individual students, rather than the earlier teacher-centric approach that placed students in the position of passive receivers of education. The study found that the new curriculum has been mostly welcomed by the administrators, teachers and students as they provide the students
with capabilities that would enrich their lives and enable them to perform well in the workplace in future. The teaching learning process has become student-centric focusing on the needs and abilities of individual students, rather than the earlier teacher-centric approach that placed students in the position of passive receivers of education. The optional subjects place a greater emphasis on imparting practical skills to the learners, which are relevant both to their daily lives as well as to the requirements of the workplace in future life. It can be observed that the new curriculum encourages the students to go for higher studies instead of dropping from school and joining the adolescent workforce. Thus it is a progressive curriculum geared to national development and having the potentiality to create highly productive and law abiding citizens. The teachers and administrators as well as the students are found to have received the reforms enthusiastically.

The role of the administrators and teachers in implementing the school curriculum is crucial for the success of the educational reforms and is discussed in chapter six. A good curriculum with non-reciprocating teachers and administrators is meaningless. The quality of students depends much on the knowledge and communication skills of the teachers. The contribution of teachers in developing a sense of moral values in the students is important for the society. Even the long experienced teachers and administrators need periodic special training in order to keep up the quality of education. The teachers' knowledge has a strong correlation with the output of the school.

Teachers play an important role in adapting the curriculum to suit the needs of the students. They constitute the final and constant linkage in the classroom activities. So they must be given a major role in planning for curriculum administration, selection of subject matter, requirement of teaching material and identification of the resources in the school and the community for educational advancement.

Chapter seven The attempts to study the progress achieved by the new educational reforms in terms of implementation at the school level, examining the views of the school administrators and the teachers, who are in charge of implementing the new schemes, and the students, who are the recipients of the learning process, based upon their experiences of the working of the educational system. The rural schools suffer from lack of adequate funding which tends to hamper
the use of sophisticated aids like video and overhead projector. This is partly due to the general poverty of the rural areas in relation to the urban affluence, and calls for greater attention on the part of the Thai authorities towards granting financial help to the rural schools.

So far as teaching methods are concerned it is observed that more innovative methods are required in the rural areas in order to attract and retain students within the educational system. The teachers tried to make the learning process an enjoyable experience for the students so that they do not drop out from school.

Rural schools need to be given importance in the matter of allocation of resources and teaching materials, so that the disparities between urban and rural schools in terms of their relative capability of development of students can be lessened. It is observed that the rural students belong mostly to the poorer section of society as compared to their urban counterparts. Therefore, the authorities should bear in mind the problems faced by the rural schools while formulating policies for educational development. It is found that the good teachers prefer to work in the urban schools and not in the rural ones. The authorities should encourage the trained and experienced teachers to work in the rural schools rather than seeking employment in urban schools, and should offer various incentives to the rural teachers for this purpose. There appears to be closer and more informal interaction between the administrators and the teachers in the rural schools. The type of social relationships in the rural setting, which are not impersonal and formal as in the urban areas, can explain this.

So far as teaching methods are concerned it is observed that more innovative methods are required in the rural areas in order to attract and retain students within the educational system, as most of the students belong to educationally and economically backward sections of Thai society, and need to be motivated to pursue higher studies so that they do not drop out from school. Thus, many of the rural teachers said that they tried to make the learning process an enjoyable experience for the students. Regarding the material provided for teaching only a quarter of the teachers feel that the equipment is sufficient. One aspect of the new educational policy that has been
successfully implemented is the lunch programme for schools. Most of the teachers said that they enjoy cooking in the school’s lunch programme.

In the management of primary education the emphasis on participatory learning involving the administrators, teachers and students has led to marked improvements in student performance in academic and co-curricular activities including basic skills. It has also enhanced the eagerness and enthusiasm of the participants in the teaching learning process to achieve better results and has made it an enjoyable and enriching experience. However, a closer contact between school administrators and various agencies in the school such as the counseling centres, on one hand, and the students, on the other, may enable higher levels of educational attainment and goal-achievement, as the students tend to have close personal contact only with their teachers rather than with the administrators or others involved in school management.

The responsibilities that the principals and the vice-principals are entrusted with are more detailed and they strike a balance between doing academic work and doing administrative work. Most of the teachers in all the four schools approved the 1992 Education Reform and the curriculum. Regarding the relevance of the curriculum in meeting the needs of the community, the administrators and the teachers offered different opinions. Their answers imply that the optional subjects that are being taught do not serve the purpose of getting job for the students, but it help them and their families for daily lives, and they able to understand themselves that which subjects or career suit them for the future study.

This study reveals a significant relationship between the frequency of teacher supervision and student achievement. Frequent teacher supervision improves the punctuality of teachers and their adherence to the curriculum. Furthermore, the active support of principals consistently increases the chances that school improvement programmes will be implemented successfully. Principals may, however, suffer from isolation and lack of communication. To play an effective role in school improvement, principals need regular mechanisms for communicating their questions and concerns to supervisors.
Under the new education policy the teachers feel that the principals do not have sufficient time for their school activities. Our questionnaire survey among the teachers reveals that nearly half of the teachers are not satisfied by the work of the school management and they do not expect anything from the principal for the development work. More than a quarter of the teachers feel strongly that the principal should accept their ideas regarding school development. The survey found that one-fourth of the teachers felt that their principals were not capable of proper management. This shows the importance of training programmes for the principals so that they can develop better skills of school management. More than half of the teachers covered by the survey said that the principals did not accept their ideas about school development programmes. This problem is much more in the rural schools.

Teachers are made a part of the policy-making process at the higher levels because their teaching experience enables them to have a clear idea of many of the problems related to classroom activities. Moreover, it should be ensured that the principals convey to the teachers information on decisions taken at the higher levels regarding the teaching-learning process.

After the 1992 Education Reform, a number of problems cropped up for the principals and the teachers. Earlier, the principals did not have much powers or responsibilities regarding school management and had enough time to manage their assigned duties. They taught in classrooms and their workload was not very high. After the 1992 reform, the school principals have the sole responsibility for management of the budget and the buildings and are also involved in the work of school cluster. Because of their heavy duties the principals have to often go out of their schools to look for budgetary support, as the government budget is not enough. This was not their responsibility earlier.

The principals do not have enough time for the school. They were given the responsibility to take class at least once a week according to the policy of the primary Educational Reform of 1992. But in fact all the principals just have their name in the timetable and do not take classes. Due to their administrative responsibilities, the principals are not able to devote time for teaching activities, though they are required to take classes as per the rules. Hence, either the principals may be absolved of their teaching duties by changing the rules, or their administrative workload including
mobilization of resources for the school should be lessened so that they can dutifully perform their teaching responsibilities.

The teaching learning technique changes with time. Some teachers felt the importance of upgrading of the knowledge and working style of the principals according to the changing times. The teachers feel that the principals should inform them about the decisions made at the higher levels for the improvement of academic work. The teachers need more materials for the teaching learning process and are not satisfied with the budget allocation given to their schools.

The teachers also feel the necessity of more training programmes to improve the teaching skills. They need the Thai government's support to get more training on the subjects in which they are interested. In the current situation there are new teaching equipment based on technology, but many teachers do not have the necessary skills to use them. So, they are under pressure to take further training to upgrade their knowledge and skills. Many teachers felt the insufficiency of teaching material in their schools.

The present system of lunch programme in the school puts more pressure on the teachers in the rural schools. Quite a number of teachers do not enjoy cooking and also they do not have time to help in the cooking. In the urban schools the burden on the teacher is less as they employ cooks for the purpose.

The output of good students does not depend on a single factor but on many inter related factors at various levels from the highest government organizational body to the individual personnel. The aspects of organization and management in a school have a strong bearing upon the learning activities within the class. The overall performance of the school is found to be better when the principal takes care of the needs of the staff, and there is proper communication among the principal, the teachers the supervisors, the students and their parents. There are thus inseparable linkages among educational planners and their policies, the principals, the teachers and the ultimate recipients of the educational process, the students in a chain of activities ranging from the policymaking stage to classroom activities. The inter-linkages and channels of communication among them and their role in educational management and the teaching learning process have therefore to be discussed.
The observations and interviews have revealed the importance of understanding and communication between them. Cooperative joint work among the staff colleagues is important for attaining an optimum teaching quality. At the same time, a good relationship between students and teachers is also required in order to achieve better results in the school.

Curriculum management is an important task for educational planners. The designers of the school curriculum should understand how to improve the child’s capability in terms of its cognitive, psychomotor and effective skills and fashion the curriculum accordingly. The policy maker should design the curriculum in a way suitable to the geographical and urban or rural location of the area. For example, it is observed that urban students give more preference to general subjects and the rural students to optional subjects and the preferences of subjects among students differ according to the utility of the subject in their surrounding area. The optional subjects facilitate the improvement of the school curricular activities according to the needs of the society.

Under the 1992 reforms, the offering of optional subject is a special innovation in the school curriculum. The optional subjects place a greater emphasis on imparting practical skills to the learners, which are relevant both to their daily lives as well as to the requirements of the workplace in future life. It can be observed that the new curriculum encourages the students to go for higher studies instead of dropping from school and joining the adolescent workforce. The students' choices of subjects differ in the urban and rural areas according to the utility of the subject, e.g. the urban students give more preference to general subjects while most of the rural students prefer the optional subjects. Thus it is a progressive curriculum geared to national development and having the potentiality to create highly productive citizens.

In order to make the reforms more effective, steps may be taken to remove the defects and lacunae observed in their implementation. Principals should be given training in school management prior to their assumption of office, so that they are better equipped to face the challenges. At present, the principals have a background of training and experience in teaching, which helps them to understand some of the problems faced by the teachers, but the importance of training and experience in school management in the case of principals cannot be denied.
The guidance and support of leaders including policy-makers, planners and administrators in the educational system and their effective interaction and collaboration with the teachers, as well as the commitment of the school and the students are crucial factors for the success of the educational process. The planners and administrators need to have a crystal clear view of the teaching learning process in the school and encourage the sharing of knowledge and experience among the colleagues. Thus the inter-linkages among the governmental authority, the country’s educational policy, the teacher-student relationship and the society’s cooperation are important for the production of knowledgeable, capable, skilled and morally upright students.