

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

Vilasinee Jintalikhitdee, Phusit Phukamchanoad, Sakapas Saengchai

Abstract—This research aims to study the level of democratic political culture and the factors that affect the democratic political culture of 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, standard deviation, and inferential statistics which are Independent Samples T-test (T-test) and One-Way ANOVA (F-test). The researcher also collected data by interviewing the target groups, and then analyzed the data by the use of descriptive analysis. The result shows that 5th and 6th graders under the authority of Dusit District Office, Bangkok have exposed to democratic political culture at high level in overall. When considering each part, it found out that the part that has highest mean is “the constitutional democratic governmental system is suitable for Thailand” statement. The part with the lowest mean is “corruption (cheat and defraud) is normal in Thai society” statement. The factor that affects democratic political culture is grade levels, occupations of mothers, and attention in news and political movements.

Keywords—Democratic, Political Culture.

I. INTRODUCTION

THAILAND had transformed its governmental system from absolute monarchy to democracy on 24 June 1932. The main principle of democracy is self-governance by citizens. The citizens should participate in country's administration. All citizens have rights, freedom and are equal under the constitution. Any decision-making or any matter must be based on the majority, but the minority cannot be ignored. The achievement of democracy relies on the degree and characteristics of political participation among the citizens. In other words, if the citizens have high level of political participation and directly participate in politics owing to democratic awareness, Thailand's democracy will be accomplished, respectively. Otherwise, it is very difficult to achieve democracy [1].

To develop democracy successfully, it is necessary to create democratic political culture among the people. The political

Vilasinee Jintalikhitdee is with the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand (phone: +662-160-1303; e-mail: vilasinee.ji@ssru.ac.th).

Phusit Phukamchanoad is with the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand (phone: +662-160-1316; e-mail: phusit.kh@ssru.ac.th).

Sakapas Saengchai is with the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand (phone: +662-160-1303; e-mail: sakapas.sa@ssru.ac.th).

culture can be changed and individually different because of the political socialization received by each individual [2].

Therefore, to lead Thai people to democratic way of life, we must foster them seriously through the process of political socialization in their early childhood or elementary education. This is because students tend to receive democratic political socialization from educational institutions where teachers, peers and other activities at school that provide knowledge about democracy both formally and informally. This encourages study environment that facilitates the development of democratic way of life. The target group of this research is the group of students in grade 5 and 6 from 9 schools under the authority of Dusit District Office, Bangkok. The researcher selected these schools due to the fact that they are located in the capital city and near the political institutions such as the government house, parliament, ministries, departments, including the offices of important political parties that indicates the expansion of democracy. These environments are often seen by the students. Moreover, the samples which are 5th and 6th graders tend to learn more intensively about democracy regarding the higher amount of democracy-related content in textbooks (more than grade 1-4). Since the students are taught in good educational institutions that provide good educational tools and teachers are effective in teaching and integrating democracy to the curriculum and the study environments are full of democratic elements, there should be a study on the level of democratic political culture practiced by the students as well as the factors affecting the democratic political culture because these would support the development of the appropriate pattern and procedure of democratic political culture socialization for the students in the future.

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To study the level of democratic political culture and the factor affecting democratic political culture 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 [3]. The researcher calculated the size of sample according to the Taro Yamane's formula [4], and then collected data from 300 samples by using a stratified sampling for probability sampling in order to have samples from every school. The population includes 52 students from Wat Pracharabueatham School, 9 students from Wat Sawadeesrinaram School, 10 students from Wat Rajphatigaram School, 16 students from

Wat Taewarajkulchorn School, 22 students from Sammananamborihan School, 54 students from Wat Benchamabophit School, 52 students from Sukothai School, 36 students from Wat Jantarasmorn School, and 49 students from Wat Thammaphiratararn School. The researcher also selected 9 samples by using purposive sampling for non-probability sampling. The data collection process was complete by the use of questionnaires and interviews. Afterward, the researcher analyzed the data extracted from questionnaires with descriptive statistics. This includes arithmetic mean, standard deviation and inferential statistics which are Independent Samples T-test (T-test) and One-Way ANOVA (F-test). The data from interviews was analyzed by descriptive analysis to measure the degree of democratic political culture in which the mean ranges into 4.21-5.00 (Highest), 3.41-4.20 (High), 2.61-3.40 (Middle), 1.81-2.60 (Low), and 1.00-1.80 (Lowest).

IV. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Most of the 5th and 6th graders under the authority of Dusit District Office, Bangkok have a high level of the democratic political culture's awareness (mean = 4.01). The statement that has the highest mean is "constitutional monarchy is suitable for Thailand" (mean = 4.51). Second, the characteristic of the political leader that is suitable for Thailand is described as "the one who pay attention to the benefit of majority the most" (mean = 4.47). Election is the best way to address democracy such as electing class leader (mean = 4.39). Respecting the rights of other people is important for living together in democratic society (mean = 4.34). Democratic-minded person is optimistic and accepts the other's capabilities (mean = 4.32). Listening to the other's opinions is important for living together in democratic society (mean = 4.31). The lowest scoring statement is "corruption (cheat and defraud) is normal in Thai society" (mean = 2.59) as shown in the following table.

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

| Political Culture | Mean | S.D. | Level |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Election is the best way to address democracy such as electing class leader. | 4.39 | 0.93 | Highest |
| Constitutional monarchy is suitable for Thailand. | 4.51 | 0.83 | Highest |
| Respecting the rights of other people is important for living together in democratic society. | 4.34 | 0.97 | Highest |
| Listening to the other's opinions is important for living together in democratic society. | 4.31 | 0.92 | Highest |
| Participating in political activities such as election and election's campaign is important in democracy. | 4.10 | 0.95 | High |
| Peaceful protest is legitimate according to Constitution law. | 3.36 | 1.37 | Middle |
| Democratic-minded person is optimistic and accepts the other's capabilities. | 4.32 | 0.91 | Highest |
| The characteristic of the political leader that is suitable for Thailand is described as "the one who pay attention to the benefit of majority the most". | 4.47 | 0.85 | Highest |
| The corruption (cheat and defraud) is normal in Thai society. | 2.59 | 1.56 | Low |
| Patronage system (i.e. offer privileges to relatives or friends) is acceptable in Thai society. | 3.73 | 1.34 | High |
| Total | 4.01 | 0.49 | High |

The factors significantly affecting democratic political culture of the 5th and 6th graders under the authority of Dusit District office, Bangkok in terms of statistics (Sig. \geq 0.05) are:

- Grade levels: the students in grade 6 tend to think in the way of democratic political culture more than students in grade 5.
- The occupations of mothers: the students whose mothers have other professions (i.e. housewives, beauticians) tend to practice democratic political culture more than students whose mothers work in the government/state-owned enterprises, trading/private businesses, private companies and general employees.
- The attention in news and political movements: the students who always/often follow news and political movement tend to think in the way of democratic political culture more than the students who rarely/sometimes follow news and political movement.

On the part of collecting data from interviewing the school administrators and the teachers from Social Science, Religion and Culture Department about the democratic political culture, some important issues are identified as follow.

1. The school administrators and the teachers from Social Science, Religion and Culture Department have more

confidence in democracy. They believe that democracy encourages peaceful society more than any other governmental systems.

2. Respecting the rights, freedom and equality of people is the best because it shows the honor to one another.
3. To respect the rule of democracy means everyone must respect the majority's opinion and honor the minority's voice at the same time.
4. The school administrators and the teachers from Social, Religion and Culture Department should promote the activities that develop students' awareness on their civic duties as well as self-confidence, especially classroom-based activities such as awareness promotion activity that emphasizes self-confidence, open mind, and assertiveness as well as activities outside classroom such as political mimic and community services both at home and at school.
5. Implement policies or strategies that encourage the students to learn about democratic political culture from real situations and discuss about the political news.
6. Implement activities that relate to democratic political culture such student council elections, class president

elections, group work activities in classroom, giving one's opinion both inside and outside classroom, and following the rules of the school.

V. DISCUSSION

The democratic political culture from the viewpoint of 5th and 6th graders under the authority of Dusit District Office, Bangkok in overall is rated as high. The statement that has the highest mean is "constitutional monarchy is suitable for Thailand". This is because Thailand is governed by parliamentary system that has a king as the head of the state. Moreover, students believe that his majesty the king sacrifices himself to help all citizens equally throughout his reign. That is to say his majesty the king stands for democratic principles such as public participation and utilitarian benefits. Moreover, the students are also faithful and believe in election as the best way to represent democracy. Election is an easy way to represent peoples from every group. Students can express their thoughts toward class president elections, and believe that the characteristic of the political leader that is suitable for Thailand is described as "the one who pay attention to the benefit of majority the most". They also believe in these statements: "Respecting the rights of other people is important for living together in democratic society", "listening to the other's opinions is important for living together in democratic society", and "democratic-minded person is optimistic and accepts the other's capabilities". The issue that the students disagree by rating it as the lowest is "the corruption (cheat and defraud) is normal in Thai society". This resulted from the way good teachers teach and foster the students to be good citizens. If they grow up, there should be low tendency of corruption committed by these students. This idea is evident in the educational institutions in Bangkok which is relevant to the interview with Kosum Krajangsri, a school administrator [5]. He said, "Our school has integrated the knowledge about corruption in the school curriculum according to the 'Growing Good, Saying No to Corruption Project' that identifies how corruption affects the students and the country". As a whole, students tend to have a high level of democratic political culture's awareness. This is relevant to the research "Development of Democratic Way of Life Practiced by Students in Primary Education under the Authority of the Department of Elementary Educational Administration of Rajburi Province" [6]. The result shows that overall image of the democratic way of life practiced by the students is rated at high level. Moreover, the results from the research "Awareness toward How to be a Good Citizen in Accordance with the Democratic Way of Life of the 6th Graders in Nongjork District, Bangkok" [7] show that most of the students are aware of how to be a good citizen in accordance with the democratic way of life at the level of acknowledgement and being responsive. The mean of the awareness toward how to be a good citizen in accordance with the democratic way of life in terms of respectfulness, harmony, and acknowledgement is high.

VI. SUGGESTIONS

1. Family institutions and educational institutions should cooperate with each other in order to instruct the students correctly about Thai politics, constitutional monarchy, and Thai culture, and to understand the students closely when observing the political situations through various media.
2. Educational institutions should promote activities inside and outside classrooms continuously through the implementation of group work activities in classroom, educational participation's encouragement, class president elections as well as internet's utilization to search for the interesting issues, and then analyze them together.
3. Students should be more interested in following the news and political movements via various media, and then discuss about them with their families, teachers, and friends.

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