

Decentralization in Education of Thailand: Lesson Learnt from South Korea^{*}

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Abstract

This paper focuses on two activities: 1) to study the situation and a road map of Thailand for increasing the role of the Local Administration Organization in providing and supporting education and, 2) to study Lesson Learnt and best practice of Educational Administration by the Local Administration Organization in South Korea. The study found that Thailand has promoted and supported the concept of decentralization to local government to be able to participate in education. This is stated in the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, the highest law of the country, and the National Education Act, 1999. The Ministerial Regulation has been issued in 2007 prescribing the rules and how to decentralize the educational administration. It is found that 381 schools have already been transferred to the local government. In the second decade of education reform (2009-2018), the proposal continues to define this important concept as it is indicated to be one of the four issues of the education system which needs urgent reform with a focus on decentralization to the school, Education Service Area, and local government. In the proposal for educational reform in the second decade, the entire framework and the primary mechanism have been set including the supporting mechanism which needs the improvement to be brought in to action. Thailand requires that good practices from countries that are successful in educational management. The experience and lesson learned from operations in South Korea's education focuses on the decentralization of education to locality. In 1991

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South Korean declared the Decentralization of Educational Administration Act and the Education Tax Act which make the allocation of educational budget become stronger. The authority of education has been decentralized and the budget has been allocated to the local government in order to meet the needs of local people without political influence. South Korea is therefore known as a country with high quality of education and ability to compete in the international level in field of education.

Keywords: Educational reform, Decentralization in education, Educational administration, Local administration organization (LAOs), Thailand, South Korea

Introduction

During the past 10 years of Thailand's education reform, evaluation efforts have indicated gratifying outcomes on some issues and points of concern on others, such a structural adjustment among different agencies responsible for education provision has resulted in their unification. In response to the requirement to decentralize authority for educational administration, educational service areas were established, serving as pivotal points for integration and coordination of efforts for educational development. Nonetheless, there are many problems that require urgent solution. Several issues have emerged; these issues require urgent measures for development, improvement and further elaboration. Notable among these points of concern are quality of learners, teachers and faculty staff, and especially of educational personnel, mainly concerning the efficiency of administration and management regarding the decentralization of administrative authority, which has not been truly transferred to educational institutions as targeted. The participation and contribution from all segments of society in the provision of education and educational administration still leave much to be desired. In view of these problems, I have conducted studies and analyses of relevant documents and reports in order to obtain information on the educational management key successes and good practices from the other countries. From these studies, it was found that South Korea is one of the countries with a strong educational system and which exhibits; success in educational reform and international competitiveness because the government has the main focus on education which cooperates in accelerating educational reform continuously. For that reason, South Korea is the one of Asia region which is very successful in education reforms including decentralization to local organizations. In addition, in 1991 a new law for promotion of local autonomy was legislated.

Decentralization in education of Thailand

As of the summary of outcomes of education reform efforts in the past, the Office of the Education Council has monitored and assessed outcomes of education reform since 1999. An overview of the past has shown several problems and areas of concern requiring urgent solution, improvement and further elaboration. The outcome of

decentralization can be summarized from the increasing efficiency in educational administration and management, strengthening participation and decentralizing power in educational administration and management from central authorities to educational service areas and educational institutions. The outcome shows that although the Ministerial Regulation Concerning the Criteria and Methods for Decentralizing Power in Educational Administration and Management 2007 has become effective, implementing agencies and schools still feel the need for more freedom and flexibility. Regarding participation in education provision, only 381 schools have been transferred to be under jurisdiction and responsibility of LAOs. Expansion of education provided by the private sector has not been as extensive as desired. In 2007, the ratios of private students at basic and higher levels were only at 17.8% and 17.1% respectively. Participation of enterprises and other institutions in education provision has increased, yet the ratio of their participation still remains almost negligible. (Thailand Ministry of Education, 2009)

In the view of the above problems, Thailand attempts to push on several projects in order to study and learn more about decentralization. Thus there were the pilot schools for educational decentralization under the basic educational institutions. The implementing found that, the problems of the decentralization to the LAOs was that some aspects of duty were not proceeded, some were proceeded without standard, some were proceeded but do not cover all 4 aspects namely academic, financial, personal and general administration, and some were proceeded unsuccessfully. For instance:

The study of the successful on decentralization of educational administration in basic educational institutions under the jurisdiction of the office of basic education commission that to participate in moving into school decentralization pilot project (amount 610 schools). The research finding indicated that the current problems in management of the decentralized educational administration were 1) in the academic management: the teacher had too many duties, 2) in the budget management: the teacher had to do the duty as the budgeting officers, the parceling officers and the administrators, 3) in the personnel management: the school couldn't select personnel to government teacher or to move into school, and 4) in the general management: the teachers lacked of cooperation. (Kanokwan Soikham, 2007)

In the same way, based on the study of Educational administration decentralization in Nakorn Pathom Region 1 found that teachers had negative attitude toward the educational administration decentralization to the Local Administration. They argued that they don't have enough knowledge and experience in educational administration. Executives of the local administration organizational at all levels should participate in setting up the standard rules and regulations for all local administration. It takes more time to develop skills knowledge and experiences. Moreover there may be some political interference to this decentralization. They all believed that the budget of LAOs would be the major problems to the teacher. (Porntip Nomnusun, 2007)

Furthermore, the result of the evaluation in the performance according to decentralization policy of basic schools in Surin province was found that 1) in academic tasks, there were problems in the educational management such as lack of teachers who possessed the knowledge of English, lack of teachers who possessed the knowledge in preparing teaching aids, lack of modern teaching materials, lack of continuous monitoring by administrators, lack of systematic supervision and monitoring, education not managing correctly according to objectives, students' lack of analyzing and creative thinking skills, and there was not enough satisfaction of those involved in academic tasks and, 2) in budget tasks, problems in educational management were lack of budget in administration and general administration. Important problems found were lack of buildings, computer rooms, computers, Internet, modern information technology, public relation relating to cooperation and cooperation within and between implementation units. (Krit Lamoonmorn, 2006)

For the readiness in educational administration of local authority administration, base on the study of the sample (80 local authority administrations) point out as a whole was at a moderate level and was correlated with the personnel development. (Kasorn Sukjinda, 2007)

As above mentioned, shown that schools have to faced with the obstacles and the problems on decentralization to LAOs, because of some administrators and teachers still lack knowledge on decentralization to Local Administrative, including people in community still don't understand about decentralization; people don't know

their role due to the lack of information and clear knowledge on decentralization wide spread.

The second decade of education reform: Trend and challenge of Thailand

Due consideration has been given to outcomes of education reform efforts in the past decade; results of research and study on future education trends, orientation and factors affecting Thai education in the year to come; application of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand 2007; educational policy of the present government (2010); and projected change in various aspects: economy, society, population, energy and environment, science and technology in the tide of globalization with free flow and transfer of human and financial resources, technologies, data and information, knowledge etc.. Based on information from the above sources and under guiding principles of the National Education Act 1999 and Amendments 2002, the Proposals for the second decade of education reform has been formulated. It starts from 2009-2018; with the goals by 2018, systemic reform of education and learning will be achieved, with emphases on the 3 main areas of concern as follows 1) developing quality and standard of education and learning of Thai people 2) education and learning opportunities and, 3) strengthening participation of all segments of society in educational administration and management by increasing the role of those outside the system of education as well. (Thailand Ministry of Education, 2009)

For the accomplishment; the Education Council was established to be in charge of preparing strategic recommendations and educational reform measuring on the following 9 areas of concern: quality development of learners, production and development of teachers and faculty staff, increasing efficiency in educational administration management and participation, increasing educational opportunities, manpower production and development, education financing, technologies for education, educational laws and, lifelong learning as well as non-formal and informal education.

This framework of actions for second decade of education reform, there are need to establishment of a mechanism or a body responsible of analyzing problems encountered in the education and learning system, which is intrinsically linked with

other systems of the nation e.g. economy, society, culture, legislation etc. At this juncture, there are 4 major issues requiring urgent reform; quality development of the new generation of Thai people, teachers, revitalizing educational institutions and learning sources, and in particular through adoption of new approaches and practices for educational administration and management.

The role of LAOs in providing and supporting education in the future

In part of quality development through adoption of new approaches and practices for educational administration and management; government emphasis given to decentralization of power in administration and management to educational institutions, educational service areas and LAOs. Participation of parents, community, private sector and all segments of society will be intensified. Administrative and managerial system will be based on principles of good governance, justice, transparency and accountability. New approaches and practices will be adopted in conjunction with creation of a corps of change agents. Financing and budgeting of education will be on the demand side, thereby allowing learners to make a choice of their courses of study.

Regarding to LAOs; the proposals for the Second Decade of Education Reform (2009-2018) has prescribed as Thailand need to increase the role of LAOs in providing and supporting education through LAOs should be encouraged to participate and contribute to provision of and support for education at all levels and of all types. Such appropriate participation will meet the real needs of the local areas, taking into account exigencies of the national education system and observance of national education standards. Guidelines for the reform measure are therefore prescribed as follows:

Principal measures; 1) increase and strengthen the role of LAOs in providing and supporting education and learning to meet the real needs of the people in the local areas. Also provide support for curriculum development by availing of local wisdom, customs and traditions, and resources in order to enhance the quality of life and strengthen the communities. 2) Strengthen capacities of LAOs for readiness in educational administration and management. Also strengthen capabilities of teachers, administrators and educational personnel of LAOs so as to become dynamic

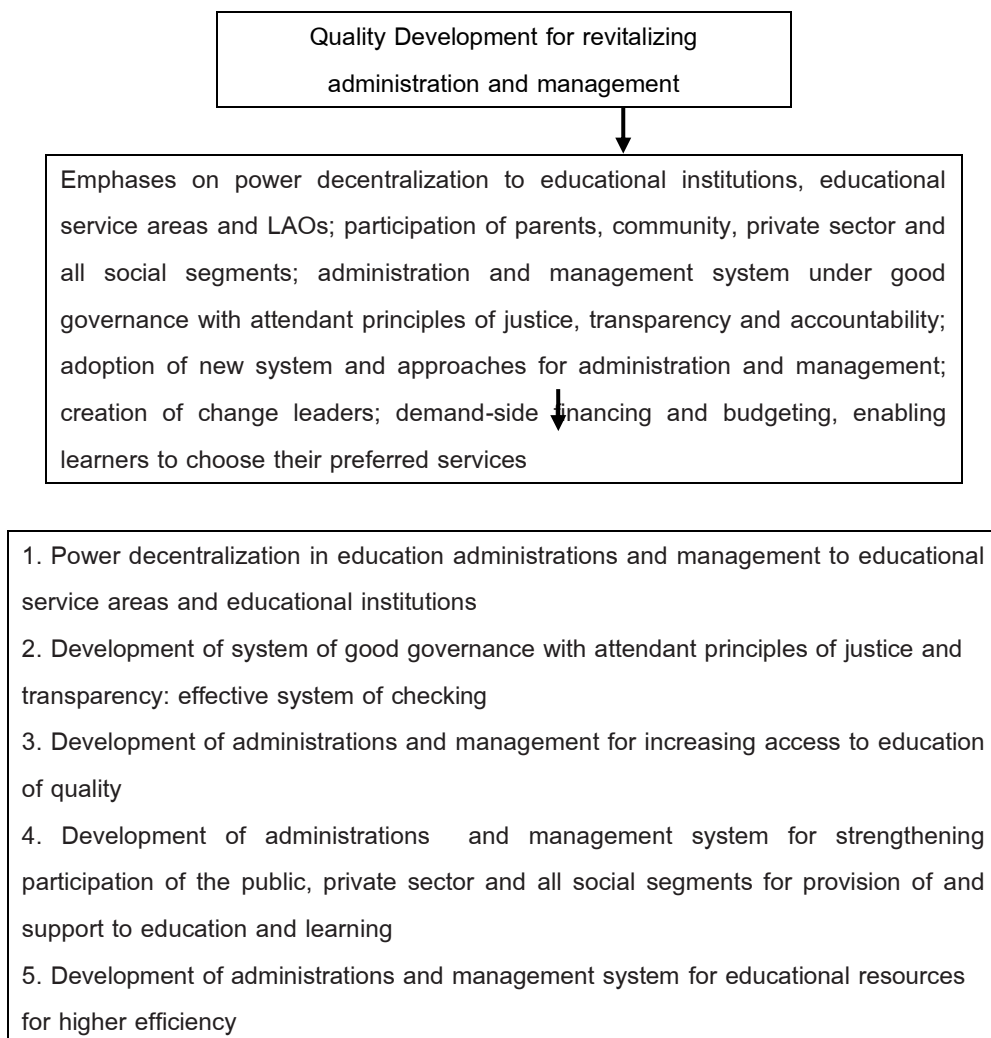
professionals, with the Ministry of Education serving as the focal point for academic affairs and supervision of academic quality and standard.

Measures; 3) formulate an integrated plan serving as a master plan for educational administration and management by LAOs. School mapping will also be conducted, with the target set for the number of learners participating at all levels and in all types of education. 4) A committee for development of education at local level provided by LAOs will be established, with responsibilities for formulating policies, plans and direction for educational development. A committee for educational quality development will also be appointed for improving quality and standard of education provided by LAOs. 5) Streamline the system and mechanism for educational administration and management of LAOs, so as to facilitate education provision by LAOs in cooperation with educational institutions run by LAOs. These educational institutions will enjoy greater administrative freedom, and will be grouped into clusters, based on the criterion of their readiness. And 6) LAOs will be encouraged to form networks among themselves. Dynamic cooperative networking for education provision will also be initiated, with participation of LAOs, offices of educational service areas, higher education institutions and other institutes/agencies in the local areas.

Besides, in the matter of developing an effective system for administration and management of resources in education, refer to streamline the system for allocating government support funds to LAOs to ensure efficient budgetary utilization. LAOs will also be encouraged to allocate more funds for education and learning. In the meantime, accelerate power decentralization to educational service areas and educational institutions. Establish groups of well-qualified persons with extensive knowledge, understanding and experience in power decentralization. Review existing legislations, rules and regulations and guidelines for the selection process for appointment of local boards of education. Steps will also be taken to streamline the powers and duties of educational service areas and education institutions to ensure good governance in their functioning. Including pressure should be made on enforcing the law already in effect; transferring authority for education provision to LAOs.

In consequence, decentralization of authority and resources to the local areas is one of the essential factors in the system of education. Government therefore has

established working group this for educational administration and management, to in depth study and proposing recommendation. The concept framework of LAOs in Educational Administration under the Proposals for the Second Decade of Education Reform has demonstrated as follow:



From the 1st educational reform in 1999 to proposal of educational reform in the 2nd decade (2009-2018), Thailand commits to push forward the decentralization of educational administration. Whether implementation in 10 years ahead will be

successful depends on the attempt to apply best practices from the countries which succeed in educational decentralization. South Korea is one of the countries known for educational system and educational decentralization. As a result, Thailand should learn from South Korean education decentralization to form a guideline in response to the proposal of educational reform in the next decade. However, the guideline should be adapted to social environment and context of Thailand.

Lesson learnt and good practice from South Korea

The educational point of view of Korean is that education is the fundament of the social and economic development of the country. The government therefore pays highly attention to education. This leads to the continuous reform of education. Hence, South Korea is very successful in the education reform especially the new educational system to meet the globalization process, the curriculum development, professionalization of teachers, the reform of the vocational and universal education, the promotion of community education to be participated in the educational reform and the decentralization to local education. (Office of the Education Council, 2005)

In 1991 South Korea declared the Decentralization of Educational Administration Act and the Education Tax Act. The authority delegated by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MOEHRD)¹ made the local government to be able to manage the educational budget as well as making the decision on educational development. The aim of the decentralization is to meet the need of local people without political influence. There is an evaluation of satisfaction of the students and the parents in each local area. The support for each school will also depend on this result of evaluation. (Office of the Education Council, 2008) As a consequence, South Korea is known as the country that has high quality of education and the ability to compete in international education.

In term of the education reform, The Republic of Korea or South Korea has developed the country under the constitutional democracy. The president comes directly from the election and the general administrative authority is decentralized to the

¹ In 2008 the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development has changed to Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST)

local government which is free from political interference. The government focuses on the unequal quality of education and the problem of severe competition for admission to institution with high reputation. The government's aims are to make Korean citizen be capable of thinking and self-reliance. For the future progress, the government uses the policy of decentralization of administration to local administration of elementary and secondary school, promote the community education in which the teachers, parents and other stakeholders in the community can participate and develop vocational education along with the industrial economics as well as develop the higher education to be the knowledge base of the society.

The educational administration of South Korea is classified into the national level and the local level. According to the local autonomy law the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development is responsible for the educational administration at national level and delegate the authority of financial planning as well as the administrative authority in making decision for primary and secondary education to the local units.

The Ministry of Education is educational administrative department of the national level which is responsible for academic activities, sciences and public education. The ministry has to take the policy into action by guiding the children into the ideal citizens who have abilities needed for the individual democracy and the ability to develop the country to the democracy. The following are the main obligations of the ministry.

1. Plans and coordinates Educational policies
2. Work out ideas for the elementary, secondary and higher educational policies
3. Publishes and approves textbooks
4. Provides administrative and financial support for all levels of schools
5. Supports local education agencies and nation universities
6. Operates the teacher training system
7. Responsible for lifelong education and developing human resource policy

The Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MEST) currently shares the duty's structure into two main responsibilities. There are two vice ministers responsible

for each section. The first deputy minister is responsible for the basic education and the human resources development. The second deputy minister is responsible for research and development in science and technology including the higher education under the supervision of the minister of education.

In respect of basic education and human resources development there are 2 offices, 8 bureaus and 34 divisions. The divisions responsible for local education are the Local Educational Autonomy Division and the Local Educational Finance Division under the supervision of the Future-Oriented HR Policy Bureau and Office of Human Resources Policy.

Educational administration by the Local government of South Korea

Since South Korea has announced the Decentralization of Educational Administration Act in 1991 and the Education Tax Act the allocation of educational budget has become stronger. The Ministry of Education has decentralized the administrative authority and the authority of budget allocation to the local government which is supervised by the local education office. The local assemblies will elect the office's executive who must have at least 15 years of experience in education and will stay in the term of 4 years. The Office of Education has the authority to decide and develop the education in order to meet the local needs without political influence. The performance assessment of the Office of Education will be made by the Ministry of Education focused on the satisfaction of parents and students in each locality. The evaluation is aimed to 1) reform classes 2) create a learning system that meet the needs of learners and 3) raise the awareness of welfare in educational reform. The evaluation system of education will currently be used in elementary and secondary schools both public and private sector. Each school will be differently supported depending on the quality measured by the educational assessment. (Office of the Education Council, 2009)

South Korea divided the local administration into 2 levels which are the provincial level and the local level: city and district. The chief executive of the province is the governor and the local chief executive is the mayor which is both from the election.

The local education of South Korea is from preprimary school to high school and the Ministry of Education will be responsive for the higher education. The management is as followed.

1. In the provincial level administration the committee of the city or the province will proceed by the Board of Education which consists of at least 7 committees elected by people. The board has authority to decide matters of importance into action or passes it to the local council to consider.

2. The School Council is elected from the representative of parents, community, teachers, and the executive. The school council is responsible for the school budget, curriculum improvement, arrangement of extracurricular activities, promotion of collaboration between school and community, arrangement of student welfare activities and school administration guidance.

The project plan will be arranged by the school according to the local needs and the budget plan will be proposed to the local administration under the consideration of the School Council.

Personnel management is a responsibility of the Office of Provincial Education and the Office of Local Education in conjunction with the School Council and teachers to recruit and develop teachers as well as to consider the works of teachers and school officers.

Government subsidies will be allocated to province, city and district to provide subsidies to school. The school incomes are from governmental subsidy, the local income (from the province, city and district), maintenance fees, private fund and other incomes. The schools are free to use the budget under the administration of the School Council.

The government gives the authority in making decision to the school. The School Council is able to change the structure of the curriculum, the appropriateness of the content and highlight the effectiveness of the programs to meet the needs of community environment based on the students. The monitoring and the evaluation of the education are conducted in 2 levels. 1) The Organization of Local Government appoints the committees to assess the quality and the standards of education. 2) The government establishes the independent organization or a group of persons which is

semi-public and semi-private to process the evaluation. This group is called KEDI. The main responsibility is to evaluate all level of education in the form of research or evaluation projects. The evaluation result will be reported to the Organization of Local Government, school, and the public. The evaluation result will further used as a criterion for supporting special subsidies to the school in case of the beyond standard progression of the school.

The governmental role of the Local education administration

Lee Myung-bak, the president of South Korea, has the policy about improving the quality of the education both in dept and in breadth including raising the educational level of South Korea to develop the potential of people in order to be ready for the international competition. The role of the local education is the reorganization of the educational organization by establishing a special group to work with the local units called the Local Education Support Office, which has special groups to work with specific tasks, such as policy matters, infrastructure, cooperation with other countries, innovation in education, and staff's welfare.

In terms of budget allocation, the government has allocated the high amount of budget for education to the local government. Because the government realizes that the quality of education often cost high. In 2006, the budget allocated to the Ministry of Education was 17.9 percent of the total budget allocated to other ministries and in 2007 the budget was increased to be 19.8 percent. Considering the budget allocated from the Ministry of Education, the most budget has been spent on the local education. In this section the allocated budget to the local government is also a high proportion as shown in Figure 1, 2 and 3.

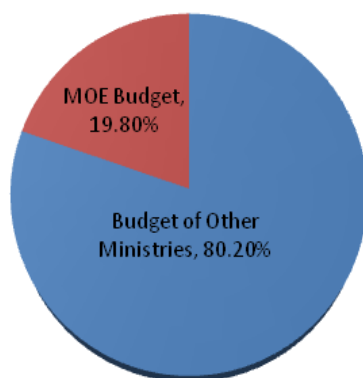


Figure 1 Central Government vs. Ministry of Education Budget (2007)

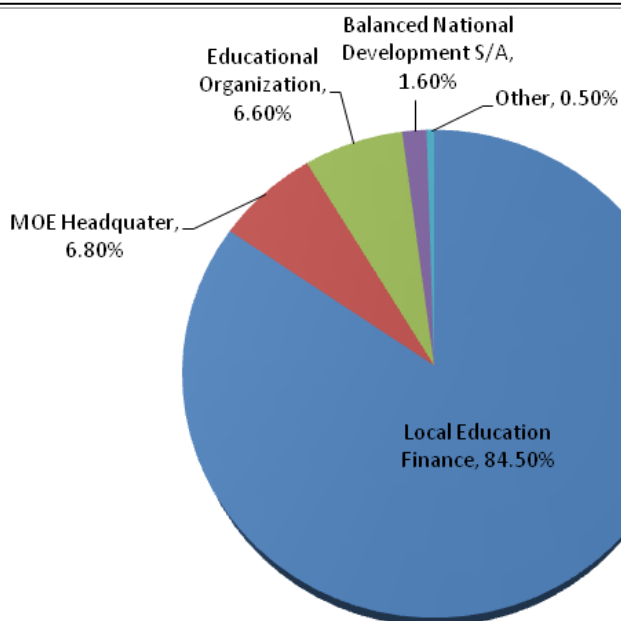
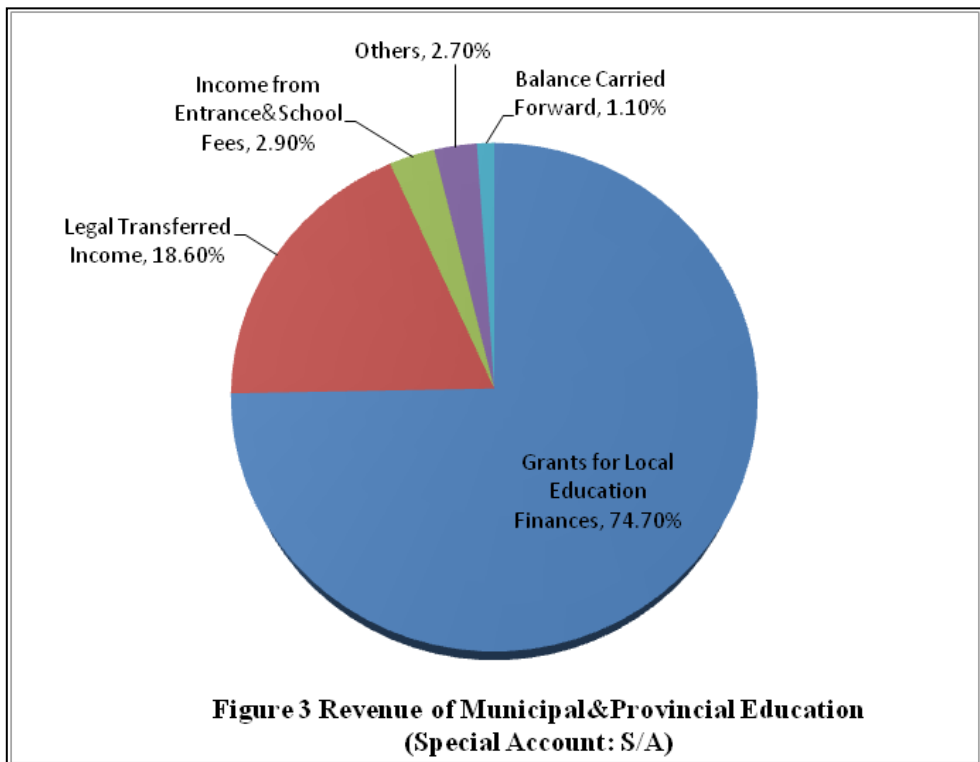


Figure 2 Expenditure of MOE (2006&2007)



Conclusion

A decade has passed since the enactment of the National Education Act 1999. Thailand has witnessed vigorous attempts at systemic reform of education provided at national level. This transformation of education reform will be the inspiration for Thailand and the challenge of achievement for the next decade. Thus Thailand needs to learn from each country which is successful in education administration and human resource development like South Korea. As we know that South Korea is one of countries which have the best practice in education system. There's an Education Law in 1949 and especially educational autonomy which is main factor in a liberal democratic political system. It is aimed at separating educational administration from political influence. Moreover South Korea's experience clearly indicates that education, or more generally human capital accumulation, is indeed extremely important for rapid economic development. Rapid accumulation of human capital is a necessary condition

for fast and sustained economic development. Therefore the Korean government has been trying to improve the education system by stressing quality over quantity, extending compulsory education, popularizing education, and increasing opportunities for education. There're also the development of new approaches and practice for educational administration to be harmonize with globalization, curriculum and instruction improvement, teacher and administrator development, vocational education and higher education reform, included community education and participation in education reform, and decentralize educational administration. That is the reason why Thailand should learn from South Korea' experiences and utilize it with suitability to Thailand's circumstance.

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