

Political Literacy in Thailand's Pre-Primary and Primary Education Curricula in the Digital Age

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Abstract

Political literacy has gained paramount importance in the digital era, as young learners require not only civic virtues but also the capacity to critically engage with mediated information. This study analyzes the integration of political literacy within Thailand's pre-primary and primary education curricula, incorporating insights from educators and academic experts to guide curriculum enhancement. The study employed a qualitative design, integrating document analysis of the Early Childhood Education Curriculum B.E. 2560 (2017) and the Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 (2008), interviews with 24 educators in Northern Thailand, and a focus group of six academic experts. The analysis was informed by four elements of political literacy: political knowledge, political skills, political attitudes, and competencies relevant to the digital age. Research indicates that political literacy predominantly manifests in implicit forms via moral development, social responsibility, and democratic coexistence, whereas explicit political knowledge, critical political skills, and competencies pertinent to the digital age are notably deficient, particularly in areas such as source evaluation, misinformation detection, digital verification, and awareness of AI- and algorithm-driven information contexts. The study emphasizes the necessity for a clearer and developmentally suitable curriculum design and adds to the sparse scholarship on political literacy in preprimary and primary education, especially in Northern Thailand.

Keywords: Political literacy, Early childhood education, Primary education, Digital citizenship, Curriculum, Northern Thailand

Introduction

Political literacy has historically been seen as fundamental to democratic citizenship, as it enables individuals to comprehend public concerns, participate in civic life, and make informed decisions regarding societal matters (Crick & Porter, 1978; Alexander, 2009). In modern cultures, political literacy must extend beyond mere awareness of formal political institutions, election frameworks, or traditional civic duties. In increasingly digital contexts, citizens must navigate quickly changing information ecosystems, assess the authenticity of online content, analyze conflicting claims, and respond judiciously to political and social challenges disseminated by digital media. As a result, political literacy is intricately linked to media literacy, digital literacy, and the critical assessment of information (Mihailidis, 2018; McDougall et al., 2018). This transition is especially crucial for young children throughout their initial years of education. Generation Alpha is maturing in contexts where digital technologies are intricately woven into daily experiences and social development (Livingstone & Third, 2017). Children are progressively exposed to information via recommendation algorithms, video-sharing platforms, social media content mediated by peers and adults, and various forms of digital filtering that shape their perceptions of credibility and relevance (Bucher, 2018; Kitchin, 2017). Individuals may encounter AI-generated words and images, automated recommendations, and algorithmically curated information streams that influence visibility, repetition, and perceived significance in digital contexts (Gran et al., 2021; Long & Magerko, 2020; UNESCO, 2023). In these situations, political literacy encompasses not merely an understanding of politics but also the initial cultivation of critical awareness concerning mediated information, influence, and public discourse. While young children may not grasp the technicalities of artificial intelligence, they can benefit from age-appropriate opportunities to acknowledge that digital information is curated, prioritized, and disseminated through systems that are not entirely impartial (Gran et al., 2021; UNESCO, 2024). In educational research, political literacy is typically defined as a multifaceted construct that includes political knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Perveen & Awan, 2017), while also fostering democratic coexistence, respect for diversity, and responsible civic engagement (Şan et al., 2023). Political knowledge encompasses the comprehension of social and political concepts, duties, rights, and obligations. Political skills encompass communication, engagement, discourse, decision-making, and the analytical interpretation of information. Political attitudes include equity, accountability, collaboration, tolerance for diversity, and democratic cohabitation. In the digital age, these dimensions must additionally encompass skills pertaining to digital communication, assessment of online

information, recognition of misinformation, and critical interaction with AI- and algorithm-driven information ecosystems (Mihailidis, 2018; Wineburg et al., 2016; UNESCO, 2023). Thus, political literacy in early childhood and primary school ought to be regarded as a developmental basis for future civic and democratic participation rather than as formal education in partisan politics. In the Thai educational framework, citizenship, morality, and social responsibility have been prominently highlighted in the national curriculum policy. The Early Childhood Education Curriculum B.E. 2560 (2017) and the Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 (2008) advocate for commendable traits including discipline, responsibility, ethical behavior, and harmonious coexistence (Bureau of Academic Affairs and Educational Standards, 2017; Ministry of Education, 2008). These policy approaches establish a significant basis for civic and moral advancement. Nonetheless, they seem to prioritize favorable personal traits and behavioral conformity over critical agency, interpretive judgment, and reflective democratic engagement. As a result, youngsters may be prompted to become responsible societal members without the preparation to interrogate information, assess conflicting assertions, differentiate truth from opinion, or critically engage with digital content and public discourse.

This constraint is more significant in Thailand's modern digital environment, as children encounter swift information streams, online influences, emotionally charged material, and the extensive transmission of unverified or deceptive information. The Thai curriculum addresses digital use and acceptable behavior, although it lacks clarity on how young learners should cultivate the ability to check information, identify falsehoods, and engage critically in mediated public discourse. The concern is not only in the presence of political literacy in the curriculum but also in its conceptualization, articulation, and adequacy for the reality of modern children. In this context, political literacy in Thailand must be evaluated not just about civic principles and participation but also regarding critical information assessment and responsible involvement in digital contexts. Notwithstanding the growing importance of these issues, research on political literacy in early education is scarce, especially within the Thai context. Current studies predominantly emphasize adolescents, university students, or general facets of civic education, while comparably neglecting the depiction of political literacy in formal curricular materials at the pre-primary and primary stages. Fewer studies have examined how instructors understand political literacy when dealing with young children and its connection to contemporary digital concerns, including misinformation, online influence, and the critical assessment of mediated information.

This disparity is particularly significant in Northern Thailand, providing a pertinent regional context for analyzing the interpretation and implementation of national curriculum frameworks across varied educational environments. Schools in the region vary in geography, community attributes, and educational resources, offering contextually relevant insights on the implementation of curricular policy in practice. This study examines the integration of political literacy in Thailand's pre-primary and primary education curricula and its interpretation by educators and academic experts in the context of the problems posed by the digital age.

Objectives of Research

This study aimed to examine how political literacy is embedded in Thailand's pre-primary and primary education curricula in the digital age. Specifically, it sought to:

1. Analyze the extent to which political literacy is embedded in the Early Childhood Education Curriculum B.E. 2560 (2017) and the Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 (2008), using a four-dimensional analytical framework of political knowledge, political skills, political attitudes, and digital-age competencies.
2. explore teachers' and academic experts' perspectives on the meaning, relevance, and implementation of political literacy in pre-primary and primary education in Northern Thailand; and
3. Propose recommendations for strengthening the integration of political literacy, digital literacy, and age-appropriate learning approaches in early education curricula.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative research design to investigate how political literacy is embedded within Thailand's pre-primary and primary education curricula in the context of the digital

age. A qualitative approach was deemed appropriate because the study sought to interpret meanings embedded in curriculum documents and to explore how political literacy is understood by teachers and academic experts within specific educational settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data Sources

The study utilized three complementary sources of qualitative data: curriculum documents, semi-structured interviews, and a focus group discussion. These sources were selected to address the research objectives from different yet interconnected perspectives. Document analysis was employed to examine the representation of political literacy within formal curriculum frameworks. Semi-structured interviews with teachers were conducted to explore how political literacy is understood and interpreted in educational practice. In addition, a focus group discussion with academic experts was organized to deepen the interpretation of findings and to formulate recommendations for curriculum development in response to the challenges of the digital age.

Document Analysis

The document analysis focused on two national curriculum frameworks: the Early Childhood Education Curriculum B.E. 2560 (2017) and the Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 (2008). These documents were selected because they constitute the principal policy foundations guiding pre-primary and primary education in Thailand. The analysis examined both explicit and implicit representations of political literacy within curriculum aims, learner characteristics, standards, and learning content (Bowen, 2009). Particular attention was directed toward concepts associated with citizenship, rights, responsibilities, participation, reasoning, social awareness, digital communication, and information-related competencies.

Participants and Key Informants

Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure that all informants possessed relevant knowledge and direct experience related to early childhood and primary education curricula in Northern Thailand. The participant group consisted of 24 teachers working at the pre-primary and primary levels in schools located in Chiang Mai, Lampang, and Phayao provinces, together with six academic experts specializing in curriculum studies, political science, and childhood education.

Teachers were selected because of their direct involvement in curriculum interpretation and classroom implementation, whereas the experts were included to provide broader curricular, analytical, and policy-oriented perspectives on political literacy in the digital age. The number of participants was considered appropriate for the purposes of qualitative inquiry, as recurring patterns emerged during data collection and thematic saturation was reached in relation to the study objectives. Consequently, the sample size was regarded as sufficient to capture both practitioner experiences and expert reflections relevant to the research questions.

Research Instruments

Three research instruments were employed: a document analysis form, a semi-structured interview guide, and a focus group discussion guide. These instruments were developed in alignment with the research objectives and the four-dimensional analytical framework of political literacy, comprising political knowledge, political skills, political attitudes, and digital-age competencies.

The document analysis form was designed to examine curriculum materials and identify concepts, themes, and curricular expressions related to political literacy. It focused on both explicit references and implicit content associated with citizenship, rights, responsibilities, participation, critical reasoning, media engagement, and digital-age competencies.

The semi-structured interview guide was used with pre-primary and primary school teachers. Interview questions explored teachers' understandings of political literacy, their interpretations of curriculum content, classroom experiences, and their perceptions of how effectively the curriculum supports the development of political literacy among young learners in contemporary digital contexts.

The focus group discussion guide was designed for experts in curriculum studies, political science, and childhood education. It aimed to elicit broader academic and policy perspectives concerning the strengths, limitations, and future development of political literacy within Thailand's pre-primary and primary education curricula.

Before data collection, all instruments underwent expert review by specialists in curriculum studies, political science, and early childhood education. The review process assessed the relevance, clarity, and appropriateness of each instrument in relation to the study objectives and analytical framework. Based on expert feedback, several revisions were made to improve wording, sequencing,

and conceptual precision. This process enhanced the content validity and overall credibility of the instruments employed in the study.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted in three sequential stages. First, relevant curriculum documents were gathered and systematically examined using the document analysis form. Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the 24 teacher participants to explore their understandings of political literacy, its significance for young learners, and its implementation in educational practice. Third, a focus group discussion was conducted with the six academic experts to provide further interpretation of the documentary and interview findings and to generate recommendations for strengthening political literacy in early education.

The sequential use of these methods allowed findings from the document analysis and interviews to inform the focus group discussion, thereby facilitating a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

Analytical Framework

The study was guided by a four-dimensional analytical framework consisting of political knowledge, political skills, political attitudes, and digital-age competencies. This framework was developed to examine how political literacy is represented within curriculum texts and interpreted by participants in relation to contemporary digital realities.

In addition to traditional civic dimensions, the framework incorporated competencies associated with digital communication, information evaluation, awareness of misinformation, and responsible engagement in digitally mediated environments. The framework served as the conceptual foundation for instrument development, data coding, and interpretation of findings.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis for curriculum documents and thematic analysis for interview and focus group data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Schreier, 2012). During document analysis, curriculum texts were coded according to the four analytical dimensions, with attention given to both explicit and implicit representations of political literacy.

For interview and focus group data, transcripts were analyzed using a combination of deductive and inductive coding procedures. Deductive coding was guided by the analytical framework, whereas inductive coding enabled new themes to emerge directly from participants' responses. The resulting codes were subsequently organized into broader themes reflecting participants' understandings of political literacy, perceived strengths of the curriculum, and identified gaps in relation to the demands of the digital age.

Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

To enhance the trustworthiness of the study, data triangulation was employed across curriculum documents, interviews, and expert discussions, while methodological triangulation was achieved through the use of multiple qualitative methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was further strengthened through the integration of multiple data sources and the systematic comparison of findings across different stages of analysis.

Ethical principles were maintained throughout the research process. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained from all participants, confidentiality was ensured, and data were securely managed in accordance with established research ethics guidelines (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants were fully informed of the study's purpose and were advised of their right to withdraw from the research at any stage without any negative consequences.

Results

The results are organized based on the four analytical factors that directed the study: political knowledge, political skills, political attitudes, and digital-age competencies. This thematic framework offers a cohesive comprehension of the representation of political literacy in Thailand's pre-primary and primary education curricula, its interpretation by educators and academic specialists, and potential avenues for curriculum enhancement. The approach fulfills the study objectives by triangulating evidence from curricular papers, teacher interviews, and expert focus group discussions, thereby uncovering patterns that span different data sources. The findings suggest that political literacy exists within Thailand's pre-primary and primary education curriculum, albeit predominantly in an implicit and fragmented manner rather than as a clearly defined curricular area. Political literacy components

are integrated within the overarching educational objectives, learner attributes, ethical development, social accountability, and citizenship-related domains across both curriculum frameworks. The findings from the interview and focus group indicate that while educators and academic specialists recognize the significance of political literacy for young learners, its definition, extent, and pedagogical ramifications are inconsistently comprehended in practice. These findings indicate multiple domains where curricular development may be required to address contemporary social and digital realities more effectively.

Political Knowledge

The document analysis indicated that both curriculum frameworks encompass content related to political knowledge, namely, with social roles, communal life, regulations, responsibilities, rights, and fundamental concepts of citizenship. Within the Early Childhood Education Curriculum, these elements are primarily embedded in developmental expectations concerning living with others, following shared agreements, and participating in social life. The Basic Education Core Curriculum distinctly incorporates political knowledge within the learning requirements and content areas of social studies, particularly those about civic responsibility, social institutions, community membership, and national identity.

Despite the presence of these elements, the curricula tend to emphasize general civic awareness rather than explicit political understanding. References to governance, democratic procedures, public decision-making, and citizen-state ties are scarce and frequently articulated in oversimplified or prescriptive terms. Thus, political knowledge seems to be conceptualized more in relation to social order and ethical behavior than in comprehending political institutions, structures, and processes.

The interview findings reflected a similar pattern. Educators typically link political education to understanding rules, obligations, respect for others, and the cultivation of good citizenship in daily life. Although the majority of participants deemed these subjects suitable for young children, only a minority mentioned political institutions, civic engagement, democratic reasoning, or societal challenges as components of early political education. Scholarly authorities noted that while the curriculum presents fundamental concepts of citizenship, it offers insufficient opportunity for children to cultivate age-appropriate insights into authority, justice, collective decision-making, and civic engagement.

Political Skills

The findings suggest that political skills are less visible within the curriculum than political knowledge. Certain curriculum elements indirectly support the development of relevant skills, particularly communication, cooperation, problem-solving, listening to others, and participation in group activities. In the pre-primary curriculum, these skills are primarily framed as components of social and emotional development. Within the primary curriculum, they appear in broader expectations related to classroom participation, collaborative learning, and responsible behavior in school and community contexts.

However, the curriculum documents provide only limited evidence of a systematic progression toward political skills understood as discussion, perspective-taking, reason-giving, collective problem-solving, and participation in shared decision-making. Opportunities for learner voice and participation are generally implied rather than explicitly structured. As a result, political skills appear more closely aligned with general social competencies than with political literacy specifically.

The interview findings further supported this interpretation. Teachers frequently highlighted practices such as taking turns, expressing opinions respectfully, and working collaboratively with peers, viewing these as important foundations for future citizenship. Nevertheless, many participants expressed uncertainty regarding how such practices could be translated into explicit learning experiences related to democratic dialogue, participation, or civic engagement. Some also perceived political discussion as potentially too complex or sensitive for young children. Academic experts suggested that this hesitation reflects a broader curricular limitation. While schools often encourage cooperation and compliance, they provide comparatively fewer opportunities for children to develop agency, deliberative capacities, and meaningful participation in collective decision-making.

Political Attitudes

Among the four analytical dimensions, political attitudes were the most strongly represented across both curriculum frameworks. The document analysis identified recurring emphasis on morality, discipline, responsibility, respect, cooperation, social harmony, and commitment to the common good.

These values were particularly prominent within the Early Childhood Education Curriculum, where development is framed holistically and closely linked to desirable moral and social dispositions. Similar themes also appeared throughout the Basic Education Core Curriculum, particularly in relation to citizenship, ethical conduct, and social responsibility.

The prominence of this dimension indicates that the curriculum places considerable emphasis on cultivating dispositions regarded as essential for social coexistence. However, these attitudes are largely framed in normative terms, emphasizing conformity, order, and responsibility more strongly than critical reflection, democratic disagreement, or questioning. Consequently, while the attitudinal dimension appears robust from a moral perspective, it is more limited when viewed through the broader lens of political literacy.

Teachers consistently emphasized the importance of political attitudes. Many identified respect, empathy, responsibility, and awareness of rules as essential foundations for political learning during the early years of education. Several participants considered these qualities more developmentally appropriate than explicit political content. Academic experts similarly acknowledged the importance of attitudes but cautioned against reducing political literacy solely to moral behavior. They argued that excessive emphasis on compliance may restrict opportunities for children to develop confidence in questioning, expressing alternative viewpoints, and engaging constructively with diversity and disagreement.

Digital-Age Competencies

Digital-age competencies emerged as the least explicitly represented dimension within the curriculum. Although both curriculum frameworks include references to communication, learning, and adaptation within changing contexts, they provide limited direct attention to competencies associated with digital citizenship, media literacy, information verification, and responsible participation in digital environments. References to these issues appear only indirectly and are not systematically integrated into broader citizenship or civic-learning objectives.

This limitation was particularly evident in the interview and focus group findings. Teachers widely recognized that children are increasingly exposed to digital media from an early age and that such exposure influences how they encounter information, authority, identity, and social interaction. Nevertheless, most participants reported that the curriculum offers little practical guidance on how these realities should be addressed within political literacy education. Concerns frequently focused on misinformation, uncritical consumption of online content, and the absence of age-appropriate approaches for helping children evaluate information and engage responsibly in digital spaces.

The expert focus group identified this issue as one of the most significant curricular gaps. Participants argued that political literacy in the digital age should extend beyond traditional civic knowledge and moral values to include the capacity to navigate mediated environments critically, responsibly, and ethically. They further emphasized that even young children can begin developing foundational competencies such as questioning information sources, distinguishing fact from falsehood in simple ways, recognizing harmful online behaviors, and participating respectfully in digitally mediated communication.

Cross-Cutting Themes

Three overarching themes emerged across all sources of data.

First, political literacy is embedded within the curriculum primarily through broad concepts of citizenship, morality, and social responsibility rather than through explicit political terminology.

Second, the attitudinal dimension is considerably more developed than the knowledge, skills, and digital-age dimensions, a pattern consistently reflected in both curriculum documents and participant perspectives.

Third, a noticeable gap exists between the rapidly changing social and digital conditions shaping children's lives and the curriculum's current approach to civic and political learning.

Taken together, these findings suggest that Thailand's current pre-primary and primary education curricula provide only a partial foundation for the development of political literacy. Although elements of political literacy are present, they remain implicit, unevenly distributed, and more strongly oriented toward moral socialization than toward critical, participatory, and digitally informed citizenship. At the same time, the perspectives of teachers and academic experts indicate growing recognition of the need to strengthen political literacy through more explicit curricular articulation of political concepts, participatory competencies, and digital-age skills.

Discussion

The findings suggest that political literacy within Thailand's pre-primary and primary education curricula is best understood as implicitly embedded rather than explicitly articulated. Although numerous curriculum components relate to political literacy, these elements are dispersed across broader domains such as moral development, citizenship, social responsibility, and learner development. Political literacy is therefore not absent from the curriculum; rather, it is incorporated within wider educational objectives and lacks conceptual visibility as a distinct area of learning. This has important implications for curriculum interpretation and implementation because concepts that are not clearly defined or systematically organized are less likely to be consistently recognized, prioritized, and enacted in educational practice.

One of the most significant findings of this study is the dominant emphasis placed on political attitudes relative to political knowledge, political skills, and digital-age competencies. This pattern indicates that early political learning is currently approached primarily through the cultivation of socially desirable dispositions such as respect, discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and social harmony. These qualities undoubtedly play an important role in supporting children's social development and their capacity to live constructively with others. However, when political literacy is framed predominantly in attitudinal and moral terms, it risks being reduced to a form of compliance-oriented citizenship rather than a broader conception of democratic learning. The curriculum appears to promote socialization into accepted norms more strongly than the development of critical, participatory, and reflective political understanding. This distinction highlights the difference between citizenship education focused on moral conformity and citizenship education oriented toward democratic participation, inquiry, and critical engagement.

This tendency is particularly evident in the relatively limited visibility of political skills. While communication, cooperation, and participation are included as general educational aims, they are not clearly developed as political capacities. The findings suggest that children are encouraged to learn how to interact appropriately with others, yet they are provided with comparatively fewer opportunities to engage in practices associated with democratic agency, such as expressing reasoned opinions, considering alternative perspectives, participating in collective decision-making, or discussing issues related to fairness and public concern. When these competencies remain framed primarily as general social skills, the curriculum may overlook important opportunities to establish the foundations of democratic participation during the early years of education. Participation should therefore be understood not only as an outcome of political learning but also as one of the conditions through which political learning develops.

The perspectives of teachers and academic experts further reinforce the conclusion that conceptual ambiguity remains a significant challenge. Although participants generally agreed that political literacy is important for young learners, their interpretations often centered on rules, duties, appropriate behavior, and civic morality rather than on age-appropriate political understanding or participation. This finding suggests that the implicit nature of the curriculum influences not only textual interpretation but also professional understanding and pedagogical practice. When political literacy is not explicitly defined within curriculum frameworks, educators may rely on conventional or cautious interpretations that prioritize order and responsibility over dialogue, inquiry, and participation. Consequently, curriculum design and educational practice appear to operate in a reciprocal relationship: implicit curriculum framing contributes to uneven implementation, while limited pedagogical enactment further reinforces narrow understandings of political learning in early childhood education.

Another important contribution of this study lies in the identification of digital-age competencies as the least developed dimension within the current curriculum. In contemporary society, children encounter social and political meanings not only through family, school, and community interactions but also through increasingly complex digital environments. Nevertheless, the analysis revealed limited curricular attention to media discernment, information verification, responsible online participation, and the foundational principles of digital citizenship. This gap is particularly significant because political literacy in the digital age requires more than civic knowledge and moral behavior. It also requires the capacity to critically navigate mediated information environments, recognize misinformation, evaluate sources, and participate responsibly in digital spaces. In this regard, the findings are consistent with contemporary scholarship emphasizing that civic and political learning must be understood in relation to media, digital, and information literacies rather than as separate educational domains (Mihailidis, 2018; McDougall et al., 2018; UNESCO, 2023).

The significance of this gap becomes even more apparent when considered in relation to emerging discussions of AI literacy and algorithm literacy. Children's access to information is increasingly shaped not only by search engines and social media platforms but also by AI-generated content, automated recommendations, and algorithmically curated information environments (Gran et

al., 2021; UNESCO, 2023). Under such conditions, political literacy requires more than civic knowledge and socially appropriate behavior; it also requires a foundational awareness that digital information may be filtered, prioritized, and shaped by systems that influence attention, interpretation, and judgment (Bucher, 2018; Gran et al., 2021; UNESCO, 2023). The findings therefore suggest that current curriculum frameworks do not yet adequately address the broader literacies required for democratic citizenship within AI-mediated information environments.

This observation should not be interpreted as a recommendation for highly technical instruction about artificial intelligence during the early years of schooling. Rather, it highlights the importance of developmentally appropriate forms of critical awareness. Young learners can be encouraged to ask why certain messages appear more frequently than others, whether digital content should always be accepted as accurate, and how they might respond thoughtfully to information encountered online (Long & Magerko, 2020; UNESCO, 2024). In this sense, the study extends existing discussions of political literacy by emphasizing that the foundations of civic understanding now include not only social and moral learning but also a critical orientation toward mediated information environments.

At the same time, the findings should not be interpreted as suggesting that political literacy must be introduced through abstract political concepts or formal political instruction. Instead, the study points toward a developmentally appropriate reconceptualization of political literacy for young learners. In pre-primary and primary education, political literacy may begin with children's understanding of fairness, rules, voice, shared responsibility, community life, and the distinction between agreement and disagreement. It may also involve meaningful opportunities for participation through classroom dialogue, collaborative decision-making, questioning information, and listening respectfully to diverse perspectives. The key issue, therefore, is not whether children are too young to engage with political literacy but whether curricula provide appropriate forms through which political understanding can be nurtured in age-appropriate ways.

Taken together, the findings suggest that Thailand's current pre-primary and primary education curricula provide only a partial foundation for political literacy and do not yet constitute a coherent framework capable of responding fully to contemporary democratic and digital realities. Existing curriculum frameworks already contain valuable elements, particularly in relation to social responsibility, moral development, and citizenship. These elements provide a strong foundation upon which further development can build. However, strengthening political literacy will require greater curricular clarity regarding the progression of political knowledge, the development of participatory competencies, and the integration of digital-age skills. Such development would not necessitate abandoning existing values-based orientations; rather, it would involve extending them toward a broader conception of citizenship that incorporates critical reflection, democratic participation, responsible engagement in both offline and online contexts, and age-appropriate awareness of how digital and AI-mediated information systems shape public understanding.

Ultimately, this study highlights the importance of moving beyond a curriculum that primarily prepares children to fit into society toward one that also enables them to understand, question, and participate in it. Such a shift is particularly important in an era characterized by social complexity, cultural diversity, and pervasive digital mediation. Political literacy should therefore not be viewed as an additional or separate subject area but as a cross-cutting educational orientation that can be meaningfully integrated throughout pre-primary and primary education through developmentally appropriate curriculum content, pedagogy, and learning experiences.

Recommendation

Taken together, the findings indicate the need for a more explicit, coherent, and developmentally appropriate approach to political literacy in early childhood and primary education. Based on the findings of this study, recommendations are proposed for educational policy, professional practice, and future research.

Policy Recommendations

First, political literacy should be more explicitly incorporated into Thailand's national curriculum, particularly at the pre-primary and primary levels. Rather than remaining implicitly embedded within broader concepts of morality and citizenship, political literacy should be recognized as a distinct yet integrated area of learning that reflects children's everyday social, civic, and digital experiences. Clear curricular articulation would enhance conceptual visibility and support more consistent implementation across educational contexts.

Second, future curriculum revisions should establish clearer competency standards and learning indicators related to political literacy in the digital age. These competencies may include age-appropriate understandings of rights, responsibilities, fairness, and participation; the ability to express

opinions with supporting reasons while listening respectfully to others; participation in shared rule-making and simple collective decision-making; the capacity to distinguish between trustworthy and untrustworthy information in accessible contexts; and responsible communication in both face-to-face and digital environments. Clearly defined indicators would assist curriculum developers and educators in translating broad educational goals into observable and assessable learning outcomes.

Third, curriculum authorities should strengthen the integration of political literacy and digital literacy by embedding competencies related to critical thinking, media awareness, information evaluation, and ethical participation within digital environments across relevant learning areas, particularly social studies. Such integration is increasingly necessary given children's growing exposure to digitally mediated information from an early age.

Fourth, teacher professional development programs should provide more systematic preparation related to political literacy in the digital era. Professional learning opportunities should encourage educators to view political literacy as extending beyond moral instruction and should equip them with practical strategies for facilitating classroom dialogue, collaborative decision-making, media questioning, and age-appropriate engagement with public issues in balanced and non-partisan ways.

Practical Recommendations

At the school level, learning environments should be designed to promote meaningful participation. Schools should create opportunities for students to engage in discussion, collaborative decision-making, rule-setting, cooperation, and respectful communication. Such experiences can help transform broad citizenship goals into authentic everyday learning practices.

Teachers should adopt activity-based and inquiry-oriented pedagogies, including role-playing, classroom voting, collaborative problem-solving, guided discussion, and case-based learning. These approaches can support the development of political skills and democratic attitudes while helping children explore concepts such as fairness, responsibility, voice, and collective life in developmentally appropriate ways.

Schools and educators should also consider the creation of safe digital learning environments, such as classroom-based digital simulations or moderated online spaces, where students can practice evaluating information, responding to differing viewpoints, identifying misleading content, and communicating responsibly. These environments can provide valuable opportunities for developing digital-age political literacy while minimizing the risks associated with unrestricted online participation.

In addition, learning activities may draw upon culturally grounded approaches to critical reflection and careful judgment. Principles associated with the Kalama Sutta, for example, may be adapted in age-appropriate ways to encourage learners to evaluate information thoughtfully rather than accepting it uncritically. Such approaches can support the development of evidence-based reasoning, reflective judgment, and responsible information-sharing practices.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should extend beyond document analysis and interviews by examining political literacy as it is enacted in everyday classroom practice. Classroom observation studies would provide deeper insights into how curriculum intentions are interpreted and translated into teaching and learning activities.

Further studies should also include students and parents as participants to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how political literacy is shaped across home, school, and digital environments. Such perspectives would complement teacher and expert viewpoints and provide a fuller picture of children's civic learning experiences.

Comparative research across regions, school types, and educational settings is also recommended. These studies could explore variations in the implementation of political literacy and identify contextual factors that influence educational practices and outcomes.

Longitudinal research would be particularly valuable for examining whether early experiences related to political literacy—including political attitudes, participatory competencies, and digital discernment—have lasting effects on later civic engagement, democratic participation, and political understanding within the Thai context.

Finally, future research may explore and evaluate culturally grounded frameworks, including educational applications of the Kalama Sutta, as potential resources for strengthening critical thinking, information discernment, and reflective judgment within political literacy education for young

learners. Such investigations may contribute to the development of contextually relevant approaches that bridge local cultural traditions with contemporary democratic and digital challenges.

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