

Peace education in the Universities of Southern Thailand

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Abstract

Higher education institutions are important factors which should be changed and transformed social conflict problems in the areas of conflicts. These are people's expectation to teach and to educate their young generation to order to develop the country. In also, Thailand faces the educational problems and affect to other problems. According to southernmost Thailand's violence situations are the big problems that Thai government faces a very hard dilemma. The government has many processes to do it, some process establishes new public unit in the area, some process spends budget to create project and program and some creates collaborative activities among local people, official staffs and the religious leaders between Muslims and Buddhists. But the badly, situations still go on and do not have tendency to settle it.

Keywords: Peace Education, Conflict, Southern Thailand

Introduction

Higher education institutions are important factors which should be changed and transformed social conflict problems in the areas of conflicts. These are people's expectation to teach and to educate their young generation to order to develop the country. In also, Thailand faces the educational problems and affect to other problems. According to southernmost Thailand's violence situations are the big problems that Thai government faces a very hard dilemma. The government have many processes to solve it, some process establishes new public unit in the area, some process spends budget to create project and program and some creates collaborative activities among local people, official staffs and the religious leaders between Muslims and Buddhists. But the badly, situations still going on and do not have tendency to settle it.

Until now, there are many scholars from many colleges and universities try to do researches to find out the ways to solve problems. But, mostly scholars and researches come from the other part. In the contrary, there are many universities and colleges in the area, Just only a few of them focus on conflict problems and do not have a collaborative to strength connection between universities and colleges. This article purpose to reinforcement the potential of higher education institutions can transform harmful conflict situations in southern through academic, scholars, researchers, lecturers, students, students activities and collaboration between higher education institutions by peace education.

In 2004 the conflict in southernmost Thailand escalated to extreme violence. The root causes of conflict come from many factors. (Thanaprasang, 2009)p.1 The conflict is not socioeconomic but mainly "ethnic religious and nationalism" (Aphornsuwan, 2007). they have ranged from issues of

poverty, Democracy and migration to ideology and human right(Harish, 2006a)p.2

There are many problems which happen in this area. Especially, Thailand is the developing country which has human needs base on the problems. That is as we know. If focus on problems in southern of Thailand, Conflicts situation in the three provinces southernmost Thailand; Pattani, Yala Narathiwat, are the main issues that make Thai government feel very serious and very hard to solve it. How to stop or solve the situations? This question have to find out the answer in everytime. Many terms of Thai governments try to manage and solve these problems. It is still continuing cover with black clouds in southernmost. It does not have the best answer for all Thai people and also government to arrange with the situations. They still believe that it will have the light of the end of the tunnel. According to Otto F. von Feigenblatt talked situations in the southernmost Thailand that Throughout 5 years the conflict in the three deep south of Thailand namely Yala, Pattani, Narathiwat and 4 districts in Songkhla province is increase. The most target of "daily killing" is civilians where the damages can be happened to the lives and a lot of casualty towards the innocent people. There are always changing of style in every time of event and it is really scared the people. By such events the government retorted by using strict laws which allow to detain the suspect persons when it shown to be related to the event. The suspect person will be questioned under the security case. Sometimes, kidnappings, torture and extraordinary of the death happen to the suspect(Feigenblatt, 2009). Thanet Aphornsuwan said that one of the political disturbances that have plagued Thailand longer than any of the political movement against the government in the modern period is the so-called separatism in the Malay Muslim provinces which border northern Malaysia (Aphornsuwan, 2007).

The conflict situations in southern Thailand still have insurgency in everyday. There are many people pass away and lose their head and their parents. According to 2004 -2010, 4,000 die. Same as the nation multimedia said More than 4,400 people have died since the violence began, while over 7,000 have been injured, according to the non-governmental organization Deep South Watch, which monitors the conflict.(<http://www.nationmultimedia.com/home/2010/12/23/national/Three-shot-dead-in-South-officials-30145014.html>)There are many roots of causes that make situation cannot stop or solve, For instance culture, religious, tradition, ethnicity or conflict interest around border Malaysia. Michael Herriman said “Here I examine the violence from the perspective of the principal sociological and historical constructs seemingly applicable to the situation”(Hurriman, 2005). Aurel Croissant(Croissant, 2005) findings of this analysis can be summarized in four major points. First, ethno-religious conflict in the Pattani Raya region included both periods of violent conflict and peaceful coexistence. Historically, however, the Muslim minority only rebelled when the Muslims perceived their cultural identity as threatened by Bangkok-based authorities. Second, several contentious religious, cultural, economic and political issues lie at the root of the present-day violence. This analysis has identified how the presence of socioeconomic and historical issues, as well as more recent factors and developments, change the enabling environment for ethnic insurgents in south Thailand.

This development promotes the transformation of an old, low-intensity conflict into a virulent and increasingly violent conflict. This process of environmental change has been crucial for the resurgence of Thai .Meanwhile, Tanet Aphornsuwan said The Muslim separatist conflict is sustained by the belief that the continued

effort of Bangkok to consolidate its control over the socioeconomic and cultural affair of the Muslims’ community will lead to the erosion of Muslims cultural and religious way of life and the disappearance of their identity. Hence the conflict is not socioeconomic but mainly “ethnic, religious and nationalist” And S P Harish (S P Harish ,2006) shows the reasons that support conflicts situation in southernmost Thailand. There are four key reasons for the change. First, the Thai government attempted to expunge the Malay identity from people living in the southern provinces. Second, the lack of support from Malaysia for the insurgent groups diminished the ethnic Malay cause of the conflict. Third, the outflow of students to pursue higher Islamic education in the Middle East also amplified the religious identity of the younger generation in southern Thailand. Fourth, the post-September 11 environment and the fear of global terrorism entering local conflicts has also facilitated in adding a religious colorings to the conflict in southern Thailand.

Peace Education

Education is the first step to develop human resources. Country development starts from giving knowledge and skills to people in countries. The youth are the best factor to develop. They will be new generation for countries. They can learn problems that happen in countries and collect data to adapt or apply or and solve problems the future. The youths are mechanism to shift and resolve problem to be a good situation or improve situation after they got a good knowledge good skills. Peace education is a one course is needed to teach in conflicts area. It will help people in area have a fundamental knowledge and skills about peace. Kamarulzaman Askandar (2009)also mention to peace education that peace education this includes creating awareness

of issues, making comparisons and learning from experiences of other countries; conducting training programs in the skills of conflict resolution and peace studies ; civic or citizenship education; introduction curriculum at school and university. Now, peace education is a important factor for every countries in the world. Why not, it is absolutely truths. There are many conflicts in every continent for example in Sudan, Ireland, India, Korea, Bosnia, and especially in southern Thailand. The role or tasks should put in educational institutions and move forward together. H. B. Danesh (2006), in developing an integrative theory of peace education, observes that even today ‘most peoples of the world live with conflict-oriented worldviews, whether ethically, religiously, or environmentally based’ (p. 239). Because that is the case, students everywhere are able to read literature from other epochs and other parts of the world and apply it to their own situations (Janet M. Powers, 2006). Ian Harris (2004) sees peace education as an equation: ‘peace education = providing knowledge about problems of violence + strategies for peace’. Although there are many types of violence and manifold strategies for peace, certainly war is a major source of violence in our world and deserves to be studied under the rubric of peace education. Ian Harris divides western peace education programmes into five types: international education, development education, environment education, human rights education and conflict resolution education. Of these categories, conflict resolution education has its main focus on the individual and interpersonal levels and seeks to develop peace-related skills and qualities, which in turn contribute toward peace in affected schools and communities. Programmes in this category have Maria Montessori’s theories of education and the Quaker project described in ‘The friendly classroom for a small

planet’ as roots, and they tend to focus on skills and qualities such as anger management, emotional awareness, empathy, assertiveness and self-worth in addition to creative conflict resolution and communication (Harris 2004). In contrast, other programme types concentrate more on a broader social setting, such as international and national levels, and they typically focus on theoretical knowledge of theories, systems, institutions and conflicts (Vambheim, 2008).

Education in Southern Thailand

The nature of education in the southern border provinces is very different from that of other parts of Thailand. Parents prefer sending their children to study both religious and secular knowledge. However, they will give a priority to religious knowledge since seeking religious knowledge is compulsory for all Muslims. Therefore, Islamic private schools which offer both religious and secular knowledge are widely preferred (Narongraksakhet, 2005)

Educational institutions in the predominantly Muslim South are extremely diverse and, before the violence surged in 2004, were inconsistently regulated. Various types of educational institutions emerged in the region, representing attempts to reconcile religious and secular knowledge. While religious knowledge is seen as essential to Muslim identity, secular education provides the qualifications needed to get a job. Government subsidies to private Islamic schools, as part of policies to urge the introduction of secular education into Islamic schools, have provided an incentive for their rapid expansion with thousands of students. There is now a substantial student body of more than 100,000 students in the Deep South’s Islamic school system, a bigger pool of potential recruits for the estimated 1, 800 to 3,000 fighters. By providing substantial

funding for private Islamic schools, government policies have inadvertently contributed to the greater separation of Muslim and Buddhist students, which only helps radicalization efforts (Crisis Group Asia report June 2009).

There are various kinds of Muslim educational institutions, formal and informal, such as Mosque, Islamic kindergarten, Tadika, Mosque Center for teaching children, Islamic private school, pondok, higher educational institution, and even public schools intentionally or unintentionally have to offer Islamic studies subjects.

The Siamese government began to emphasize the use of Thai language after 1910. There was a concerted attempt to educate the Malays in Thai (Dulyakasem 1991, p. 141) and this led to periodic protests in the southern provinces. The elites feared that the introduction of Thai would lead to the erosion of the Malay language and culture. Soon after the introduction of the 1921 Primary Education Act which necessitated Malay children to attend Thai primary schools, there was a major rebellion in 1922. This revolt was orchestrated by Tengku Abdul Kadir from Kelantan, to whom he had moved in 1915 (Pitsuwan 1982, pp. 57–58). (HARISH, 2006b) P.2

Higher education institutions in Southern Thailand

Currently, there are no peace and conflict resolution education at the undergraduate level in Thailand, but there are many postgraduate students doing research on these subjects. An example is Mahidol University's human rights education and peace research programs. At Chulalongkorn University, there is a 3-month program on peace and conflict study sponsored by international Rotary club (Suwit laohasiriwong, 2009). This is a problem of peace education in southern

Thailand, in the same time Worawit Baru (2009) said that as a strategy for peace, an autonomous political and cultural community should be built in southern Thailand. This institution can be a source of conflict resolution and peace education, promotion of human rights and justice, and coordination center for the community. And Prasert Chitapong (2009) said about educational institution to build peace education that on the other hand, the long term goals for peace should include the understanding of living in diversity. People in Thailand come from two different ethnicities; and they must learn to live with one another. Effort should also be made to develop the education, economic, and social systems that are suitable for the culture in the region. Finally, we need to exercise peace education, not just in the conflict areas, but also all over Thailand. This includes secondary school children, university students, university graduates and those unable to attend universities. And in 1994 Unesco's conference on education adopted a proposal on education for peace, human rights and democracy in school and training institutions. They highlight the need to make the formal education system more open to society and underline the importance of cooperation with the non-formal education system more open to society and underline the importance of cooperation with the non-formal sector. Further suggested was that traditional form of education requiring fundamental changes.

Higher Educational institutions or Universities are the one important institution that can solve or decrease the problems. Higher Education Institutions have unique attributes that make them natural leaders. Nowadays, the roles or tasks of higher Education institutions or Universities in Thailand divide into four tasks. There are studying and teaching, researching, servicing of academics and cultural conservation. It is compulsory

tasks to universities have to do it. Because of Universities have indicator about key performance. When back to consider the role of universities in southern Thailand. There are many institutions or Universities in this area. Some focus on conflicts situation, but some does not realize the situation. It maybe shows significant that almost universities in southern Thailand do not focus on conflicts situation. But there are collaborative networkings between public and private universities in six universities, namely Yala Islamic University, Pattani province. Prince of Songkhla University, Pattani Campus, Pattani province, Prince of Songkhla University, Hatyai Campus, Songkhla province, Hatyai University, Hatyai, Songkhla province and Thanksin University, Songkhla Campus, Songkhla province Under STUfPeace Group. Abdulroning Suetir and Ayesah Abubakar¹ said about history of STUfPeace In march 2007, the research and Education for peace, University Sains Malaysia (REPUSM) and The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) organized a youth-oriented program known as Dreamkeepers the program was intended to promote the “peace dream” by creating and supporting the dreamkeepers/youths of southern Thailand. As a result of this Dreamkeeper Program, the delegate agreed to form a network of named as the southern Thailand Peace Network (STPN). A year after the formation of STPN , other institutions also came to join in. STPN realized that its vision needs to include all of the universities in southern Thailand, Therefore, the members decided to change their name from STPN to the Southern Thailand Universities for peace, or to be simply known as STUfpeace. There are many universities in Thailand have fieldworks or activities in this area. Each

¹ Abdulroning Suetir and Ayesah Abubakar. A History of STUfPeace: Building Peace Constituencies from the universities to the communities of southern Thailand. 2009, P90

university has project and do it by himself. Some project in each university has complex fieldwork. It does not have discussion or meeting before do each project. STUfpeace is a new group form many universities come to join in and have activities together. Beyond that they can able to find ways to enhance peacebuilding and the creation of a culture of peace through education. Every University in STUfpeace group encourages students to do peace activities inside and outside the university. They promote peace education among university students and youth groups in Southern Thailand.

Conclusion

The goal of a culture of peace is a world in which the rich diversity of cultures is a cause for appreciation and cooperation. There is already mounting evidence of initiatives reflecting such positive diversity at all levels – from the local to the international. There is also a growing belief that the culture of war, which has characterized the dominant civilization of the past, can be replaced by a culture of peace (UNESCO 2000). Peace education is based on practising tolerance towards others and on active involvement to improve situations, therefore a concrete ‘price’ (political, economic, and other) is embedded, which is paid for by the ones who practise it. (Fierer, 2008).

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