

One Tablet per Child Policy in Thailand

นโยบายแท็บเล็ตส่วนตัวเพื่อการศึกษาของประเทศไทย

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate Thai public policy, namely one table per child policy, which is imposed by the Thai government in 2012. Yingluck Shinawatra, Prime Minister of Thailand at that time, has imposed a policy called “One Tablet per Child” aiming to achieve its populist movement through eliminating inequalities and improving Thai educational standards. This sort of populist policy is hoped to make everyone equal in society. With a huge amount of investment in education. This study utilizes the documentary research by collecting secondary data from various and related sources about table policy from international cases and the case of Thailand. It also tends to illustrate outcomes and effect of this One Tablet Per Child policy on society and well as various interest groups. This issue has brought several criticisms over the budget expenditure and ineffectiveness of the tablet usage itself. There are several environmental pressure groups have raised criticisms over this policy by claiming that it contributes to children’s health and as well as the environmental impact due to a huge amount of electricity consumed by the tablets. Even though the policy was implemented, many have criticized the policy as it hasn’t been able to provide effective result as desired. Some have pressurized the government to provide more tablet to students for better education.

Keywords: Public Policy, Populism, Thailand, Education Policy

บทคัดย่อ

บทความวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษานโยบายและเสนอแนวทางในการพัฒนาในอนาคตสำหรับนโยบาย “One table per child” ซึ่งเป็นนโยบายรัฐบาลของไทยที่กำหนดในปี 2555 โดยนางสาวยิ่งลักษณ์ ชินวัตร นายกรัฐมนตรีแห่งประเทศไทยในเวลานั้นได้เป็นผู้กำหนดนโยบายที่เรียกว่า “One table per child” มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อให้บรรลุการเคลื่อนไหวของประชานิยมโดยกำจัดความไม่เท่าเทียม และปรับปรุงมาตรฐานการศึกษาของไทย บรรลุเป้าหมายนโยบายประชานิยมผ่านการกำจัดความไม่เท่าเทียมกัน ปรับปรุงมาตรฐานการศึกษาไทย นโยบายนี้ยังมีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อให้เกิดความเท่าเทียมกันในสังคมไทยด้วยการลงทุนทางการศึกษาในงบประมาณสูง บทความวิจัยนี้เป็นการวิจัยโดยใช้การรวบรวมข้อมูลและเอกสารที่เกี่ยวข้องและกรณีศึกษาที่เกิดขึ้นในต่างประเทศมาวิเคราะห์เพื่อหาแนวทางในการพัฒนานโยบายแท็บเล็ตส่วนตัวเพื่อการศึกษาของประเทศไทย ยังมีแนวโน้มที่จะแสดงให้เห็นถึงผลลัพธ์และผลกระทบของนโยบาย “One Tablet Per Child” ต่อสังคมรวมถึงกลุ่มผู้ที่ได้รับประโยชน์จากนโยบายด้วย ปัญหานี้ได้นำการวิพากษ์วิจารณ์หลายอย่างเกี่ยวกับการใช้จ่ายงบประมาณ และการใช้งานแท็บเล็ตอย่างไร้ประสิทธิภาพ ประชาชนชั้นกลางจำนวนมากวิพากษ์วิจารณ์นโยบายนี้ว่าเป็นรูปแบบของการใช้กลยุทธ์ทางการเมืองโดยรัฐบาลเพื่อให้ได้รับความนิยมในการเลือกตั้งในสมัยต่อไป ยิ่งไปกว่านั้นยังมีกลุ่มต่อต้านด้านสิ่งแวดล้อมหลายกลุ่มได้วิจารณ์นโยบายนี้โดยชี้ให้เห็นว่านโยบายนี้ก่อให้เกิดผลเสียต่อสุขภาพของเยาวชน และยังส่งผลกระทบต่อสิ่งแวดล้อมจากการใช้แท็บเล็ตไฟฟ้าจำนวนมาก แม้ว่านโยบายนี้จะมีผลบังคับใช้แล้วนั้น แต่ยังมีอีกหลายเสียงที่วิจารณ์ว่านโยบายดังกล่าวไม่สามารถให้ผลลัพธ์ที่มีประสิทธิภาพตามที่ต้องการ และยังมีบางกลุ่มได้กดดันรัฐบาลให้จัดหาแท็บเล็ตให้กับนักเรียนเพื่อการศึกษาที่ดีขึ้น

คำสำคัญ: นโยบายสาธารณะ, ประชานิยม, ประเทศไทย, นโยบายการศึกษา

Introduction

The study tends to illustrate outcomes and effect of this One Tablet Per Child policy on society and well as various interest groups. The fact that the government is implementing this policy to because to address poverty and injustice so that the social gap would be narrower. Obviously, it favors the red shirts' interest, however leaving the opposition's, the yellow shirts

behind. This issue has brought several criticisms over the budget expenditure and ineffectiveness of the tablet usage itself. The Yellow shirts also criticize the government's policy that it is nothing useful by a form of corruption and unwise government budget spending. (Ken.L,2014). There is a large number of middle class people who criticized this policy that it is a form of using political strategy by the government to gain

popularity in election for the next period of Prime Minister., Yingluck is hoping that it will allow every child to gain access to tablet usage at school because this will improve Children's education and as well as eliminating social and economic inequalities among people within the country the act of applying such policy is just to help meet the interest of the Red shirts people who are mostly poor .

These research studies also express the support of the certain group of educational interest such as the UNICEF, who is in a strong support on this policy. (UNICEF,2013).

Overall, this research study tends to concentrate on the One Tablet Per Child policy which is implemented by the Yingluck government with the aims of addressing social injustice by developing education and knowledge. It also illustrates the interest groups actions toward the policy and as well as the positive and negative impacts on students, society and the country's literacy rates as a whole.

One tablet per child policy or OTPC was introduced in Thailand in 2012, by Pheu Thai party as a new policy of Thai education claiming to address inequality and standards of education quality. The main aim of this policy is to bring improvement in school and increase knowledge beyond from text book, mainly for those who live in remote areas that lack of learning recourses.

“One tablet per child policy” should be regarded as a political doctrine of populism that appeals to the interests and conceptions of the general people, especially contrasting those interests with the interests of the elite. The policy began as a campaign for election by the Pheu Thai party, as to deliver 800,000 tablets to primary school children, so that students and teachers both benefit from it. One tablet per child policy is one of the top populist policy that helped PM Yingluck rise to power. It has become very popular among students and manufacturers. The government has spent THB 2460 (US\$82) per device, each of which features Google's Android 4.0 Ice Cream Sandwich operating system, 1GB RAM, 1.2 GHz single core CPUs, and storage capacity of 8GB. The minister of education has stated that there will be improvements in the education system such as increase in learning quality of a student at a fast growing rate, which will help to improve the education system of Thailand and provide all the students with equal access to education.

Related Theories

Interest group refers to any voluntary association that seeks to publicly promote and create advantages for its cause, which includes corporations, charitable organizations, civil rights groups, neighborhood associations, professional and trade associations. One tablet

per child policy was adopted by Pheu Thai Party as the party had campaigned on the pledge of “one tablet per child”, one of the populist policies. Interest and Pressure groups are very different from political parties. Political parties seek representation and power through elections focusing on national interest whereas pressure groups in the main seek political influence and are concerned with particular issues. The interest groups also work with political parties, or even become affiliated with one, to achieve their policy goals.

Institutional Theory emphasizes on the formal and legal aspect of government structure. It looks at the government arrangement, their legal power and rules for procedure. It focuses on the formal arrangements. A policy is not a public policy until it is adopted, implemented and enforced by some governmental institution. Institutionalized interest groups are a part of government, departments or agencies, but are politically neutral. They are characterized by well-structured and enduring organization, with clear objectives, and exclusive knowledge of the appropriate sectors of government and their clients. However, as a part of government, they tend to persuade government through internal means. There are some who take this definition of interests groups further to include organizations which are closely associated with government through their receipt of government funding.

(OBEC) Office of Basic Education Commission is the child of Education Ministry and it desires to continue the one tablet policy in Thailand even after the challenges faced. And has currently been seeking a budget of more than 4 billion Bath for tablets for the 2014 academic year. OBEC has a project to develop teaching and learning in schools in local dialect in the border areas, and Thai being taught as a second language. Rajabhat University has been assigned the task of creating a program in the form of a DVD for assisting with the learning of Thai and Mon vocabulary. (Yamwagee, 2014)

Ministry of education has been pushing for implementation of this program with the intention to revise the Education Ministry’s 400-billion-baht budget to the government - especially as they are affecting to those projects that seem to overlap with the tablet policy, such as budgetary items involving libraries and computer rooms (Fernquest, 2011)

The elite theory, the policy flows downward from the elite to the mass. Elites share values that differentiate them from the mass. The prevailing public policies reflect elite values, which generally preserve the status quo. Public policy may be viewed as the values and preferences of a governing elite. The elites shape mass opinion and the public officials and administrators merely carry out policies decided on by the elite, which flows ‘down’ to the mass.

“One Tablet Per Child” policy, which has been a controversial educational policy launched by the Pheu Thai-led government. It was perceived as a populist policy to address people’s problem of poverty, inequality and uneven standards of education quality. But, the elected government also constitute of an elite, so the decisions were primarily influenced by the elites in the society. Elites work as protective insider groups to promote their self-interests as they are involved in decision making process. Elite also exerts influence through symbolic needs, for one tablet policy/ per child has been considered as one of the symbolic politics because it was introduced by current PM before elections as a campaign which served the interest of the people as well as her own needs to be elected as Prime Minister. (Watts, 2013)

In the South and Northeastern of Thailand who have formed a pressure group in a bid to secure more funding for further education in the rural area. The group of people in the South and Northeastern of Thailand warns that the government invest in One Tablet per Child around 3,000 billion baht. The pressure group wants the government to take 3,000 billion baht for the policy, to develop the potential of the teachers or develop the school in the rural area equivalent to school in the city, which make the equality in public school in every areas. It aims to lobby local and national politicians about the importance of its worked in widening access. (Intathep, 2014)

Previous cases

1. Educational tablet pressure groups in general

There are several organizations or pressure groups that dealing with tablet for education and try to promote and support usage of tablet in education in different countries.

Tablets for Schools is a charity that commissions the largest independent research program in the world focus on the impact of tablets in learning and attainment. They provide research, and use it as a basis for best result for schools implementing tablet technology practices. These efforts are support by several part of education including head teachers, schools, academics, charities, industry and government. They support with the long-term goal that provide tablets for each student in the UK. A key part of mission is to prevent this from happening through making sure that any investments made by schools, government or parents can be justified by solid research. (tabletsforschools.org, 2014)

One Laptop per Child (OLPC) is a project that supported by two different part 1) the Miami-based One Laptop per Child Association (OLPCA) and 2) the Cambridge-based OLPC Foundation (OLPCF), these two U.S. non-profit organizations set up to oversee the creation of affordable educational devices for use in the developing world. The project was funded by organizations’ member such as AMD, Chi Mei,

eBay, Google, Marvell Technology Group, News Corporation, Nortel, Red Hat, and Quanta. The root cause of the rapid change, digital technology, and also provides a solution. When every child has a connected laptop, they have the key in their hands to full development and participation. Limits are erased as they can learn to work with others around the world, to access high-quality, modern materials, to engage their passions and develop their expertise. (Sultana, 2013) The winning project of the UN Refugee Agency's (UNHCR) second online challenge is "Tablets for Education", an initiative to use tablets and their applications to help refugee children overcome the language barriers that prevent them settling into new countries and apparently "unanimously supported by the Leadership Committee" and will now become one of the agency's 2014 Innovation Projects, meaning it will receive funding and undergo further development. This project is not run by the pressure groups but it is showing that international organization also consider about educational tablets. (Collins, 2014) From the information above, in Thailand this policy is directly proposed by government and later on some pressure groups started to question about the performance and outcome of this policy.

2. Educational tablet in South Korea

The South Korea educational tablet and technology are developed by the Korea Institute of Science and Technology (KIST). (Grzybowski, 2013)

Besides alleviating backpack strains and reducing the market for highlighters, the move of educational tablets or digital textbooks could have a huge impact on the educational publishing industry. Korean publishers have been very hesitant about embracing ebooks, as the director of the International Project Department at the Korean Publishers Association, Seung Hyun Moon explains: Korean publishers are very conservative. They are scared of ebooks. They witnessed the collapse of the music industry and they are reluctant to give content because they think it can be easily pirated. There is a law for everyone to make a legal deposit of ebooks to the Korean National Library, but publishers are reluctant to do that. (Davies, 2013)

A study released in June by OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) showed that the country is particularly prepared for the transition to digital learning. (Murray, 2011) Moreover, not only tablet policy issue but pressure group also working on other issues in education. The Korean Federation of Teachers' Associations announced that 40% of teachers are not satisfied with the loss of teachers' powers in classroom due to the new Teachers' Evaluation System. The Korean Teachers Union (KTU) has demanded that the government halt standardized testing, which is used in the country to determine school budgets - those with higher test results get more money from the government. In the case of Thailand, it is different from Korea

as there are no such pressure group to proposed this policy such as the publisher but it is more a political campaign that aims to win votes from majority of people.

Analysis and Discussion

1. Impact

“The Ministry of education in Thailand is currently distributing tablets to all first year primary (Prathom 1) school children across the country as part of the government’s “One Tablet Per Child” (OTPC) project to improve education. Early indication suggest that they are many unexplored issues in designing and implementing tablet activities for such a large and varies group of students and so far there is a lack of evaluation on the effectiveness of the tablet activities. In this article, it proposes four challenges for the improving Thailand’s OTPC project, consisting of developing contextualized content, ensuring

usability, providing teacher support, and assessing learning outcomes.” (Yamwagee, 2013)

This sample consists of a nationally representative sample of 100 fifteen year old Thai students from the PISA 2006 survey. The researcher specified three well defined types of computer usage or treatment as follows: frequent usage for only educational purposes (such as using educational software, spreadsheet, or browsing the internet for information about people, things, or ideas - 21, frequent usage only for entertainment purposes (as in playing games, or downloading games and music 10, and frequent usage for both the frequent usage for only education purposes and the frequent usage for only entertainment purposes above 34. Their control group comprises the remaining 35 students who reported occasional or zero use for these purposes. (Lathapipat, 2011)

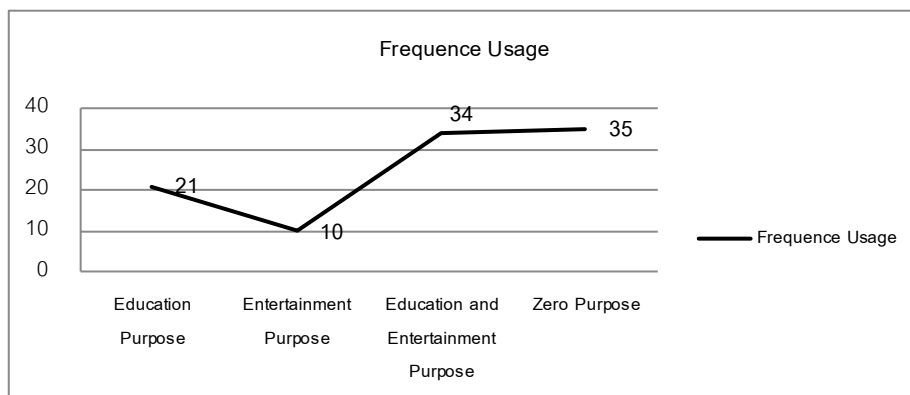


Figure 1 The graph show what the students do when they have tablets

Source: Potential Adverse Effects of the One Tablet per Child Policy

As is standard for this type of research design, the test score impact estimates were adjusted for between group differences in the personal factors of the children, such as their family income, their parents' educational attainments and occupations, as well as the type of school they attended, their class sizes, student teacher ratio, and teacher qualifications. In effect, the students in the four groups described above were statistically adjusted to make them compatible with the stated observable dimensions for meaningful comparisons to be made. The results show strong evidence that differences in the impacts of computer use result from the type of usage. To put it another way; for a median student these are equivalent to around a 10 percentile drop in science and a 6 percentile drop in mathematics in the national ability distributions. In contrast, we find that using computers for educational purposes has small, but positive effects on student performance. The impact estimates are also not statistically significant. (Lathapipat, 2011)

The Pheu Thai running the government is pushing for implementation of this program. He started his job by mentioning his intention to revise the Education Ministry's 400-billion-baht budget - especially pertaining to those projects that seem to overlap with the tablet policy, such as budgetary items involving libraries and computer rooms. He has also indicated that the tablet handouts will begin with students

attending Prathom 1 (Grade 1) nationwide. And that is when the warning alarms began to ring for even if the intentions are good, in order to turn a vision into reality the government must not let policy falter into mere populism. The handing out of an educational tool such as an e-book or tablet is not an end in itself - and certainly not a substitute for the entire learning process. The "one tablet per child" policy alone will not solve all the nation's education woes. There is the larger context in which the tablet policy must fit in, and a preparation process will be necessary to make the tool effective.

Last impact, nowadays people pay more attention to the technology more than usual, and technology plays an important role which impacts the society. And especially Thailand government has announced that they are going to distribute tablets to every single kid in Thailand. To begin with, the researcher does satisfy with the idea of giving tablets to students but not for kids. When kids see colors and sounds, they do enjoy but tend to pay attention to the media more than the academic courses. But for the older ones such as teens and adults do need it more than kids because they know their limits. They don't need people to tell them what to do; they know what they have to do and what are they doing, even though the material that they are reading has neither colors nor sounds.

2. Relationship with Pressure Group

In the research, the people more than 70 percent in the South and Northeastern of Thailand who have formed a pressure group in a bid to secure more funding for further education in the rural area. The group of people in the South and Northeastern of Thailand warns that the government invest in One Tablet per Child around 3,000 billion baht but this policy was failed and only 20 percent of the student who get benefit from this policy. The pressure group want the government should take 3,000 billion baht for this policy to develop the potential of the teachers or develop the school in the rural area equivalent to

school in the city, which make the equality in public school in every areas. It aims to lobby local and national politicians about the importance of its worked in widening access.

The data in the research indicate that the teacher cannot adjust the teaching from the tablet to the environment in each local and there has been concern that such device to encourage children to play more games. The result of research will demonstrate a failure caused by the unavailability of the content of the classes, and teachers. But the government uses the budget to distribute the tablet to the student in Grade 1 and also the budget process continued further.

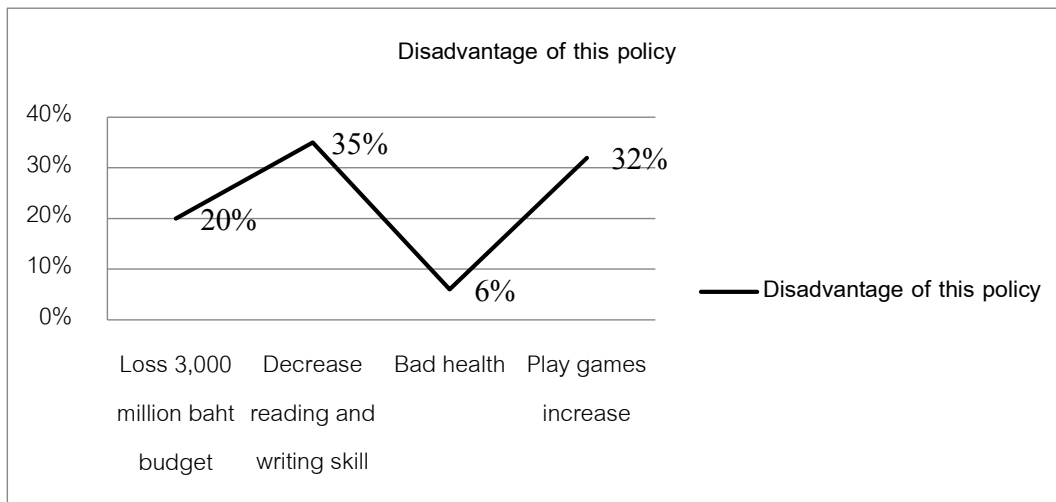


Figure 2 Disadvantage of 'One Tablet per Child' when the government distribute the tablet to the students

Source: English Communication II

In figure 2 the researcher can see the problem of this policy that the pressure groups want to pressure the government to responsibility for this failure. They think the government should take this budget to develop the schools in the country for example to build e-learning in every public schools, build the library, improve the teacher that the government provides scholarships to teachers who want to develop knowledge and teaching, or bring the education programs of the successful country to develop in Thailand.

Implications

Scholars have ratified the idea of giving tablets to students but not for kids. When kids see colors and sounds, they do enjoy but tend to pay attention to the media more than the academic courses. But for the older ones such as teens and adults do need it more than kids. (English Communication II, 2012)

Most of the students may not have facilities for tablet feature studying such as teachers may not be qualified to teach with technology or lack of internet facilities, so the student may lag behind in the rural areas. The OTPC is a good policy for education enhancement but the government must make sure about other related structures such as internet and teachers are provided and trained respectively. (Saengpassa, 2013)

There are higher risks of the tablet being broken, so the government must have alternatives to this problem whether to repair or replace the tablet, either ways both cost money to the government. The government should not just provide the tablet pc, but also has to make sure it works effectively by having the monitoring and evaluation system. If the tablet is broken by the student after receiving what will the government do in order to fix it, in either ways the government has to find the alternative to it, because if the government is not able to do so, the effectiveness declines for the policy to provide equal quality of education.

Conclusion

“One tablet per child policy” (OTPC) is the policy that create by Yingluck government that be faced many criticized from people and also pressure groups. This idea of providing tablet to support education for all students no matter they poor or rich is a good idea but this policy was unsuccessful because of several aspects such as the low quality of tablet, ineffective software, teachers who don't have a knowledge in technology or using technology to support in education etc. There are the pressure groups which pressure government to reconsider in tablet policy that using a huge budget from buying tablet for quite large number of students

but many students in other areas did not get tablets. By the pressure groups influence to government and there also have opinion from people toward this policy that they both agree and disagree.

Moreover, press and television are the importance part that provide that news about tablet policy by giving facts, opinion and effect of different sectors in several aspects from academics, students, parents, etc. In other countries, there have both support and not support pressure groups for tablet policy. In support group, they believe that tablets will helping student to have a better learning with

equality of learning in all status. In the other hands, the different sides was be effected from the tablet policy such as pressure groups who are publishers that worry about stability of selling books, when the government have tablet policy which all student will using digital textbooks. Nowadays, The National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) has scrapped the four billion baht tablets for children project for the 2014 fiscal year after seeing it does little to support education, and also is an unnecessary spending of national budget. And they tasked 10 government agencies relevant to education to come up with more viable projects for consideration.

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