

An Analysis and a Synthesis of Components of Social Studies Research Works in Thailand during 1964-2017

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Abstract

This paper investigated the components of social studies research in Thailand during the 1964 – 2017 period. The population comprised of 1,569 theses on social studies or on the substance or subject areas of social studies, religion, and culture, which was fully completed and published in the same period. These works were derived from ThaiLIS (Thai Digital Collection); the database of the full content theses was gathered from 11 universities nationwide. The research tools were an analytical survey and an analytical record of thesis characteristics, with details of the tools. The quantitative data were analyzed using frequency and percentage. The qualitative data were applied with an enumeration technique and content analysis.

The findings of the analysis and the synthesis revealed that 98.92% are master's theses and 1.08% are doctoral dissertations. The six components were 1) Types of research - quantitative research: 98.41%; 2) Research objectives – to develop media/innovation/learning activity package/learning management plan: 29.89%; 3) Populations and sample groups – students: 66.41%; 4) Research tools – questionnaire: 52.39%; 5) Statistical methods – mean: 72.59%; and 6) Quality tests for research tools – validity: 71.06%.

Keywords: Analysis, synthesis, research components, social studies, Thailand

Introduction

The National Education Act, B.E. 2542 prescribes that the production and development of quality teachers and educational personnel must conform to the education professional standards so as to be in accordance with the education reform framework and the education model for Thailand 4.0. The objective is to promote the students' capabilities to create constructive products and properly integrate old and new knowledge. All graduates will, as a result, possess the capacity to enhance teaching and learning management for young generations, in order to assure desirable qualifications.



As a higher education institution, the Faculty of Education of Chiang Mai University is committed to producing educational graduates at all levels with excellence in both arts and sciences, and improving educational sciences through a research-orientated process. The approach, according to the faculty's missions, encourages the acquisition of greater insight into prevailing knowledge as well as new bodies of knowledge for which graduates can employ via effective management on the basis of self-reliance. With respect to this, the faculty employs certain strategies to produce social studies teachers under the principal concept which emphasizes on the research-based approach. This is a key to continuous development and enhancement of the quality of graduates. With this approach, students will graduate with professional ethics and expertise in teaching and learning; thus, in conformity with the vision, philosophy, and commitment concerning production of social studies teachers and educational personnel in a sustainable fashion.

However, in the educational management for graduate programs professional standards is administrated under either direct or indirect rules and regulations or based on announcements from the Ministry of Education and Office of Higher Education Commission: OHEC, the Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (Public Organization): ONESQA, and higher education institutions, students must strictly comply with these (Uthai Adulyahsem, 2014). According to this, the development of curricular for graduate education in the social studies program of the university urges that students must complete at least one thesis with an approval from a thesis advisory committee as part of graduation (Graduate School Chiang Mai University, 2016).

In light of that, the researcher, with experience in teaching and learning administration and as a social studies thesis advisor for over a decade, has learned that the sphere of knowledge of social studies research is still in a limited scope; students continue to follow the prevailing research methodology. This has resulted in a reproduction of social studies research formalities; hence, no outstanding and concrete innovations in social studies has created a true benefit development for the case of Thailand 4.0 (Chetthapoom Wannapaisan, 2017).

Having recognized the importance of analysis and synthesis of components of social studies research in Thailand, the researcher conducted an investigation into the theses of higher education institutions in Thailand with a focus on the 1964 – 2017 period in a bid to create a fresh new body of knowledge, a direction of development, a systematic enhancement of the quality of national social studies thesis research, as well as the most updated information on social studies research.

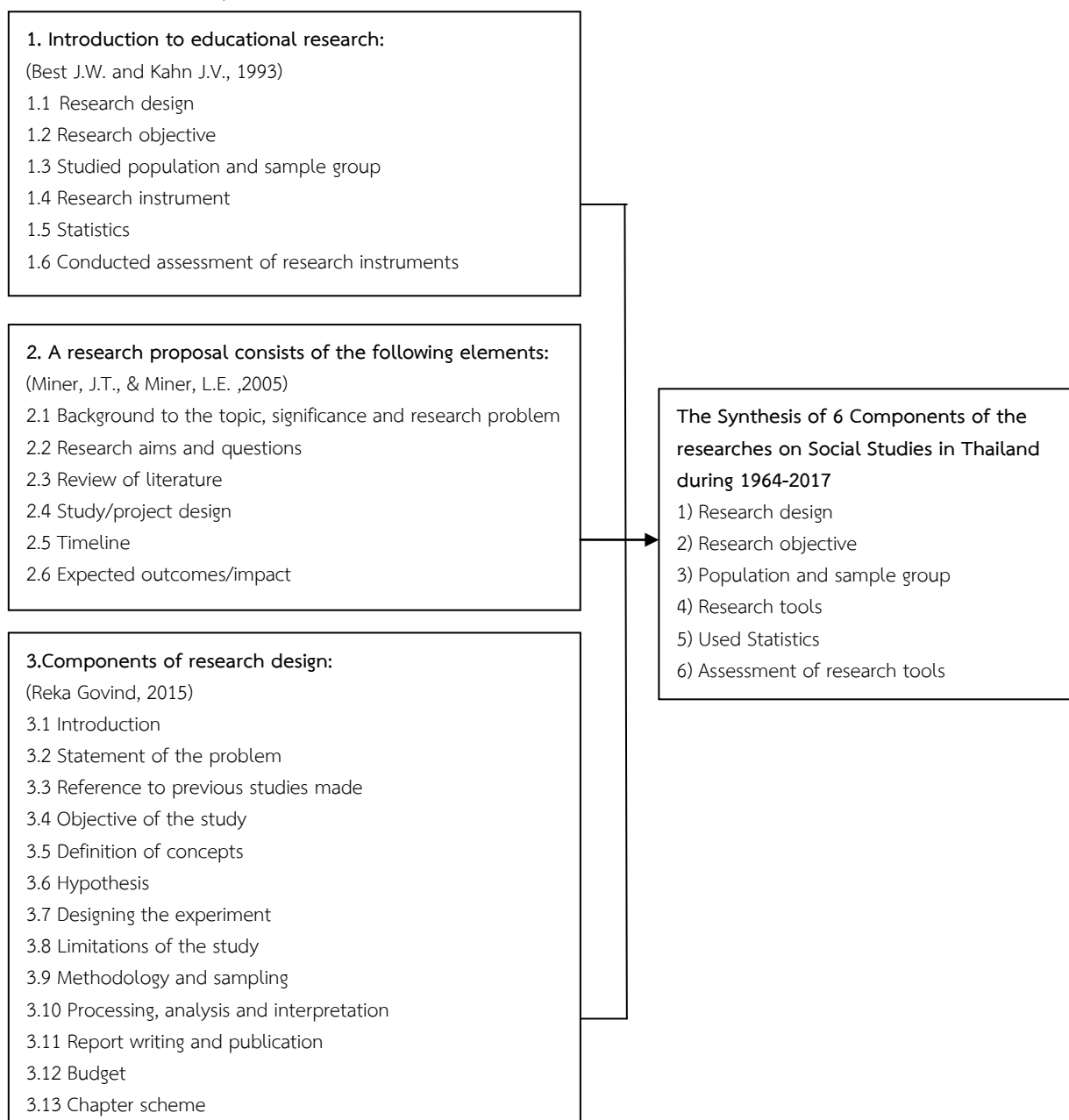


This paper will contribute to a broader sphere of knowledge of social studies research. The findings can be utilized for research itself, improvement of teaching and learning, development of social studies learning, creation of quality academic works valuable for the country. As a consequence, innovations and bodies of knowledge built on such findings will take part in further elevating the quality of Thai and global citizens.

Objective

To investigate the components of social studies research papers in Thailand during the 1964 – 2017 era.

Conceptual Theory Framework



Research Methods

1. Population and target group

The population and the sample group were the thesis papers concerning with the substance of social studies from eleven higher education institutions in Thailand which offers a master's degrees and doctoral degrees. With a total of 1,569 theses, these papers were published or disseminated in the thesis database - Thai Library Integrated System or Thai Digital Collection (ThaiLIS or TDC), which offers a service of providing full content thesis papers.

2. Research process

To be in accordance with the objective, the research was divided into five steps as follows:

2.1 The collection of thesis papers from the database: ThaiLIS, the database of full content theses were gathered from eleven universities nationwide. The study was performed with a focus on papers with subjects related to the discipline of social studies (shown in Table 1).

2.2 Issues and variables concerning characteristics of the theses being analyzed were identified and categorized for a synthesis of components, based on a study of components of thesis or research by John W. Best and James V. Kahn (1993). A synthesis by Jeremy T. Miner and Lynn E. Miner. (2005) and Reka Govind (2015) showed that there are six essential thesis components: 1) Types of research, 2) Research objectives, 3) Types of population and sample group, 4) Research tools, 5) Statistical methods, and 6) Quality tests for research tools.

2.3 A content analysis of the variables being studied was conducted and the results were presented in percentage.

2.4 A synthesis of thesis components was performed using an enumeration technique.

2.5 A report and a presentation of the findings were produced.

3. Research tools

The tools comprised of the following: 3.1) a form of analytical survey of a number of theses from eleven universities and 3.2) a form of analytical record of thesis characteristics (Claire Howell Major and Maggi Savin-Baden, 2010) with six components: Types of research, Research objectives, Types of population and sample group, Research tools, Statistical methods, and Quality tests for research tools. The quality testing performed through measurement of content validity provided an average IOC of 0.89 and 0.93, respectively, with individual IOC ranging between 0.44 – 1.00. Also, a test for criterion-related validity against 2 documents of tool criteria provided a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.969 and 0.816, with a statistical significance level of 0.01.



4. Data collection

The data, together with detailed information, were collected through the following steps.

4.1 The researcher downloaded 1,569 thesis papers with subjects of social studies from the database: ThaiLIS, the database of full content theses were gathered from eleven universities nationwide (shown in Table 1).

4.2 The researcher conducted a study into issues and variables concerning characteristics of theses being analyzed using an analytical survey.

4.3 The researcher recorded the survey data onto the analytical record.

4.4 The data derived from 4.2 and 4.3 were further examined.

5. Data analysis

The researcher conducted an analysis of the quantitative data using frequency and percentage; and qualitative data with an enumeration technique and content analysis (Helen M. Cooper, 2010).

Table 1 A number of social studies theses of each university

No.	Institution	Year	Number	Percentage (%)
1	Burapha University	1976-2016	40	2.55
2	Chiang Mai University	1987-2015	256	16.32
3	Chulalongkorn University	1964-2017	305	19.44
4	Kasetsart University	1978-2014	314	20.01
5	Khon Kaen University	1982-2014	306	19.50
6	Naresuan University	1989-2011	22	1.40
7	Prince of Songkla University	1989-2007	10	0.64
8	Ramkhamhaeng University	1998-2016	19	1.21
9	Silpakorn University	2002-2014	60	3.82
10	Srinakharinwirot University	1964-2008	142	9.05
11	Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University	1995-2015	95	6.05
Total			1,569	100.00

Source: Data Collection and Analysis

Results

The findings from the analysis of 1,569 theses revealed that 98.92% are master's theses and 1.08% are doctoral dissertations, with six components: 1) Types of research, 2) Research objectives, 3) Types of population and sample group, 4) Research tools, Statistical methods, and 6) Quality tests for research tools - the details are elaborated as below.



1) Types of research based on characteristics of analysis of data are quantitative research: 98.41%, and qualitative research: 1.59%, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Types of research based on characteristics of data analysis in social studies theses of each university

No.	Institution	Quantitative research		Qualitative research	
		Number	%	Number	%
1	Burapha University	40	100.00	0	0.00
2	Chiang Mai University	252	98.44	4	1.56
3	Chulalongkorn University	293	96.07	12	9.93
4	Kasetsart University	308	94.90	6	1.91
5	Khon Kaen University	304	99.35	2	0.65
6	Naresuan University	22	100.00	0	0.00
7	Prince of Songkla University	10	100.00	0	0.00
8	Ramkhamhaeng University	19	100.00	0	0.00
9	Silpakorn University	60	100.00	0	0.00
10	Srinakharinwirot University	141	99.30	1	0.71
11	Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University	95	100.00	0	0.00
Total		1,544	98.41	25	1.59

Source: Data Collection and Analysis

2) The research objectives can be arranged in descending order as follows: To create or develop media/innovation/teaching package/learning activity package/learning management plan: 29.89%; To examine role/behavior/satisfaction/attitude/opinion: 28.68%; To make a comparison/measurement of learning achievement: 26.20%; To evaluate or ascertain effectiveness of media/innovation/teaching package/learning activity package/learning management plan: 3.57%; To develop a curriculum/learning management: 2.55%; and To study into condition/problem/suggestion/trend/framework for development: 0.18%, as shown Table 3.



Table 3 Research objectives of social studies theses of each university (%)

No.	Institution	To create or develop media/innovation/teaching package/learning activity package/learning management plan	To examine role/behavior/satisfaction/attitude/opinion	To make a comparison/measurement of learning achievement	To evaluate or ascertain effectiveness of media/innovation/teaching package/learning activity package/learning management plan	To develop a curriculum/learning management	To study into condition/problem/suggestion/trend/framework for development
1	Burapha University	32.50	10.00	15.00	5.00	30.00	7.50
2	Chiang Mai University	49.22	18.75	3.91	3.13	1.56	7.81
3	Chulalongkorn University	8.85	29.84	39.02	2.95	2.62	27.54
4	Kasetsart University	12.74	55.73	24.20	7.01	1.27	11.15
5	Khon Kaen University	31.70	39.54	12.42	1.31	2.29	16.99
6	Naresuan University	81.82	0.00	0.00	4.55	13.64	0.00
7	Prince of Songkla University	80.00	0.00	40.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
8	Ramkhamhaeng University	57.89	0.00	42.11	0.00	0.00	0.00
9	Silpakorn University	95.00	1.67	3.33	3.33	0.00	0.00
10	Srinakharinwirot University	25.35	2.84	66.90	2.11	1.41	2.82
11	Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University	37.89	6.32	55.79	5.26	0.00	2.11
Average total (%)		29.89	28.68	26.20	3.57	2.55	0.18

Source: Data Collection and Analysis

3) Population and sample group can be arranged in descending order as follows: students: 66.41%, followed by teachers: 32.06%, educational personnel: 12.11%, specialists/expert judges/local intellectuals: 5.42%, and parents/communities/monks/novice and others: 4.91, respectively, as shown in Table 4.



Table 4 Population and sample group used in social studies theses of each university (%)

No.	Institution	Students	Teachers	Educational personnel	Specialists/expert judges/local intellectuals	Parents/communities/monks/novice/and others
1	Burapha University	75.00	15.00	5.00	2.50	2.50
2	Chiang Mai University	49.22	45.70	26.17	8.59	6.25
3	Chulalongkorn University	50.82	52.13	18.36	5.57	2.62
4	Kasetsart University	68.79	32.17	7.64	6.05	3.50
5	Khon Kaen University	63.07	28.10	11.11	2.94	13.07
6	Naresuan University	95.45	9.09	0.00	4.55	4.55
7	Prince of Songkla University	80.00	20.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
8	Ramkhamhaeng University	94.74	5.26	0.00	0.00	0.00
9	Silpakorn University	98.33	6.67	5.00	3.33	0.00
10	Srinakharinwirot University	96.48	4.93	0.00	0.00	0.00
11	Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University	83.16	18.95	4.21	14.74	0.00
Average total (%)		66.41	32.06	12.11	5.42	4.91

Source: Data Collection and Analysis

4) Research tools can be arranged in descending order as follows: questionnaire: 52.39%, learning management plan/teaching package/learning activity package: 48.25%, test: 47.61%, interview: 13.58%, observation: 10.58%, checklist/survey: 5.80%, record: 5.16%, and documentary analysis: 3.19%, as shown in Table 5.



Table 5 Research tools employed in social studies theses of each university (%)

No.	Institution	Questionnaire	plan/teaching package/learning activity	Test	Interview	Observation	Checklist/survey	Record	Documentary analysis
1	Burapha University	17.50	37.50	20.00	5.00	2.50	12.50	5.00	0.00
2	Chiang Mai University	41.41	54.30	27.73	16.80	7.18	4.69	6.64	1.17
3	Chulalongkorn University	60.33	20.33	22.30	20.98	2.95	3.93	2.30	12.13
4	Kasetsart University	70.06	38.54	47.77	4.78	5.73	16.88	1.27	1.59
5	Khon Kaen University	54.90	37.25	50.33	22.88	18.30	2.61	14.38	0.33
6	Naresuan University	31.82	81.82	86.36	9.09	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.55
7	Prince of Songkla University	0.00	80.00	70.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	30.00	0.00
8	Ramkhamhaeng University	15.79	89.47	89.47	5.26	10.53	0.00	0.00	0.00
9	Silpakorn University	93.33	100.00	91.67	21.67	0.00	0.00	6.67	3.33
10	Srinakharinwirot University	22.54	83.10	88.73	0.00	2.82	0.70	0.00	0.70
11	Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University	41.05	89.47	75.79	3.16	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Average total (%)		52.39	48.25	47.61	13.58	10.58	5.80	5.16	3.19

Source: Data Collection and Analysis

5) Statistical methods can be arranged in descending order as follows: mean: 72.59%, standard deviation: 52.58%, percentage: 43.59%, hypothesis testing (t-test): 35.63%, frequency distribution: 18.36%, analysis of variance: 15.49%, and determination of efficiency criterion: 11.41%, as shown in Table 6.



Table 6 Statistical methods employed in social studies theses of each university (%)

No.	Institution	Mean (\bar{X})	Standard deviation (SD)	Percentage (%)	Hypothesis testing (t-test, z-test, F-test)	Frequency distribution (f)	Analysis of variance (S^2)	Determination of efficiency criterion (E_1/E_2)
1	Burapha University	95.00	92.50	17.50	70.00	2.50	20.00	0.00
2	Chiang Mai University	62.11	50.00	23.44	8.20	8.20	0.78	3.91
3	Chulalongkorn University	75.74	63.61	58.03	36.07	18.69	7.51	1.97
4	Kasetsart University	51.91	28.66	62.42	32.17	30.89	24.84	10.19
5	Khon Kaen University	76.14	60.13	60.13	17.32	31.05	13.07	9.15
6	Naresuan University	100.00	100.00	0.00	77.27	0.00	0.00	72.73
7	Prince of Songkla University	100.00	100.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
8	Ramkhamhaeng University	89.47	89.47	15.79	73.68	0.00	0.00	47.37
9	Silpakorn University	98.33	98.33	35.00	35.00	0.00	1.67	41.67
10	Srinakharinwirot University	97.89	18.31	11.97	69.01	9.86	58.45	22.54
11	Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University	71.58	61.05	20.00	68.42	3.16	8.42	22.11
Average total (%)		72.59	52.58	43.59	35.63	18.36	15.49	11.41

Source: Data Collection and Analysis

6) The criterion for a quality test for research tools can be arranged in descending order as follows: validity: 71.00%, reliability: 61.63%, difficulty: 36.97%, discrimination: 36.97%, and objectivity: 0.06%, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7 Quality test for research tools employed in social studies theses of each university (%)

No.	Institution	Validity	Reliability	Difficult	Discrimination	Objectivity
1	Burapha University	17.50	22.50	20.00	20.00	0.00
2	Chiang Mai University	44.14	34.38	10.16	10.16	0.00
3	Chulalongkorn University	54.75	26.56	16.72	16.72	0.00
4	Kasetsart University	95.86	85.99	29.94	29.94	0.32
5	Khon Kaen University	70.59	70.59	38.24	38.24	0.00
6	Naresuan University	86.36	50.00	77.27	77.27	0.00
7	Prince of Songkla University	70.00	70.00	70.00	70.00	0.00
8	Ramkhamhaeng University	73.68	78.95	84.21	84.21	0.00
9	Silpakorn University	100.00	100.00	81.67	81.67	0.00
10	Srinakharinwirot University	97.18	97.18	90.14	90.14	0.00
11	Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University	75.79	75.79	70.53	70.53	0.00
Average total (%)		71.00	61.63	36.97	36.97	0.06

Source: Data Collection and Analysis

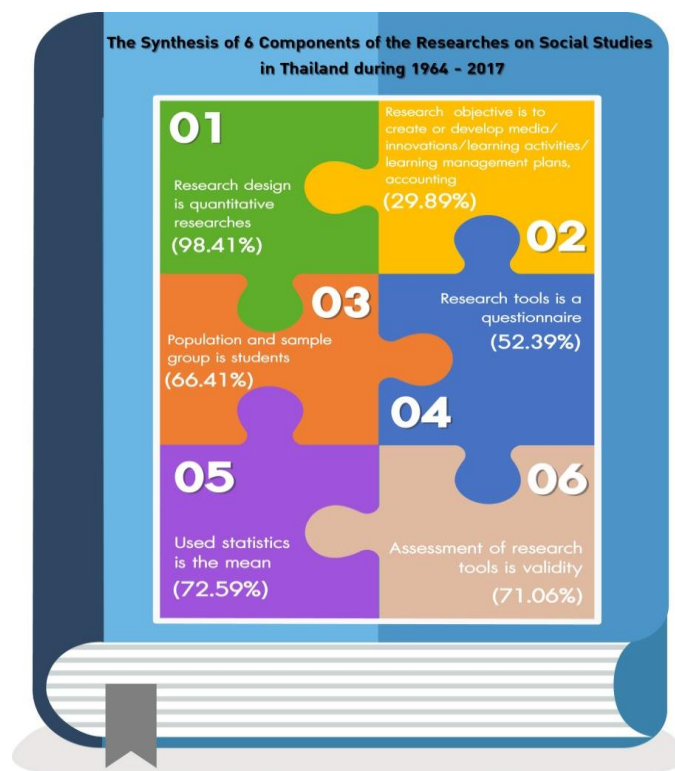


Figure 1 The synthesis results concerning components of social studies theses research in Thailand during 1964 – 2017



Conclusions and Discussions

The analysis and the synthesis of the components of social studies theses in Thailand during the period of 1964 – 2017 are explained below.

1) The most preferred type of research based on analysis of data is quantitative research: 98.92%; if based on research methods, experimental research constitutes the majority. This is due to the fact that most papers were conducted as part of an education for a master's degree or a doctoral degree to obtain approval for a certificate representing completion of their degree, by students being under the supervision and advice of advisors, or expert judges. This accords with the study of Boonchom Srisa-ard and Surithong Srisa-ard (2011), Wirat Wiratnipawan (2010), and Pitsanu Fongsi (2011) which asserted that conducting a thesis requires knowledge and competency, endurance, costs, etc. for successful completion. Also, as a qualitative research demands a great deal of knowledge of the thesis topic, a duration of research which frequently continue beyond the time frame specified in the curriculum, and sufficient capacity for successful completion, most students opted for a quantitative research thesis to assure their graduation within a time frame.

2) The top 3 research objectives can be arranged as follows: (1) To create or develop media/innovations/learning activities/learning management plans: 29.89%; (2) To examine roles/behaviors/satisfaction/attitude/opinions: 28.68%; and (3) To make a comparison/measurement of learning achievement: 26.20%. The main reason behind this is that social studies research deals with classroom action research. This research type requires that teachers conduct a research to ascertain the ways to resolve problems or to improve student learning. In conducting a research, teachers need to constantly analyze students; once a problem occurs to any student a study into such a problem must be performed to find out systematically for a resolution or a method of improving student learning through the research-based approach. This corresponds to a study by Nilrat Navagitpaitoon (2017) which highlighted that classroom action research is an integration of learning management and research. Although there are various types of research, teachers commonly conduct experimental research, whereas a research is done to resolve problems or to develop learning innovations in the teaching method and learning media.

3) The most common population and sample group in the research are students: 66.41%. This is because social studies research is a study to ascertain a resolution and an improvement of student learning; students are central to this research type. Other populations which have an involvement are teachers and educational personnel, for example: directors, education institution committees, and educational supervisors. This reinforces the findings of Nonglak Wiratchai and Suwimon Wongwanich (1999) which



affirmed that management or those authorized to set education policies is a crucial factor to promote and support research in educational institutions, and also involves parents/students as well as educational management such as specialists/expert judges/local intellects.

4) The most used research tool is the questionnaire: 52.39%. This confirmed a study of Chetthapoom Wannapaisan (2019) which stated that a questionnaire is a tool employed to collect data and respondents do not wish to disclose their personal data. Also, this tool is widely employed at present due to its convenience, time and cost saving, and accessibility to large numbers of the target group within a limited time frame. Additionally, the use of questionnaire was developed from a Google Form to facilitate a collection of data, which is becoming popular among researchers as it provides convenience for both researchers and respondents.

5) The statistics employed in research analysis are mean (\bar{X}): 72.59%, standard deviation (SD): 52.58%, and percentage (%): 43.59%. This concurs with Tipsiri Kanjanawasee and Sirichai Kanjanawasee (2016) which explained that because a research tool in most research works is a questionnaire, such statistics are preferable. As for the hypothesis testing (t-test, z-test, and f-test), analysis of variance (S^2), and determination of efficiency criteria (E1/E2), they are employed to analyze a test and a learning achievement assessment, or to measure effectiveness of an activity package used in research.

6) The criterion for the quality of research tool testing can be arranged in descending order as follows: validity (71.00), confidence (61.63%), difficulty (36.97%), discrimination (36.97%), and objectivity (0.06%). This is consistent with Chetthapoom Wannapaisan (2019), which puts forward that research tools employed in social studies research require a quality test; each may be measured with a different method, but all tools must be at least tested for validity, with an addition of 1-3 aspects. Nonetheless, this depends on the tool type. For example, a test is measured for reliability through the use of a try-out with sample groups, with characteristics similar to the target group. Difficulty testing is the measurement of the difficulty level of question items, indicating suitability for the sample group. Discrimination testing is the determination of efficiency of question items across a range: discrimination between positive attitudes and negative attitudes or between capabilities from the weakest to the strongest. Objectivity testing is the determination of clarity of question items associated with an assessment, with definite criteria to provide measures in a consistent or same direction.



Suggestions

Suggestions for policy setting

1. Higher education institutions and their education faculty which offer master's and doctoral degrees in the “social studies program” need to systematically develop and integrate a curriculum with an “educational research and evaluation program” that are under the same supervision of the faculty to continuously enhance the quality and the standard of research works.
2. The curriculum management committee for the social studies major in higher education institution offering both a master's degree and a doctoral degree should establish policies or strategies on development of teaching and learning with principles, concepts, and theories of the subject “social studies research”: to further enhance effectiveness and efficiency of such research in a modernized fashion and in a response to the development of the quality of Thai citizens.

Suggestions for actions

1. To elevate the standards of research, greater qualitative research should be promoted. Also, a new dimension of narrative and descriptive information should be created so as to depict students on the basis of diversity which reflects social studies learning behaviors in various subjects.
2. Quality testing for research tools should be more varied with at least one to three aspects measured, especially reliability, difficulty, and discrimination to assure clarity and the standard of data collection.
3. Researchers of social studies need to constantly update information and learn innovations in social studies, at both national and international level, to acquire knowledge of the global system, a direction of social studies learning with global attention, and a trend of intellectual investment; and ultimately to improve Thai and global citizens in the present situation.
4. Researchers of social studies need to collect, study, analyze, and synthesize social studies research works in Thailand to learn for a direction and trend of the research with all data and information utilized for improving greater accuracy and generate true power of development for society and the citizens.

Suggestions for further research

1. A study, collection, analysis, and synthesis of social studies research works in Thailand should be conducted in order to make a comparison against those of higher education institutions abroad, in particular in Japan and ASEAN countries – with similar contexts to Thailand, as well as powerhouse nations such as China, the United States, and the United Kingdom.

2. The scope of synthesis of social studies thesis research should be expanded into other areas: learning management, development of innovations and building on existing works, a search for bodies of knowledge from interdisciplinary research - with interrelated subject areas, and a study on a modernized body of knowledge.

3. Social studies research should be studied under social directions, conditions, and technologies resulting in global change, with great attention towards Thai interests and global society. This should also include the promotion of and support for funding research projects on new issues and innovations; for example, 21st Century Learning Skills, Thailand 4.0, Autonomous Things AI, Augmented Analytics, Immersive Technology, Smart Spaces, and Digital ethics and privacy.

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