

Field-trip of Primary School Children at Heritage Place

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Abstract

This study investigates learning experiences of school children (G4 – G6) studying in Nakhon Ratchasima Province who attended school field trip to the Phimai Historical Park (PHP), the biggest Khmer Sanctuary in Thailand, which is a popular tourist attraction and important learning resource for school children. It is focused on what and how young children learn from their informal education and field trip.

Significant interpretation objectives and suitable knowledge themes for young learners are examined in order to establish heritage understanding including lifelong learning as it is emphasized in the Reform of National Education system of the 15-year Free Education. The picture of how the school children were prepared for their historical site visit was established in order to understand the value, extent and effectiveness of the learning experience. School curricula and texts about Phimai and related topics were interrogated.

The research method is based on empirical surveying, observation and in-depth interviewing to explore the learning experiences during the visits by students to the PHP. Evaluations were obtained from responses to surveys.

The study uncovered large numbers of positive results, providing direction for how to arrange young learners for historic site visits. Both teachers and students mentioned that Social Studies, especially History, provided the main themes for the field trips. However, although the school field trips would benefit students learning in

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the classroom, the data showed that the teachers were limited in recognizing their role in connecting the field trip with the school curriculum and the lessons provided.

The structure of the field trips was guide-centered. A worksheet provided by the school was only a task for students to submit in relation to the site visit. A demonstrable communication gap between teachers and guides about effective interpretation for children was observed. This gap, and the limited involvement by some teachers in interpretation, limits the effectiveness of the learning experience for some students.

Keywords: field-trip, primary school children, heritage place

Introduction

According to the National Education Act 1999 (Minister of Education (MOE), 1999) proclaimed “Lifelong education for all” (EFA) as the base guiding principle and the goal of the education system in Thailand. The significant part of this reform was to concentrate on less teaching but more learning. The National Education Development Plan of the Ministry of Education (2012 – 2016), moreover, proposed not only learning and literacy among children and adults as the major concern of the government but also lifelong learning as the significant skill, focusing on knowledge, skills and attitude. Informal education is one of three types of education which are the heart of education reform. It allows the

learners to learn by themselves in accordance with their interests, readiness, potentialities and opportunities from person society, media, environment and other resources such as libraries, museums, community learning network and so forth. Community centers serve as venues where informal education activities are organized to provide occasions for learning to read and write (UNESCO, 2015). These provisions distinctively point that for achieve EFA goals, it is necessary to mobilize resources from all parts of society to serve education for all.

Phimai Historical Park (PHP), announced as the National Historical Park in 1989, is the largest Tantrayana Buddhist Khmer Sanctuary in Thailand. It is located on the Upper Mun River Valley, found

plenty of the important prehistoric and historic archaeology sites, in Nakhon Ratchasima Province. This place is the significant tourist attraction in the Northeast of Thailand, obtaining almost 300,000 visitors each year. Approximately 33% of visitors are school children from all around country.

This research aims to examine the responses of the school children gained from their visit to PHP which limited to the school curriculum and textbook subjects about Phimai. The value of the site's interpretation from young children was considers.

Integration between education and field trip

In a traditional and didactic approach, 'learning' is synonymous with 'scholarship' or 'knowledge'. Educational processes are designed to enable the transfer of knowledge from teachers to students. Facts and information are highly focused and taught. Increasing verbal knowledge is the objective of learning which is limited to the written and spoken word. Teaching methods are cognitive rather than experiential. Students' minds

are separated from their bodies. Schools are perceived as places of serious study. The students are kept away from the world. The results show many failures (Hooper-Greenhill, 2007).

In the modern world, economic growth has raised the value of education and increased the access of children and adults to high quality and effective education. Modern education reforms have been increasingly driven by a growing understanding of what works in education and how to go about successfully improving teaching and learning in schools since the late 20th century. In Thailand, education reform was started in 1999. Constructivism was one of main education theory that was used. This theory suggests that learners construct knowledge out of their experiences. Usually, humans generate knowledge and meaning from an interaction between their experiences and their ideas. It is known as the learning by doing approach. Since then, the paradigm shift of Thai Education has changed from teacher-centered to student-centered learning.

The Council of Learning Outside Classroom (2006) defines outside-classroom learning as the use of places other than the classroom for teaching and learning which are often the most memorable learning experiences, and help children to make sense of the world around them by making links between feelings and learning. They stay with us into adulthood and affect our behavior, lifestyle and work. They influence children's values and the decisions they make. They allow them to transfer learning experienced outside to the classroom and vice versa (The Department for Education and Skills, 2006). In 2007, a field trip at least once a year is one of four activities to promote quality improvement among students of the 15-years free education policy of the Thailand Ministry of Education (MOE), (MOE, 2009). Learning out-of-classroom or the field trip is a kind of education differing significantly from learning in the classroom in terms of learning, the teaching methods, and the goals. It usually focuses on skills and affective learning instead of cognitive content (Rogers, 2011). Interestingly, it is about

what and how students have learned or experienced during the trip visit.

Consideration of the Phimai Historical Park as a place for learning or educational site could assist in understanding history, art and the sense of pride and heritage awareness in children. Heritage interpretation is an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects or a mission-based communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the visitors and the meanings inherent in the resource. Tilden (1977) suggested that *"interpretation addressed to children should not be a dilution of the presentation to adults, but should follow a fundamentally different approach. To be at its best it will require a separate program."* Therefore, museums, galleries and heritage sites should provide an appropriate interpretation for them. Although there are many researches and successful interpretative methods for children in museums and galleries all around the world, in Thailand, there is still a lack of research about

interpretation and evaluation at museums, galleries and heritage sites for school children. This paper intends to evaluate what and how school children learn or experience during their field trip visit at Phimai Historical Park.

Objective and Research questions

From the pilot study, the results showed that the majority group of young visitors at PHP was the primary school children. This group was, then, considered and random selected at the site as the sample of this research. The study was to examine the learning of primary school children (G 4 – G6) in Nakhon Ratchasima Province from their

visit to PHP and to explore the existing curricula and school texts about PHP and related topics. The research questions were: (1) What do students experience on a historic site visit? and (2) What does the curriculum and school text mention about PHP?

Method

Population and Sample

Population

The population was primary school children (G4 - G6) at the age of 9-14 years old in Nakhon Ratchasima province who visited PHP in 2013, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: The Number of school students who visited PHP in 2013

Grade	Numbers of school students (persons)
G4 – G6	17,897

Source: Phimai Historical Park Office, 2013

Sample

The sample was calculated by using the formula of Taro Yamane (1967). The result of sample number was 392 students.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

n = sample
N = Population
e = allowable error at 5%

$$n = \frac{17,897}{1 + 17,897(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = 392$$

The sample size, 392 of school children out of the whole population of 17,897 respondents, would therefore be the lowest acceptable number of responses to maintain at 95% confidence level. Dealing with young children, the number of sample size, 663 respondents, had been increased to compensate for nonresponse. To get the data, survey forms were used for asking school children and teachers to complete. Survey forms of school children were divided into three sections; pre-trip preparation, school children's contentment and personal general information. Another was teachers' survey forms, composed of four sections; pre-trip preparation, during-trip and post-trip activities, and personal general

information. When they finished the round visit, the researchers asked them to fill in the survey forms. To help who could not read well, all students completed the survey forms step by step at the same time while the researchers read or explained each question. The teachers were asked to complete the survey forms as well. It took about 10 minutes. Some of both groups were selected to the in-depth interview. During-trip observation and photos also occurred with permission from the teachers and the PHP officers. Only the completed survey forms were calculated. The descriptive statistics were run for frequency distributions and categorical percentages

Results

Observation during-trip at PHP

The overall figures during the visit showed that all of them went to PHP by bus in both morning and afternoon. They spent about 40 minutes to 1 hour for their visits. The structure of the visits was guide-centered by guide who were the officers or trained young volunteer guides from Phimaiwitaya school (Figure 1a). Information of the place were explained such as history, architectures, arts, sculptures including its significance. Local legend, Phajit - Oraphim, was sometimes told as well. Asking simple question was used for the interaction between the guides and students. It was also used to attract their attention.

From the guides' perspective, the numbers of students affect the conduct of the groups. It was efficient if the numbers were not more than 50 persons per round. Only some teachers followed

the groups while the others waited in front of the site. In cases where school had large numbers of students and the teachers did not follow the groups, it was problematic. The guide solved these problems by summarizing the information of the place in brief at the starting point otherwise the students would not catch any information. The numbers of visitors who followed until the end usually were about 20 persons.

The task-oriented activity was mostly worksheets asking about history of PHP. They were sometimes included open-ended questions. The answers could be easily found from the explanation and the signage (Figure 1b). At the end of the round trip, the groups spent about 10 minutes completing the survey forms. After that, the students had a short time to explore the place or the information center where was usually skipped.



Figure 1: (a) Guide-centered structure (b) Students

Results of the survey forms

Number of the survey forms, random collected at PHP, were 663 of students and 59 of teachers from eleven schools. The completed ones, 571 of students (86.1%) and 42 of the teachers (71.2%), were calculated.

Personal information of respondents

Students

The personal information of the primary school children was analyzed into four categories; age, school

grade, gender and school type (Table 2).

The three largest groups of students were at the age of eleven (37.8%), twelve (29.9%), and ten (26.8%), respectively.

The category of school grade was grade 6 (38.0%), grade 5 (36.1%) and grade 4 (25.9%), respectively. The number of the girls (56.4%) was slightly more than that of boys (43.6%). More than three-quarter of them came from public schools (77.9%) rather than private schools (22.1%). All of them studied in schools that teach the Thai curriculum.

Table 2: Personal information of the students (n =571)

Characteristics	Number of students	%
Age		
9	20	3.5
10	153	26.8
11	216	37.8
12	171	29.9
13	10	1.8
14	1	0.2
School grade		
Grade 4	148	25.9
Grade 5	206	36.1
Grade 6	217	38.0
Gender		
Male	249	43.6
Female	322	56.4
School type		
Public school	445	77.9
Private school	126	22.1

Teachers

Personal information of the teachers was also analyzed. They were divided into four categories; age, teaching grade, gender and teaching experience (Table 3 and Figure 2). The three largest groups of teachers were in the range of twenty-one to thirty years of

age (35.7%), forty-one to fifty (28.6%), thirty-one to forty (26.2%), and fifty-one to sixty (9.5%), respectively. Most of them taught in G 4 – G6 (69.1%). Others taught in K 1 – 3 (14.3 %), G 7 – 9 (9.5%) and G 1 – 3 (7.1%), respectively. The teachers who taught in other grades joined and helped them to facilitate the field trips where

there were large numbers of students. The majority of teachers were women (88.1%). Nearly half of the teachers had teaching experience over 15 years (43.9%). Others were in the range of 1 – 3

years (26.8%), 4 – 6 and 13 – 15 years (7.3%), and 7 – 9 years (2.4%), respectively. This implies that they were quite experienced teachers.

Table 3: Personal information of the teachers (n =42)

Characteristics	Number of teachers	Results (%)
Age		
21 – 30	15	35.7
31 – 40	11	26.2
41 – 50	12	28.6
51 – 60	4	9.5
Over 60	0	0
Teaching grade		
K 1- 3	6	14.3
G 1- 3	3	7.1
G 4 - 6	29	69.1
G 7 - 9	4	9.5
Gender		
Male	5	11.9
Female	37	88.1

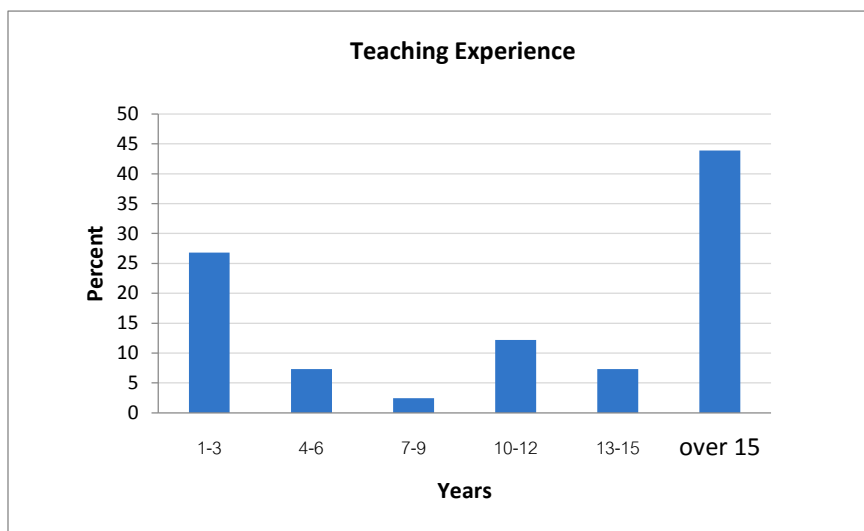


Figure 2: The teachers' teaching experience

Trip Preparation

Pre-trip preparation

The purpose of pre-trip preparation was asked to the students and teachers. Five categories about what the teachers had told the students before the field trip were asked; destination, objective, activities, topic and worksheet. The results indicate that all of them knew where the destination of the field trip was (Figure 3). With reference to the objective and the topic of the field trip, although nearly all of the teachers stated that they told the students (97.6%), around three-quarter of the students could recognize them (69.0% and 77.1%, respectively). The field trip activities were prepared by

most teachers (88.1%) while only half of the students remembered it. In addition, not all of the teachers prepared worksheets for students (83.3%).

Almost of the field trip fees came from the government and schools (94.9%) which was under the 15-year Free Education with Quality Policy of 2009. The open-ended questions revealed that there were several teacher motivations choosing the PHP as one of their destination. The important ones were the long history of the place, and the outstanding Khmer stone architecture, arts, sculptures, and landscape including easy access. Some teachers mentioned that the students would learn in the

authentic place which had never happened in the classroom and it was more effective than listening to others or reading books. Only one of them, however, related these field trips with the school curriculum.

Concerning knowledge, teachers thought history was the main theme that students would gain knowledge about when visiting the PHP. Architecture and arts, and sculpture

themes were the second and the third priority. Significance was less important when visiting the site. The other two themes were related to Cambodia and related to other countries. Surprisingly, the teachers thought that local legend was the least important. In contrast, most of the students said that they enjoyed and were impressed when the guide told them about the story of the local legend, Phajit – Oraphim.

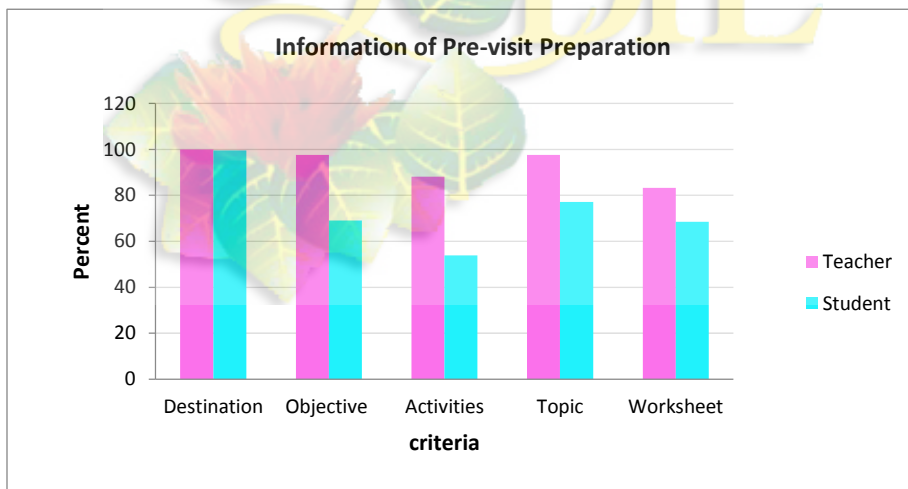


Figure 3: Information about pre-trip preparation

During trip activity

As mentioned above, the structure of the field trip was guide-centered by the officers of the PHP and/or sometimes trained young guides.

One round of the visit was about 40 minutes to 1 hour. With regard to the content, the teachers did not ask for specific themes or information related to their curriculum and/or lessons. On the

other hand, the guides did not know exactly what the curriculum or lessons of each school were as well. The content or information presented to the school groups was mostly up to the guides. There were big gaps between institutions. Some teachers followed the groups but others waited in front of the site. The interview revealed that they got bored doing many revisits to the same place and listening to the same information.

In addition, the observation revealed that worksheets were the only field trip task prepared by the teachers. The close-ended questions were about the simple information of the PHP, for instance, ‘who was the founder of the PHP?’, ‘when was the PHP built and by whom?’. The open-ended questions were sometimes available. The students were able to share their experiences and feelings. A blank page was occasionally provided for drawing or writing. During the trip, students were also interested in the signage including the one written about do and don’t behaviors. The parents who joined the field trip also helped their children to complete the worksheets.

The route at PHP comprised of ten stations (Figure 4), beginning with gathering students at Phlab phla Pleuang Khreung where the first station was. The guides introduced themselves and usually asked questions about PHP in order to check the students’ prior knowledge. The guides then explained the general content of each station in brief to the groups such as history, architecture, arts and sculptures, the meaning of the buildings, construction and restoration. Before going into the outer enclosure, group photos were often taken at the *Naga Bridge*, the 2nd stop (Figure 5). The students were excited when they crossed the *Naga Bridge*, travelling from the human world to the god’s world. The 3rd station was the outer southern *gopura* where the composition of the door frame was explained, such as the lintels and the columns and especially the stone carvings. Going into the *gopura*, the massive pillars and the two different kinds of sandstone, white and red one, were introduced. The guide invited the groups to look at the holes on the massive pillars and on the floor, and then

asked questions about what these holes were used for. Some brave students guessed while others discussed it with their friends and/or teachers. The different kinds of sandstone were in different positions, such as the door and

window frames, together with the massive pillars made of white sandstone, which is better and stronger in quality while the roofs and the walls were made of red sandstone.

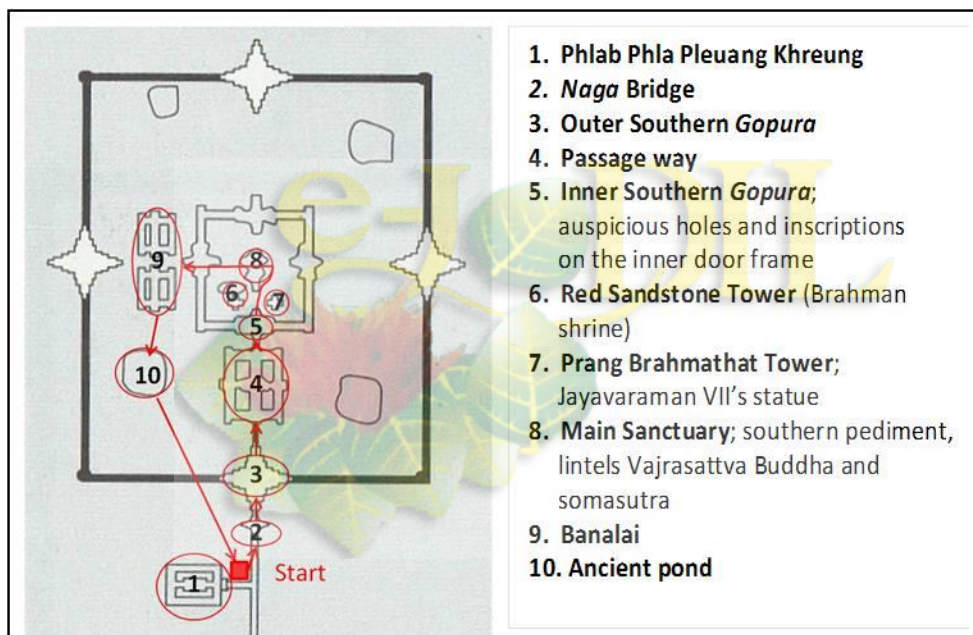


Figure 4: Historical route at the PHP



Figure 5: Taking a group photo at the *Naga Bridge*

The outer *gopura*, the passage way and the second enclosure were the 4th station (Figure 6). By observing, the students were impressed by the space. This landscape was one of the popular scenes that students took both individual and group photos of. They then moved into the inner *gopura*, the 5th station, where they would find the auspicious holes and the ancient Khmer inscription. Entering the central courtyard, three buildings lay ahead, the Brahman Shrine (the 6th station), the Prang Brahmthat Tower (the 7th station) and the main tower (the 8th station). In this zone, the remarkable information of the PHP, which faces to the south of the main tower, and the southern pediment carved

the Shiva *Nataraj* scene appeared in front of the groups. Afterwards, the guide took the group to the east of the main tower in order to explain the construction, function, decoration and shape of these buildings, Prang Brahmthat tower and Brahman Shrine including the eastern main tower. The highlights were the five *shikara* layers of the main tower with artefacts and the Jayavarman VII's statue (replica) enshrined in the Brahmthat Tower. Interestingly, each building is made of the different kinds of sandstone; white sandstone for the main tower, red sandstone for the Brahman Shrine and laterite for the Prang Brahmthat Tower. While the guides were conducting the groups, the students sometimes wrote

the answers to the questions, took photos, read the signage and talked to their friends and teachers. If the students did not look at the information, simple questions were asked by the guides.

Prior to going inside the main tower, the groups sometimes could take a rest in the shade for about 5 minutes while the guides were having conversations or giving an opportunity to teachers or students who wanted to ask questions. Inside the main tower, the students were introduced to three compositions of the building; *mandapa*, *antarala* and *garbhagrha*. The last one is where the significant Buddha Image is enshrined. Looking up at the upper part of the *garbhagrha*, the restoration evidence of the main tower, concrete beams, can be seen. To emphasize the Mahayana Buddhist sanctuary of the PHP, some of the lintels around *garbhagrha* were introduced. Moreover, *somasutra*, the conduit on the floor, was also mentioned.

The groups then shifted to the western exterior of the main tower to see the Ramayana scenes depicted on the lintels and the pediments. Although the students did not know about the depicted scenes such as the scene of constructing the causeway to Lanka or the scene of the bound Rama and Lakshmana with the Nagabas arrows, they still felt familiar with the names of Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, *garuda* and the group of monkeys. The next stop was the Banalai, (the 9th station) situated in the western exterior at the inner *gopura* and then the ancient pond, the last station (the 10th station). The students were brought back to the starting point to complete the survey forms for 10 minutes with the help of the guides and the researcher who read and explain the questions step-by-step. After completing the survey forms, the students had a short free time to explore the place, read the signage, finish their worksheets and visit the information center



Figure 6: Passage way, the second enclosure and three towers

In addition, the field trip of each school did not visit only the PHP but also other places, shown in Table 4. The Phimai National Museum, Sai-nagan (a huge Banyan tree) and Arts of Museum (3 D Art gallery) were popular choices for the teachers. The reasons were that these places are situated in the same area in Phimai District. Baan Tamprasat (an archaeology site) is not far from the PHP as well. Wat Salaroi and Samrit field are related to the history of Thao Suranaree, a heroine of Nakhon Ratchasima Province. Wat Phalakroi is famous for the sculptures of immoral people. The science center focuses on astronomy. Other destination was the Nakhon

Ratchasima zoo where was the most interesting place for children, especially ocean park section. Field trips were thus used to enhance the students' experiences in many aspects which sometimes were not related to the school curriculum and/or lesson. Many destinations of field trip, moreover, resulted in too exhausted children.

Post-trip activity

Open-ended question was asked by teachers as a post-trip activity and assessment. The results show that the teachers can be classified into two groups; one who had post-trip activities and the other who had no post

trip activity. The activities mentioned by the first group were the students' summarizing their field trip experience in term of reports and mind mapping. A presentation in front of the classroom allows the sharing of student experiences and/or conclusion of the information

which the students acquired from the field trips. The assessments were mostly from worksheets and/or the observation of the student behavior during field trips. Some of them did include the writing of reports, mind mapping and presenting in front of the classroom as well.

Table 4: The destinations of school field trips

	Destination
1	The PHP, Sai-ngan (Huge Banyan tree), Arts of Museum, Wat Salaloi
2	The PHP, Sai-ngan (Huge Banyan tree), Baan Tarnprasat (archaeology site)
3	The PHP, Arts of Museum (3D art gallery), Science Centre of Education
4	The PHP, Phimai National Museum, Wat Salaloi, Samrit Field
5	The PHP, Phimai National Museum, Baan Tarnprasat (archaeology site), Sai-ngan (Banyan tree), Samrit Field
6	The PHP, Phimai National Museum, Sai-ngan (Banyan tree)
7	The PHP, Wat Baanrai, Wat Parlagroi
8	The PHP, Phimai National Museum, Baan Tarnprasat (archaeology site), Arts of Museum, Sai-ngan (banyan tree), Samrit Field
9	The PHP, Arts of Museum
10	The PHP, Nakhon Ratchasima Zoo
11	The PHP, Phimai National Museum

Interpretation at PHP

The interpretation of the PHP was provided not only by the guided tours but also by brochures in six

languages: Thai, English, French, German, Chinese and Japanese; and signage in two languages, Thai and English. At the information center, prehistoric tools and

artefacts found during the archaeological surveys are displayed (replicas), for instance, Phimai Black bowls, metal tools and the inscriptions from Bor E Ka. Some information about the PHP from both the pre-historical and historical period is presented as exhibits in the ‘tracing the past of Phimai’ theme. Simple questions about the PHP included the following; What is the purpose of Prasat Phimai?, Who built Prasat Phimai?, What is the Khmer Prasat? and Where is the biggest Mahayana Buddhist Sanctuary in Thailand?. The late pre-historical settlements of the ancient people are labelled including the nearby archaeology sites such as at Ban Non Wat, Neon U-Lok, Non Sung District, in Nakhon Ratchasima Province. The information of historical periods started with the assimilation of Dvaravati civilization during the 7th – 10th centuries BE from central Thailand in this area, especially Buddhism. In the 11th – 13th centuries BE, the settlements was conquered by the King of ancient Khmer and then the town of Vimaya was established as the center of political power. The golden age of Phimai was during the 12th – 13th

centuries BE during the reign of King Jayavarman VI, the pioneer king of the Mahidharapura dynasty. Several pieces of evidence are shown that Phimai was his important administration center. The decline of the ancient Khmer Empire in this region was during in the Ayutthaya period and the Phimai was ruled by the king of Ayutthaya (Figure 7).

Others aspects are exhibited, for example, the construction of the Khmer sanctuary; the map and list of the ancient Khmer sanctuaries in Northeastern Thailand; the royal road from Angkor to Phimai as well as the VDO presentation of the PHP’s restoration by using the anastylosis method. Some of the Thai and English books such as guide books about the PHP, Khmer sanctuaries and other attractive sites in Thailand are available for sale. Unfortunately, the visit to the information center was usually skipped for the school groups because of the large numbers of students in each group and the limit of visiting time. Although some of them came in and saw the exhibits, they hardly understood this information without the facilitation of interpreters. However, except for the

guided tour, specific interpretations and activities for visitors of different ages are not provided at the PHP.



Figure 7: (a) information center at the PHP (b) Exhibits display in the information center

Curriculum and school texts

The following question was asked to both the students and the teachers: which topics about PHP did you learn or know about before this visit? The results are showed in Figure 8. The topic with the highest number of selections both the students and the teachers was history (22.8% and 19.3%, respectively). There were slight differences between the results of the students and the teachers. For the second topic, teachers focused on significance (17.8%) rather than arts and sculptures (9.9%) which was

different for the students (13.7% and 15.4%). Architecture and conversation were chosen by teachers at 11.9% while for students, architecture was 13.0% and conversation 9.7%. However, the students were more interested in the local legend – Phajit- Oraphin – than the teachers, scoring 12.6% and 8.9%, respectively.

Not surprisingly, the teachers and students could link PHP, the biggest Khmer sanctuary in Thailand, with Cambodia (8.9% and 9.3%, respectively). They knew about Angkor Wat. In addition, the Khmer language is still used to

communicate in daily life by Thai people in the Northeast of Thailand such as in Buriram, Surin, and Sisaket provinces. However, due to the relationship between the PHP and other countries except Cambodia, although this topic was the lowest number by the teachers (7.9%) and students (6.5%), they still recognized it. However, what exactly linked them together was not clear. The in-depth interview of the teachers revealed that it was probably because

Thailand has joined the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015. This affected school education. The government announced that information about ASEAN has to be taught in the schools especially dress, greetings and tourist attractions. Some students were, therefore, able to remember the name of Borobudur and/or Prambanan Temple compounds, the famous Buddhist and Hindu temple Compounds in Java, Indonesia.

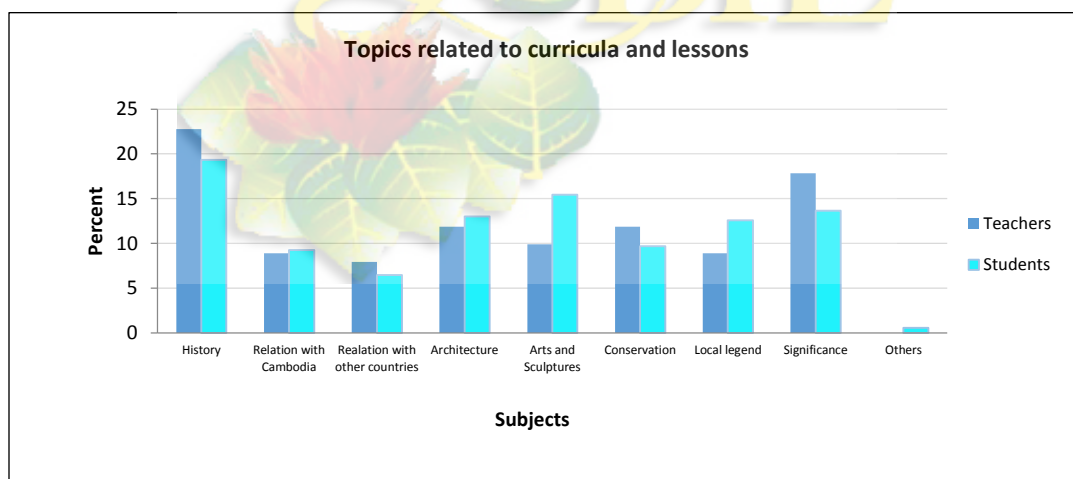


Figure 8: Topics were chosen by the students compared to the teachers

History is studied in-depth in the curriculum and school texts. According to the Basic Education Core Curriculum of Thailand (MOE, 2008), History is a part of Social Studies. The first

two topics of the core curriculum are able to be related to PHP, as illustrated in Table 5. The curriculum of upper primary children (G 4 – G6) is relevant to the construction of historical concepts such

as counting the time periods for G 4; investigating the historic development from the evidence and human beings in both prehistoric and historical periods in the local area for G 5; and explaining historical methodology and the influence of Indian and Chinese civilizations in Thailand and Southeast Asia for G 6. It is therefore appropriate for the teachers to arrange field trips that support learning History in their classroom as the prehistoric and historic sites and evidence from Phimai and the Upper Mun River have been found and studied by many researchers. To obtain the whole picture of this area, there is a national historical park (PHP), the national museum and archaeological sites in the region. Grade 4 students, for instance can learn how to count the time periods back to at least a thousand years. Grade 5 students are also able to study human evolution in Thailand. Grade 6 students can learn about the relationship between the PHP and ASEAN as well.

For the consideration of the teachers' opinions in terms of the links between field trips and the curriculum and lessons in the classroom,

teachers were asked the question 'Does the school have a curriculum related to PHP?'. The results indicated that more than half of them taught about PHP in the classroom (52%). The other two groups who had prepared curricula about PHP and who had no curriculum or lesson related to PHP are the same at 24% (Figure 9). The data showed that some of the primary teachers taught more than one subject. The teachers of the last group taught in other subjects, for example, Math, Science, and English and Thai language. Only one History teacher did not teach any topic related to PHP. This indicated that the knowledge of PHP has been structured by the teachers only with regard to history.

However, the teachers who prepared the curricula were given in-depth interviews by phone call. One of the teachers said that the PHP topic was in the school curriculum in order to focus on historic methodology and local history for Grade 5 students. She spent 5 periods teaching this topic (one period per week). In the first period, teacher introduced the PHP in brief, and then the students were divided into groups. Each group had to

gather information on different themes from several sources, for instance, newspapers, magazines, and the internet. The themes were about history, the setting, significance, architecture, arts and sculptures. The second period started with a VDO clip of the PHP. The students' activity was brainstorming in order to prepare a presentation in the third period. In the fourth period, the students did a quiz and the teachers gave them the information about the field trip preparation. The field trip at the PHP was in their last period. In their worksheets, six objectives of the field trip appeared; to provide integrated learning; to provide opportunities for out-of-school learning; to practice working in groups; to be able to apply prior knowledge with new experiences and use them in daily life; to establish and transmit a sense of awareness about Thai culture and wisdom; and to encourage lifelong learning. The expected learning outcomes were cognitive skills and attitudes and disadvantaged children had a chance to learn and experience out of the school. The other page was the schedule written by the students. After

the field trip, assessment was done by the teachers from the worksheets and from observations during the field trip, but they did not mention the post trip activity. However, the level of student contentment could have been asked in the classroom or individually.

Investigating the teachers' and students' experiences about PHP was also done by asking the question 'Have you ever been to PHP?'. The outcomes were that most of the teachers had been to PHP (83.3%) regularly with their families and schools (46.7% and 35.6%, respectively). The reason the other teachers had never been to the PHP was unclear because of the high percentage of 'other' choices chosen (71.4%). Almost half of the students have been to PHP (45.7%). A large number of them visited the PHP with schools (35.3%). Others went there with their families (21.2%). The main reason for ones who had never been to the PHP was that no one had organized a trip (Figure 10 - 11).

To discover the students' view of their prior knowledge about PHP, the students were asked the question 'Have teachers ever taught you about

PHP?’. The result showed that the largest group of the students answered they have learnt about PHP in their classroom (64.1%). 27.7% of them said that their teacher had not taught about PHP in the classroom but they knew about it from other sources. The other 8.2% did not have information about PHP. The results indicate that majority of students had prior knowledge about PHP before the field trip (91.8%) and almost half of them had visited PHP (45.7%) (Figure 12).

In addition, findings from the history school texts (G4 – G6), used all around the country, disclosed that both of Phimai and the Upper Mun River Valley were few mentioned. For example, the Upper Mun River regions, mentioned as prehistoric sites from the Iron Age, and Phimai including the PHP which have been developed since the ancient communities, were found in only

one teacher’s hand book. Angkor Wat and Prambanan temple compounds were included as the ASEAN tourist attractions.

Nevertheless, two Thai books on the stone sanctuary for young children have been found. Firstly, a cartoon book from the Phimai National Museum, sold only at the site, is about the construction of the stone sanctuary. The fundamental information about how the stone tower was built is described such as the plan, structure, materials, stone quarry site and the construction of the building (Figure 13). The other one is the stone sanctuaries in the Northeast. This book includes information about the remarkable stone sanctuaries such as Phimai sanctuary, Phnomrung sanctuary and Mueang Tum sanctuary. The clear pictures of the buildings’ section plan and the anastylosis method are also presented in this book.

Table 5: Core curriculum of History for G 4 – 6 related to subject matter in school texts Page 1/2

Core curriculum	Indicators*	Subject matter** (School text)
1. Understanding of the meaning and significance of historical times and periods; and the ability to avail historical methodology for systematic analysis of various events.	Grade 4 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Count the time periods by decade, century and millennium Explain the ages in studying the brief history of mankind. Categorize the evidence used in the studying the historical development of the local area. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Count the time periods by decade, century and millennium. The ages and evidence of the history of mankind <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prehistoric period - Historic period
	Grade 5 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the historical development of the local area by using a variety of evidence. Collect data from various sources in order to reasonably answer historical questions. Explain the differences between truths and facts concerning the history of the local area. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the historical development of the local area by using a variety of evidence; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Statues - Temples - Tourist attractions - Etc.
	Grade 6 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Explain the importance of historical methodology in making a simple study of historical events. Present data from a variety of evidence in order to understand events of the past. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Learning the historical methodology from historical evidence; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inscriptions - Archives - Documents - Etc.

Source: *MOE, 2008: 177 – 179.

** Kongchana , 2016a: 5; 2016b: 4, and 2016c: 16 – 20.

Table 5: Core curriculum of History for G 4 – 6 related to subject matter in school texts Page 2/2

Core curriculum	Indicators*	Subject matter** (School text)
2. Understanding of the development of mankind from the past to the present; realizing the importance of relationships and the continuous change of events, and the ability to analyse their effects.	Grade 4 1. Explain in brief the settling and development of human beings in the pre-historic and historic ages. 2. Cite examples of historical evidence found in the local area that show the development of mankind	1. History of human evolution in Thailand; - Prehistoric period - Historic period; - Before Sukothai - Sukothai - Ayutthaya - Rattanakosin
	Grade 5 1. Explain in brief the influence of Indian and Chinese civilizations on Thailand and Southeast Asia. 4. Discuss in brief the influence of foreign cultures on the present Thai society.	1. Brief explanation of the influence of Indian and Chinese civilization; - religion - language, - architecture - food
	Grade 6 1. Explain the present social economic and political situations of neighbouring countries. 2. Explain in brief the relationships of the ASEAN Group.	1. Neighbouring countries in brief (ASEAN)

Source: *MOE, 2008: 177 – 179.

** Kongchana , 2016a: 5; 2016b: 4, and 2016c: 16 – 20.

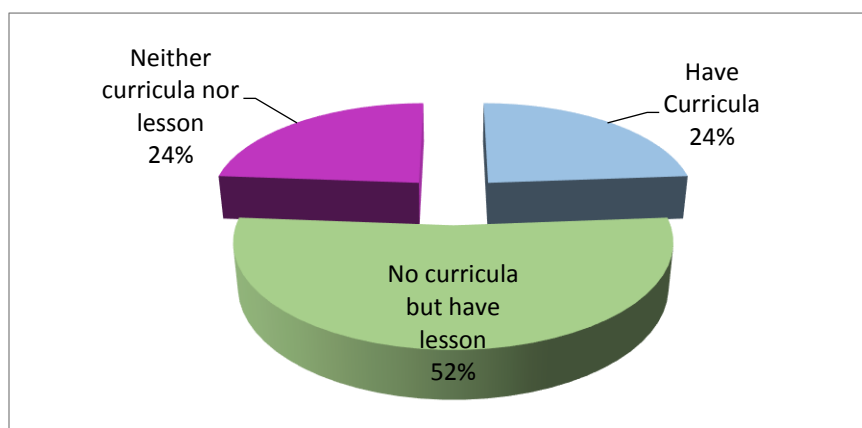


Figure 9: Number of the teachers who had prepared curricula and lessons connected to the field trip and school lessons

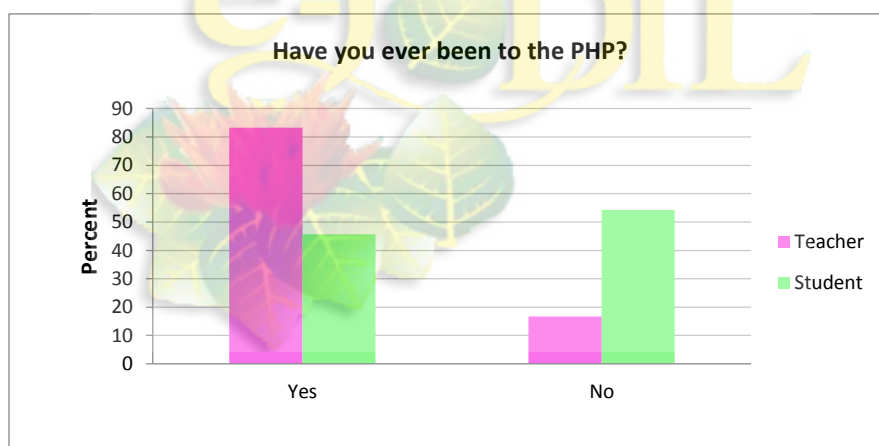


Figure 10: Numbers of teachers and students that have been to the PHP

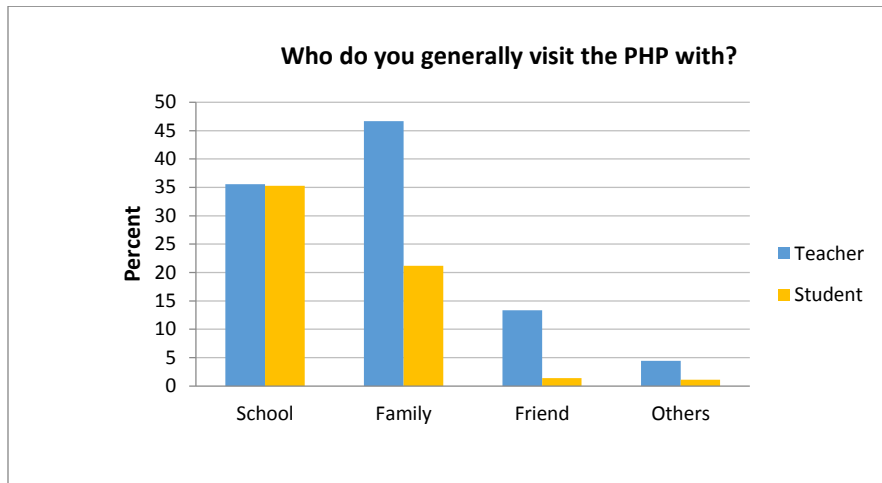


Figure 11: The people with whom teachers and students visited PHP

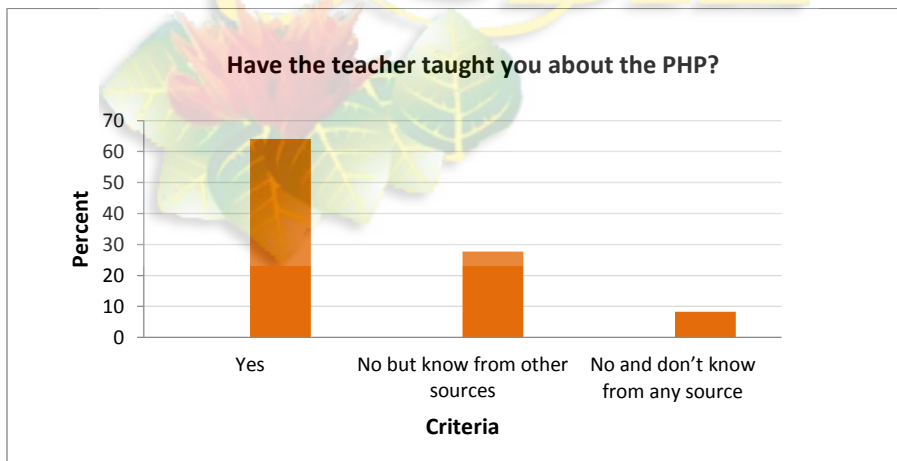


Figure 12: The number of students who learnt about the PHP before the field trip

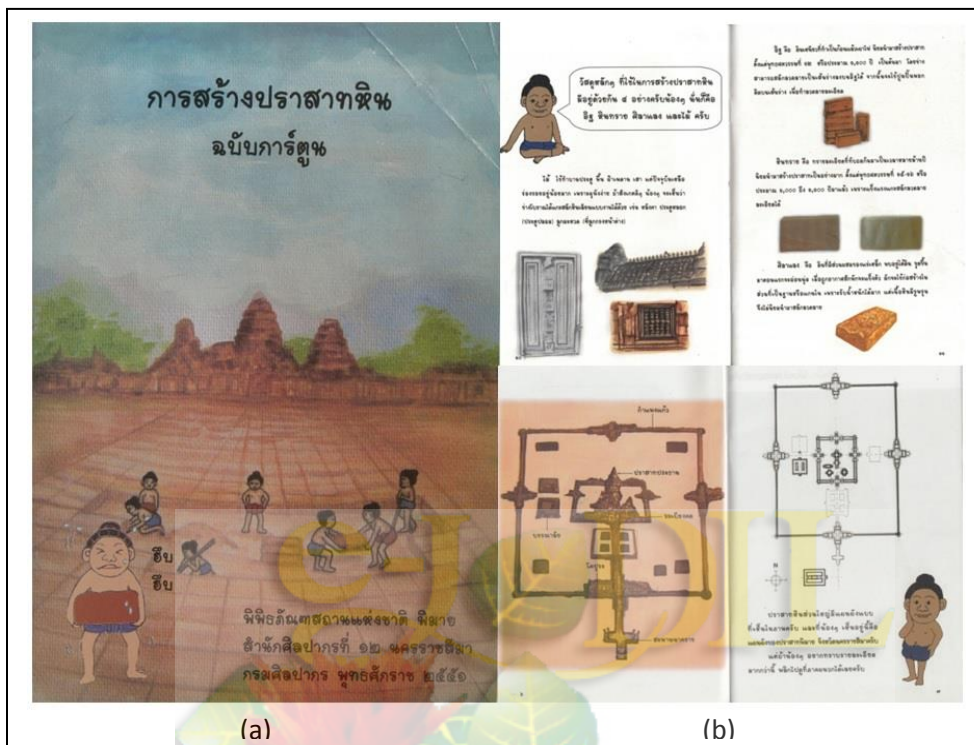


Figure13: (a and b) the cartoon book of the construction of the stone sanctuary

Source: Phimai National Museum, 2008.

Discussions

Trip preparation and interpretation for children

Learning from outdoor experiences has been proved to enhance learning in the classroom. The results discovered that the students seem to prefer activities more than merely holding documents, listening to guides or reading the signage. Although the explanations did not motivate learning the information about

the site, most of the students did enjoy the field trip. They mentioned that they had learnt and seen new things which they could not do in the classroom. Content related to the field trip that both teachers and the students mentioned focused on history.

With reference to the aspect of interpretation, there is a large gap between the teachers and the guides in that they have never communicated or

worked together to prepare and interpret appropriate information for children of particular ages. The teachers thought that it should be the role of the PHP to do the interpretation. On the other hand, the PHP do not know what the teachers and the students need for their field trip or information relating to the curriculum or lessons in the classroom. They thought that the guided tour is enough interpretation for every group. This shows that there is insufficient interpretation during the visit to the PHP. By observation, the guide explained what he/she thought would be interesting and what the students or visitors would like to know. Some information might be linked to the curriculum or the lesson in the classroom, but some might not. It is, however, important to mention that although teachers got bored when they listened to the same information many times they still failed to give any feedback to the PHP. Some of them solved this problem by waiting for the groups in front of the PHP under the shade.

Regardless of the explanation, the students did not get particular information about the PHP because of

the use of technical terms without giving details making it hard to understand even for adults. Interviewing teachers reveals that most of the information about the PHP came from the Phimai guidebook. The only task of the site visit was a worksheet prepared by the teachers often containing short paragraphs about each place and closed-ended questions such as ‘When was the sanctuary built and by whom?’ which the students had to complete. The students mentioned that they preferred worksheets with drawing rather than writing and/or answering closed-ended questions. The number of the students in each group, moreover, affected the concentration of students as well as the control of the groups. The larger the group of students, the less efficient was the learning. Usually there were not more than 20 persons who followed the guide until the end.

With regard to the survey and observation, it is clear that the existing interpretation for students at the PHP lacks effective interpretative material. Although the information center not only provides a timeline of the history relating to Phimai sanctuary, but also several

languages brochures. However, the student groups normally did not use these services because of the short time visit and the large number of students in each group. The students spend most of the time listening, looking, and writing the answers to their assignment so they did not have time to read the exhibits. Only a few students went into the information center and saw the exhibits. Unfortunately, they were hard to understand because the exhibits were not aimed at young children.

However, learning and education reform concerns people and organizations coming together to consider the educational task. An appropriate interpretation for young children at the PHP should be provided by cooperating with many institutions especially schools and the PHP. To be effective, cooperative planning and the design of interpretations should be covered in three stages; before trip, during trip and post trip. The interpretation should cover not only the structure of guide-centered tours but should provide materials and activities including assignments as well.

Curriculum and content

As previous mentioned, history was the core theme of the field trip at the PHP. A systematic activity which would promote learning history with effectiveness and meaningfulness of history teaching in Thailand was suggested by Pongvuthitham (2007). The content of this subject concerns the chronology of the events which is far from the learners' life, especially for young children. Most of it is abstract. The learners need to integrate critical thinking with historical imagination to construct historical concepts. Shaping the historical concepts by using interpretation and evaluation of the facts in the classroom is not enough. Adequate activities which come from the collaboration of teachers and students to choose appropriate ones would be more practical. The activities usually consisted of reading textbooks in the classroom, gathering information from several sources, exhibiting, site visits, and post-visit activities such as state performances and in front of classroom presentations. The evaluation is done by teachers, students and parents.

Nevertheless, the survey results revealed that the activities planned by the teachers were similar to those mentioned above. Three quarters of the teachers mentioned that the field trips were related to the curriculum and lessons in the classroom mostly in terms of history. For the construction of academic concepts, however, not only history but other subjects were not obvious as well. Firstly, the destinations of the field trips chosen by the teachers show that the teachers included many aspects. They were not aware of any specific goals of these visits. Some of them chose to visit places which were in the same area but involved different topics such as the PHP, Sai Ngam (huge banyan tree) and the 3D art gallery. Other teachers selected places that the students would prefer such as the zoo and the observatory. These results indicated that although these field trips have the potential to provide essential learning experiences, several teachers might not be aware of their role in the experience and might not take full advantage of this resource.

Many researchers have presented the role of teachers and the student with regard to field trip experiences. Griffin and Symington (1997) suggested that teachers used chiefly task-oriented teaching practices in their classroom and made little effort to connect topics and the museum. Storksdieck (2001) revealed that teachers were usually unaware of their role in tailoring their students' experiences during field trips. Kisiel (2005) also stressed that teachers might not have explicit goals for their visit and cannot connect the out-door experience to the classroom curriculum.

In a historical perspective, results from the interview, not only the students, but also the adults revealed that they got confused and could not relate the Phimai history with Thai History. There are various reasons which could explain this. For instance, during the reign of King Rama V (1868 – 1910), Siam was invaded by western countries. One of the policies transforming Siam as a modern country in order to protect the nation from being colonialised was the creation of unity in terms of Thai History which

could be divided into three periods; Sukhothai, Ayutthaya and Rattanakosin. The local histories, both prehistoric and historic, were disregarded. The outstanding history of this region is the development of the ancient communities around the Upper Mun River Valley including Phimai, from the prehistoric to the historic period for more than three hundred years as the agricultural and rock salt producing communities before the beginning of Thai history in the Sukhothai period. Unfortunately, the history of the ancient communities of the Upper Mun River Valley particularly the history of Phimai seems to be connected to the ancient Khmer Empire more than Thai History.

Additionally, the several destinations chosen by the teachers showed that they had many aspects to cover but did not recognize their significance. They did not try to construct the whole picture of the development or the history of this area so the students were unable to understand the history of Phimai. The students felt that Phimai was individual or isolated from Thai History. To get an overview of the local history of

this region, the information should be reinterpreted. Furthermore, the history of ASEAN especially Thailand and neighboring countries should be reconsidered as well because of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) which has been established to support the relationship and networks of ASEAN trade and production since 2015.

Conclusion

The study of field-trip of school children in Nakhon Ratchasima province at PHP showed that Social Studies especially History was emphasis. Guide-centered by the officers of the PHP and/or sometimes trained young guides was used as the structure of the field trip. Worksheets with simple questions were only tool prepared by the teachers. Most of the children had some information about PHP before their visits. Although the objectives of the field-trips were less related to the school curriculum school children showed the positive results of authentic places visits. Interpretation of young children needed to be improved with collaboration of all stakeholders.

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