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Model of educational assurance participation in small schools in Thailand

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates stakeholder participation in educational quality assurance (QA) for small schools in Thailand. The primary objective is to identify key components and indicators of participation and to bridge the gap between current and desired engagement levels. The study delineates five participation components and 13 indicators, providing a comprehensive framework for evaluating and enhancing stakeholder involvement. We employed a mixed-methods research design, incorporating group discussions, questionnaires, interviews, and model assessments to collect data from stakeholders in small schools in northeastern Thailand. We used basic statistical techniques to analyze the data, revealing that current participation is moderate, while the desired level is substantially higher. The participatory model developed in this study was operationalized through an 84-hour training program aimed at strengthening collaboration among administrators, teachers, and community members. The study also discusses other problems, like limited infrastructure and the possible addition of digital tools that could help with engagement even more. These results show how important it is for stakeholders to be involved in ensuring the quality of education. They also give us useful information for future research and policymaking that aims to improve education in small schools.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in social and economic development, especially in the current era of rapid technological and societal changes. In this context, the involvement of all stakeholders in educational development is a key factor in ensuring quality assurance (QA) in education. This engagement not only requires collaboration between teachers and students but also among communities, parents, private sectors, and government agencies working together to create an effective and sustainable education system. Stakeholder participation is a critical component of educational QA. Effective school leadership that involves stakeholders such as teachers, parents, and the community significantly enhances the quality of education. This collaborative approach creates a supportive learning environment that improves educational outcomes and student development [1]. Students, as primary stakeholders, play a vital role in quality enhancement. Their involvement begins with developing quality awareness and literacy, which are crucial for maximizing their contribution to QA processes. The student quality literacy index (SQL index) is a tool used to measure students' understanding and involvement in quality systems, emphasizing the need for their active participation [2]. Education is vital for empowering individuals, especially those living in poverty or facing social exclusion. It enables them to make informed choices and improve their life circumstances [3], [4].

Furthermore, it opens up the world, allowing individuals to access information, understand history, and prepare for future challenges. It fosters critical thinking and the development of a well-rounded perspective [5]. Education is essential for expanding human capabilities and freedoms. It contributes to personal growth, societal participation, and the development of critical abilities, which are necessary for a fulfilling life [6]. Education is a key factor in socio-economic development and political stability. It helps in forming personalities that can contribute to societal progress and economic prosperity [7]. Beyond knowledge transfer, education promotes holistic growth, character development, and social inclusion. It is integral to improving living standards and empowering marginalized groups, such as women in disadvantaged communities [8]. Education is indispensable for personal empowerment, social justice, and economic development. It provides individuals with the tools to navigate and contribute to society effectively, fostering both personal and societal growth. Through education, individuals can achieve a higher quality of life and participate meaningfully in democratic processes.

Education is a fundamental human right and plays a crucial role in individual and societal development. It is particularly valuable for those facing disadvantages, as it provides opportunities for better life choices and social inclusion. Education is vital for individuals living in poverty or facing social exclusion, as it offers the capability to make beneficial life choices and promotes social justice [9]. Furthermore, it is essential for the holistic growth of individuals, encompassing not just knowledge and skills, but also character formation and critical thinking abilities. It prepares individuals for societal participation and sustainable development [10]. Unlike their larger counterparts, small schools face distinctive challenges that make the adoption of total quality management (TQM) both crucial and uniquely demanding. Limited resources, smaller administrative teams, and often closer community ties necessitate a quality management approach that is both adaptable and sensitive to local contexts. TQM offers a framework through which small schools can systematize quality improvement initiatives, balancing operational efficiency with educational relevance. The adoption of TQM leads to enhanced teaching quality, increased student satisfaction, and more effective use of resources, fostering a sustainable environment of continuous improvement. Central to TQM's success in small schools is leadership, especially the pivotal role played by school principals. Principals not only guide the vision and strategic direction but also embody quality culture motivators who regulate and oversee the multifaceted processes embedded within the school's operations. Their leadership shapes stakeholder involvement, resource allocation, and QA, rendering their role indispensable in driving TQM initiatives [11]. Empirical data further support the essential engagement of leadership in successful TQM implementation within educational institutions, highlighting the benefits of leadership commitment accompanied by strategic planning and collaboration [12]. Overall, education is indispensable for personal empowerment, social inclusion, economic development, and the reduction of poverty and inequality. It fosters holistic human development and societal progress, making it a cornerstone for building a better future.

Small schools are educational institutions typically characterized by a limited enrollment size, which influences their operational dynamics and educational delivery. These schools are often situated in diverse geographic locations, including remote rural areas and small urban communities, which shapes their role within the broader education system. The organizational structure of small schools tends to be more flexible and less bureaucratic compared to larger institutions, often requiring resource allocation that must balance limited budgets with the necessity to cover comprehensive curriculum needs. In such contexts, small schools may rely on multi-grade classrooms and shared teaching roles, with educators frequently assuming multiple responsibilities within the school environment. The diversity in student populations within small schools varies widely but is influenced significantly by the community context, including socio-economic, cultural, and linguistic factors. For example, small schools in rural or underserved areas may serve populations with unique needs, including higher proportions of students from disadvantaged backgrounds or minority groups. This diversity presents both challenges and opportunities for personalized learning and community engagement. The importance of understanding these characteristics lies in their implications for educational practice. Small schools' capacity to foster close-knit communities often contrasts with their limited access to specialized resources or advanced technological infrastructure, shaping the QA measures applicable within their context. Current educational frameworks acknowledge the unique position of small schools, emphasizing the need for tailored assessment and support mechanisms to address their distinct operational and pedagogical challenges [13]–[15]. Resource limitations remain a formidable challenge for small schools globally. Access to up-to-date technological tools is often restricted, hindering the integration of innovative teaching and learning methodologies. Physical facilities may be inadequate, lacking modern classrooms, laboratories, or libraries necessary to support a conducive learning environment. These infrastructural deficits diminish the schools' capacity to deliver comprehensive curricula and extracurricular activities. Moreover, the recruitment and retention of qualified teaching and administrative personnel are constrained by factors such as geographic isolation, limited professional growth opportunities, and lower remuneration, which collectively impact educational quality. Without sufficient resources, small schools struggle to meet evolving educational standards and cater effectively to diverse learner needs [16]. QA among Thai schools is subject

to numerous challenges, including a lack of consensus on quality indicators, diverse stakeholder interests, and the rapid pace of globalization and technological change. The lack of collaboration between school stakeholders plus the aforementioned issues hinder progress in educational development. Educational assurance has been exploited as a means to help schools attain higher educational quality. Different countries employ various models for QA, each with unique benefits and drawbacks. Continuous improvement, adaptation, and a strong emphasis on academic integrity are essential for overcoming these challenges and ensuring the sustained quality of education. Different stakeholders (students, educators, employers, and government bodies) have varying interests and perspectives on what constitutes quality in education, complicating the establishment of universally accepted quality standards [17]. However, various challenges and issues complicate the implementation and effectiveness of QA systems [18]. Continuous improvement and adaptation of QA systems are necessary to keep up with evolving educational standards and societal needs. This includes building management commitment, forming quality control circles, and engaging in regular data collection and analysis [19].

QA in educational institutions is a complex and multifaceted issue, involving various stakeholders and requiring comprehensive strategies to ensure effective educational outcomes. Several challenges and problems are commonly identified in the QA processes within educational institutions. QA involves a wide range of stakeholders, including students, educators, and policymakers, each with different interests and perspectives on what constitutes quality education. There is often no single, unified model for QA, leading to inconsistencies in how quality is measured and maintained across different institutions and regions [20]. The main challenges in educational QA include the complexity of stakeholder involvement, lack of unified models, implementation difficulties, resource constraints, and the impact of globalization and technology. Addressing these issues requires comprehensive strategies that involve stakeholder engagement, policy-level changes, and the development of reliable models for QA systems. These efforts are crucial for improving educational outcomes and maintaining institutional accountability [21].

Participation in educational settings is a multifaceted concept that encompasses various forms of engagement by students, teachers, and other stakeholders. Understanding these patterns is crucial for enhancing educational outcomes and fostering inclusive learning environments. In online learning environments, passive participation, often referred to as "lurking", is a common pattern. This behavior includes low or no contribution to discussions, which can be influenced by motivational factors and the design of the learning environment. Strategies to encourage active participation are needed, especially in the context of increased online learning due to the pandemic [22]. Silent students, particularly those who are low-achieving, often face educational disadvantages due to limited participation in classroom discussions. Teachers can engage these students by recognizing and encouraging their spontaneous contributions [23]. The SIPOC model is applied to support the development of educational quality and to improve processes within the school context. This framework includes five key elements: suppliers (S), inputs (I), processes (P), outputs (O), and customers (C). The process involves designing a model that addresses specific educational needs, identifying the recipients of educational services, understanding their requirements, and crafting effective processes to meet those needs. This comprehensive approach, which connects suppliers and inputs with the overall educational management process, contributes to the effectiveness of educational management. The article also presents a methodology for managing educational processes, including algorithms for adjusting learning resources and selecting strategies to manage educational quality effectively [24]. The developed model serves as a conceptual framework to guide efforts aimed at achieving high educational outcomes, particularly in rural schools [25].

In final analysis, the SIPOC model, as part of the six-sigma framework, offers a structured and effective approach to improving the quality of education. By providing a clear understanding of educational processes and identifying areas for improvement, the SIPOC model helps enhance teaching quality, operational efficiency, and, ultimately, student outcomes. Although the contribution of stakeholders to education development has been well articulated, research work evaluating these elements in relation to QA in small schools in Thailand remains limited. To address this gap and provide assistance with the educational development of these underserved schools, it is important to conduct further research examining the contribution of these developmental criteria in diverse educational settings. This study demonstrates that the participation of school personnel in educational QA implementation affects the improvement of school quality. This paper is a part of the doctoral dissertation entitled "Model of educational quality assurance participation in small schools in Thailand".

This paper is included in the doctoral dissertation, "Model of participation in the educational standard assurance of the small schools under the Office of the Basic Educational Commission". The research aimed to: i) investigate the components and indicators of participation in QA processes; ii) examine current conditions, desirable states, and essential needs; iii) develop a participatory model; and iv) study the outcomes of using research tools.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Concepts and theories related to participation

Community involvement in educational management signifies a crucial transition from structured top-down governance structures to inclusive methodologies that empower populations as equal participants in determining educational results [26]. Participation characteristics, participation is a multifaceted concept that encompasses various forms of involvement in activities across different contexts, including social, educational, political, and health domains. Understanding the nuances of participation is crucial for developing effective interventions and policies that enhance individual and community well-being. Social participation involves individuals engaging in activities that foster interactions with others in community life, influenced by societal context and personal meaning [27], [28]. Participation in educational settings is complex and context-dependent, involving both social and individual dynamics. Teachers and researchers need to adopt inclusive and context-specific approaches to understand and enhance participation [29]. In rehabilitation, participation is defined as involvement in life situations, with importance and satisfaction varying across age groups and influenced by cognitive functioning and frequency of participation [30]. Given the aforementioned considerations, the conclusion can be drawn is that participation is a dynamic and context-specific phenomenon that plays a critical role in various aspects of life, from social interactions and education to political engagement and health. Effective participation requires understanding and addressing the unique needs and contexts of individuals, particularly those from marginalized groups. By fostering inclusive and supportive environments, the quality and impact of participation across different domains can be enhanced.

Autistic youth exhibit variable participation patterns in daily activities, with more active profiles linked to greater environmental support, higher cognitive functioning, and less externalizing behavior [31]. Internal and external factors highly influence farmers' participation in planning, implementation, evaluation, and enjoyment of results [32]. Younger age groups and advanced smartphone users are more willing to participate in smartphone-based data collection, while circumstances impact participation rates differently for different social groups [33]. Youth participation in decision-making can positively influence mental health and well-being outcomes for participants, but more research is needed to optimize these outcomes [34]. Public servants' attitudes towards ordinary citizens, not demographics or information and communication technology (ICT) skills, significantly impact their inclination towards e-participation in St. Petersburg, Russia [35]. Participation in community sports organizations follows a power-law distribution, driven by habit formation and behavioral inertia, with individuals showing a burst-quiet participation pattern [36]. Citizen participation in elections is significant for avoiding post-election conflicts and violence, representing citizens' ideas and aspirations, promoting inclusivity, enhancing election legitimacy, and serving as a catalyst for national development [37]. Voluntary participation has a small positive impact on well-being indicators, with nonpolitical volunteering having more positive effects than political participation [38]. Legal and sociological frameworks support participation in social life, but they conceal gaps and silences that require closer scrutiny to provide clear evidence of its significance or outcomes for young people [39]. It is important for adults to guarantee children's rights and ensure their participation in communicative processes, fostering understanding between individuals through communication [40]. Participation is a multifaceted, context-dependent phenomenon shaped by internal and external factors that requires inclusive approaches tailored to diverse stakeholder needs. Empirical evidence demonstrates that meaningful stakeholder engagement in decision-making processes significantly enhances organizational outcomes, well-being, and community development, particularly in educational settings where the collaborative involvement of teachers, students, and community members drives sustained quality improvement.

2.2. Concepts and theories related to QA

QA is a critical component of quality management across various industries, including pharmaceuticals, education, and software development. It ensures that products and services meet specified quality requirements, thereby boosting confidence among stakeholders and supporting continuous improvement. International standards guide QA systems, which involve comprehensive processes to prevent nonconformities and ensure the achievement of quality objectives. QA is a management technique that ensures products or services meet quality requirements and are fit for use [41]. In result, QA in schools is a multifaceted process that involves setting and meeting national education standards, implementing effective internal systems, and addressing various challenges. Key themes and criteria must be well understood and feasible to enhance learning achievements. Continuous improvement and strong stakeholder commitment are essential for successful QA in schools. QA in education is a comprehensive process aimed at ensuring educational institutions meet certain standards of quality in teaching, learning, and administration. It involves both internal and external mechanisms to maintain and improve educational quality. Engaging various stakeholders, including students, employers, and educational authorities, is essential for aligning educational services with market and societal needs [42]. Stakeholder involvement helps in setting relevant

quality standards and ensuring that educational outcomes meet the expectations of all parties involved [43]. Educational QA is a multifaceted process involving internal and external systems, stakeholder engagement, leadership, and a strong quality culture. These components work together to ensure that educational institutions provide high-quality education that meets the needs of students and society. In summary, educational standard assurance is a means to assess the quality of education and performance of the schools in Thailand. It is evidenced in the aforementioned review of literature that cooperation from various stakeholders has the potential to proliferate schools to attain higher standards. However, research work investigating the existing level of stakeholders' correspondence in small school development in Thailand has been less articulated. For this instance, this research was set to unveil the issue and additionally provide a model to foster mutual collaboration in educational endeavors.

In a nutshell the advancement of QA in small schools is a multifaceted, cooperative undertaking that necessitates interdependent responsibilities among leadership, educators, students, parents, communities, and policymakers. Each group brings unique contributions that are vital to sustaining, monitoring, and improving educational quality. The dynamic interplay among these actors fosters a resilient QA ecosystem tailored to the specific challenges of small schools, where resource limitations and contextual factors demand adaptive, participatory strategies. Recognizing and strengthening these interrelationships is essential to realizing equitable and high-quality education in small school contexts [44]–[46]. Within individual small schools, cooperation between teachers and leadership underpins collective approaches to QA. Peer coaching, reciprocal feedback loops, and shared governance mechanisms encourage continuous reflection and problem-solving in a supportive environment [47]. Such integration fosters a culture oriented toward quality enhancement and resilience, with an emphasis on professional growth and mutual responsibility [48], [49]. Future-oriented participation empowers students from diverse backgrounds by affirming their identities and fostering active engagement in their educational journeys. Engagement strengthens resilience against social and academic adversities by cultivating a sense of belonging and self-efficacy. This empowerment enhances academic achievement and encourages lifelong learning dispositions. Concrete cases illustrate how such participation leads to increased student voice in curriculum design, school governance, and community initiatives, contributing to more equitable and inclusive outcomes. These processes are integral to dismantling deficit-based narratives and affirming diverse capabilities and contributions within education. Educational institutions that embrace future-oriented involvement experience transformational shifts in their cultures and norms. These shifts are characterized by environments that consistently uphold respect, inclusivity, and collaborative decision-making. Leadership plays a critical role in modeling and sustaining these values, which permeate through policies, curricula, and interpersonal relationships within schools. Over time, these cultural shifts normalize equity-driven practices and invite diverse stakeholders to take ownership of educational processes. The long-term implications include more resilient institutions capable of adapting to demographic changes and societal expectations with equity as a guiding principle. Education functions as a pivotal driver of social equity by preparing individuals to participate fully in democratic and inclusive societies. Future-oriented contribution fosters inclusive citizenship by cultivating intercultural understanding, shared values, and collective responsibility. Education policies that emphasize equity contribute to reducing social stratification and promoting cohesion beyond school settings. These interconnections illustrate the long-reaching impacts of educational strategies that align policy, practice, and cultural competence with societal equity goals, ultimately contributing to more just and harmonious communities [50].

Student participation is a cornerstone of student-centered learning paradigms that prioritize learner autonomy, collaboration, and critical inquiry. By actively engaging in teaching and curriculum development processes, students influence the adoption of pedagogical approaches that resonate with their learning styles and preferences. This empowerment fosters self-reliance and bolsters critical thinking capacities, essential for academic and professional success. Student voices guide curriculum relevance ensuring that content aligns with evolving knowledge and skill requirements. The integration of these principles sustains quality teaching and enriches the learning experience [51]. Project-based learning complements this by providing experiential opportunities to develop creativity and problem-solving skills, further supporting quality education standards [52]. In final analysis, educational QA is an extensive process necessitating active stakeholder involvement through collaborative efforts among leadership, educators, students, parents, and communities to create robust quality ecosystems. Future-oriented participatory approaches that empower diverse learners and prioritize student-centered learning paradigms are fundamental to cultivating institutional cultures characterized by equity, inclusivity, and adaptive capacity, ultimately achieving educational outcomes aligned with evolving societal expectations.

2.3. Conceptual framework

The research methodology was formed based on the integration of the principles of a variety of theories and models that shape the educational landscape, guiding effective management and improvement.

Key frameworks include; i) participation: emphasizes stakeholder engagement in the educational process. SIPOC model: outlines relationships among suppliers, inputs, processes, outputs, and customers; ii) educational QA: ensures adherence to established educational standards, iii) model development: focuses on creating and refining educational frameworks, iv) focus group discussions and needs assessment: identifies and addresses specific educational needs; v) expert seminars: provide professional insights and guidance; and vi) context of small schools: highlights the unique challenges and requirements of smaller educational institutions.

3. METHOD

3.1. Research design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The methodology comprised four sequential phases: component and indicator examination, needs assessment, model development, and model evaluation, with data integration being fundamental to generating insights beyond what either approach could provide independently.

3.2. Research samples and procedures

This research was conducted using the research and development (R&D) methodology and divided into four phases. The details are:

3.2.1. Phase 1: studied the components and indicators

Study of components and indicators of participation in QA activities for small schools under the Thai Ministry of Education in Thailand. In this phase, the researchers explore concepts, theories, and relevant research concerning the components and indicators of engagement in QA activities in the targeted schools. The goal was to establish a conceptual framework for the research and conduct a framework for the focus group discussions. The review of the literature also helped the researchers identify components and indicators of the forms of involvement in the school assurance process. The data obtained at this stage provided a checklist of questions to be included in the interview forms and the assessment forms and determined the necessary condition index ($PNI_{modified}$).

3.2.2. Phase 2: studied the needs

The researchers scrutinized the existing state, ideal circumstances, and essential prerequisites for engaging in QA initiatives. The researchers surveyed the current situation, desirable conditions, and requirements with a sample group consisting of school administrators and teachers who were responsible for the assurance obligations. The sample group, derived through a multi-stage random sampling process, comprised 385 individuals. We collected data using a 5-level Likert scale questionnaire with an index of congruence (IOC) ranging from 0.60 to 1.00. The questionnaire assessing the current situation demonstrated discriminant validity (between 0.479 and 0.850) and high reliability (α=0.988), while the questionnaire addressing desirable conditions and requirements exhibited discriminant validity (between 0.479 and 0.898) and high reliability (α=0.989). Google Forms were used to collect data from the sample group. The researchers utilized pre-packaged computer software for data analysis and needs assessment.

3.2.3. Phase 3: model development

The researchers focused on developing a model for active participation in the QA process of the targeted schools. This included on-site visits to three exemplary schools with outstanding educational QA practices: Ban Kamin Non-Hua Na School, Ban Khok Sahakorn Thep Raksa School, and Ban Non-Thong School. The researchers conducted interviews with school administrators and teachers and reviewed additional documents such as educational quality development plans, annual operation plans, self-assessment reports (SAR), and learning management plans. The data collection tools included semi-structured interviews and an analysis process that involved summarizing interview content and grouping information. The collected data served as a foundation for developing guidelines and shaping the model. Nine experts organized a seminar to validate and evaluate the model, ensuring its reliability and effectiveness.

3.2.4. Phase 4: model assessment

The researchers evaluated the application of the participation model in the sample schools to identify their QA process. This phase involved implementing and assessing the model in a real-world setting to determine its accuracy, appropriateness, feasibility, and the benefits derived from its implementation. The target group for this assessment was school teachers and administrators who were in charge of educational assurance preparation. Specifically, the study focused on Ban Khok Muang School in Khon Kaen province.

The research tools received from this phase included: i) curriculum: the researchers organized a seminar with nine experts to assess the curriculum, taking into account its accuracy, appropriateness, feasibility, and utility; and ii) evaluation form: to assure the accuracy of the developed curriculum, the researchers provided guidance, followed up, and facilitated the learning exchange during the six weeks from July 2023 to August 2023.

4. RESULTS

The following sections present the results of the research, organized according to the structure of the research paper.

4.1. Components and indicators of participation in the QA processes within small schools in the context of Thailand

In the first phase, the study focused on identifying the components and indicators of participation in the QA processes within small schools in the context of Thailand. The analysis revealed five key components and 13 associated indicators related to participation in these processes: i) strategic planning participation (3 indicators), involvement in the strategic planning process; ii) decision-making participation (3 indicators), participation in decision-making processes; iii) operational participation (2 indicators), engagement in day-to-day operational practices; iv) benefits receiving participation (2 indicators), involvement in receiving benefits as part of the process; and v) monitoring participation (3 indicators), engagement in monitoring activities. To gather insights on the validity of the above-mentioned elements, the researchers conducted group discussions with nine qualified experts and found that there was a high level of agreement among the participants on the identified components and indicators.

4.2. Needs assessment

In the second phase, the researchers assessed the current situation, preferences, and requirements for involvement in the QA process of targeted schools. The findings showed that the overall performance level of engagement was moderate. Among the specific aspects, contribution in monitoring and operational practices ranked the highest. In terms of preferences, the overall performance level was found to be highest in monitoring and benefits-receiving participation. Conversely, the study of requirements revealed that engagement in monitoring was deemed the least prioritized. The analysis of the priority needs index ($PNI_{modified}$) yielded an average value of 0.462. When assessing specific areas of need, involvement in operational practices emerged as the highest priority, while involvement in monitoring was ranked lowest in terms of requirements.

4.3. Model development

In the third phase, the researchers developed a model for participation in the QA processes of small schools under the basic education commission. This model aims to enhance the integration and effectiveness of engagement in these processes, based on the insights gathered from the previous phases. The combination of these elements of engagement resulted in the creation of an educational assurance participation model as shown in Figure 1.

The researchers conducted on-site visits to teen exemplary schools that received the Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) award: Ban Kamin Non-Hua Na School, Ban Khok Sahakorn Thep Raksa School, and Ban Non-Thong School. The results were summarized into five aspects: i) involvement in strategic planning, this phase investigated how the teachers, the school committee, parent representatives, and alumni were involved in the school's strategic planning; ii) decision-making involvement, this step inspected how administrators and teachers collaborated in the educational assurance planning sessions, considering their feasibility, and how these participants were incorporated into the school's annual operational plan; iii) operational involvement, this step involved finding the actual level of the stakeholders' engagement and joint effort in the completion of significant operations of the targeted schools; iv) benefits realization involvement, schools and stakeholders' level of participation in ensuring certain benefits among the students were investigated at this step; and v) monitoring involvement, the school stakeholders' level of participation in monitoring the school task executions was investigated. To achieve this objective, the schools were subjected to actively disseminate information about their ongoing or upcoming actions to inform the school stakeholders and entice their engagement in following up on the development process. The illustration depicts a participatory model for implementing QA in small-sized schools in Thailand. This model, which involves leveraging participatory components, was categorized into five dimensions of participation: i) strategic planning; ii) decision-making; iii) practical implementation; iv) benefits realization; and v) monitoring and follow-up.

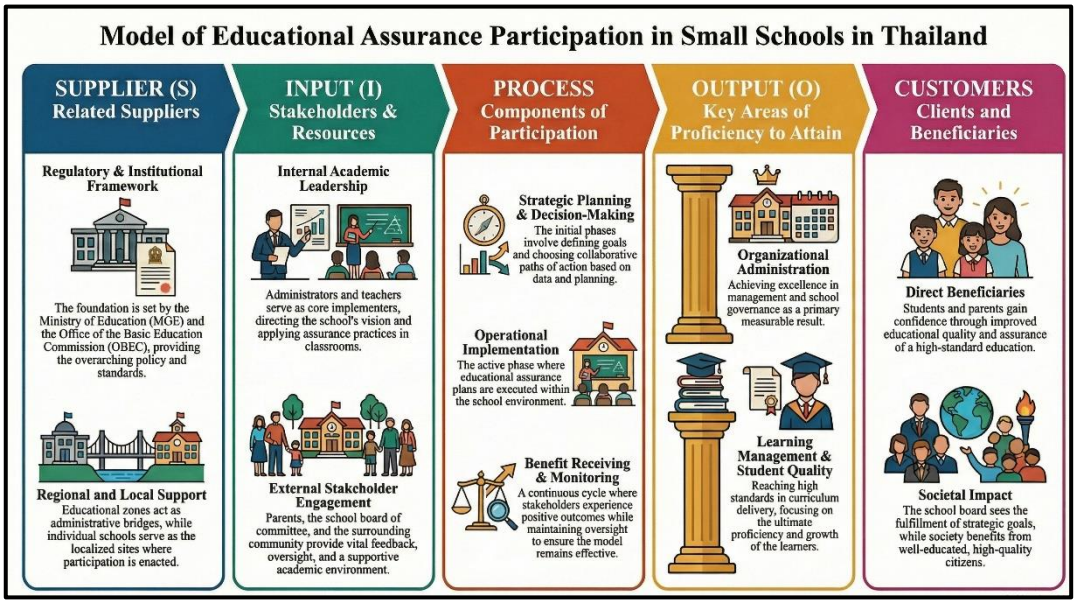

Figure 1. A participatory model for educational QA in small schools in Thailand

4.4. Model assessment

The fourth phase involves studying the results of applying the participatory framework in the QA process with the targeted small school, Ban Khok Muang School, in Khon Kaen Province, northeastern region of Thailand. The intervention period spanned from July to August 2023. The researchers divided the curriculum's content into four sections:

a. Section 1: pre- and post-development assessment (excluding time)
b. Section 2: intensive development section
   – Module 1: engagement in strategic planning (2 hours)
   – Module 2: involvement in decision-making (2 hours)
   – Module 3: engagement in practical implementation (3 hours)
   – Module 4: involvement in benefits realization (3 hours)
   – Module 5: engagement in monitoring and follow-up (2 hours)
c. Section 3: development of professional experience through field visits to small schools with exemplary QA practices (Module 6, 24 hours)
d. Section 4 focuses on the integrated development of practical work experience relevant to QA in small educational institutions.
e. Module 7: integrating professional experience with actual work practices (44 hours)
f. Module 8: synthesis of methods for collaborative development in QA of small-sized schools (4 hours). The total duration of these activities was 84 hours. Note that the time used for the assessment of post-implementation activities was excluded from the overall time calculations

The following section discusses the result of the introduction of the framework to the targeted school group.

a. Strategic planning participation: school administrators and teachers collaborated on strategic planning for the QA process. The management process involved preparing teachers for efficient planning, organizing activities, and developing effective teaching plans. This resulted in shared knowledge, understanding, and mutual awareness among school administrators and teachers about the strategies to be implemented to foster quality of education. The planned strategies aimed to help teachers proficiently design learning activities.
b. Decision-making participation: administrators and teachers jointly made decisions, such as implementing in-school projects. Collaborative decisions encompass considerations of alignment and feasibility. Collaborative decisions included formulating and developing learning management plans, making SAR, and making suggestions for internal quality assessments within the school.
c. Implementation participation: school administrators engaged in planning and decision-making with teachers on various issues namely:
   – Reviewing SAR and QA reports: the data from the reviewing of the assurance report helped the school to set concrete goals for educational development.

- Developing projects: based on the objectives of the school development plan observed in the SAR, the school personnel had to set the relevant project to enhance student quality.
- Developing learning management plans: the teachers were required to individually develop strategies and collaborate on plan development.
- Participation in benefits realization: school administrators and teachers recognize the importance of beneficial actions for the school and students
- Follow-up: administrators and teachers participate in activities such as reviewing school SAR, developing projects, and collaboratively developing learning management plans. In the implementation of these activities, administrators and teachers jointly planned various projects, specified clear timelines for follow-up activities, and presented continuous information derived from monitoring and publicizing activities.

The professional development curriculum presented in Table 1 consists of nine learning activities totaling 84 hours, systematically structured along a participatory development framework encompassing conceptual understanding, practical field implementation, and knowledge synthesis. About 81 percent of the teaching time is spent on real-world experiences, showing that the curriculum is designed to help improve education quality in real job settings, especially in smaller schools, leading to lasting improvements.

Table 1. Professional development curriculum structure

No.	Activities	Objectives	Duration (hours)	Expected outcomes
1	Section 1: pre- and post-development assessment (excluding time)	To establish understanding of professional experience development in educational quality improvement	-	Participants gain understanding of the development curriculum framework
2	Section 2: intensive development section Module 1: participation in strategic planning	To develop strategic planning skills for educational quality improvement	2	Participants acquire strategic planning competencies for educational quality improvement
3	Module 2: participation in decision-making	To develop decision-making skills for educational quality improvement	2	Participants acquire decision-making competencies for educational quality improvement
4	Module 3: participation in practical implementation	To develop practical implementation skills for educational quality improvement	3	Participants acquire practical implementation competencies for educational quality improvement
5	Module 4: participation in benefits realization	To develop skills in benefits realization for educational quality improvement	3	Participants acquire competencies in benefits realization for educational quality improvement
6	Module 5: participation in monitoring and follow-up	To develop monitoring and follow-up skills for educational quality improvement	2	Participants acquire monitoring and follow-up competencies for educational quality improvement
7	Section 3: development of professional experience through field visits to small schools with best practices in QA (Module 6)	To study best practices through site visits to model educational institutions	24	Participants understand guidelines for educational quality improvement
8	Module 7: integrating professional experience with actual work practices	To practice implementation skills for educational quality improvement at participants' own institutions	44	Educational institutions receive development support in QA enhancement
9	Module 8: synthesis of methods for participatory development in QA of small-sized schools	To synthesize participatory development methods in QA systems for small-sized schools	4	Participants understand methodological approaches for participatory development in QA systems for small-sized schools
	Total		84	

This research presents a systematic framework designed to enhance educational QA in small Thai schools by fostering robust stakeholder participation. The study addresses the critical gap between the current moderate levels of engagement and the desired higher levels of involvement among school stakeholders, with operational implementation being the area in most urgent need of development. The core of the framework is a participatory model structured around five key components: strategic planning, decision-making, operational participation, benefits realization, and monitoring. This process actively involves a comprehensive range of internal stakeholders, such as administrators and teachers, and external stakeholders, including parents and the community, all within a supportive institutional structure. This model was operationalized and evaluated through a comprehensive 84-hour training curriculum implemented at a target school. The application of the framework yielded significant and positive

improvements in three primary outcome areas: management and administration, learning management, and overall student quality. In essence, the framework provides a practical, cyclical process (plan-do-check-act) that empowers stakeholders to collaboratively drive continuous improvement, offering a tangible solution to the unique challenges faced by small educational institutions.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. Results of the application of the framework with the targeted school

The following are the results of integrating the framework into the targeted school group: i) management and administration, after integrating the participatory framework, the school demonstrated a higher level of administrative efficiency. Enhancing the school management led to an organized and systematic administrative system that helps foster higher quality in school operations; ii) learning management, in the realm of learning management, teachers demonstrated improved knowledge and understanding in creating learning management plans. These plans were developed collaboratively, allowing teachers to effectively implement them in teaching activities; and iii) student quality: the school's administrators demonstrated efficient management skills that involved participation in all of the five areas of collaboration (strategic planning, decision-making, practical implementation, benefit realization, and follow-up). After completing the processes outlined in the framework, positive outcomes were reflected in the overall quality of student experiences.

5.2. The study on the components and indicators of participation in the QA process of small schools in Thailand

The information presented in this research was obtained from various sources to gain comprehension of the fundamental components of participation. Moreover, group discussions involving nine qualified participants also provided confirmation of the components and indicators of educational participation. The findings revealed that participation components consist of five elements and 13 indicators. Qualified participants rated their average level of practice on these components as highly favorable. The evaluation of the committee's opinions on the various components revealed that decision-making, realization of benefits, strategic planning involvement, and monitoring participation received the highest levels of endorsement. The researchers recorded the highest average satisfaction scores for each component. They also conducted a comprehensive review, taking into account relevant theories, documents, and both national and international research. The scrutiny of various sources of information explains the unanimous approval among the committee. Consequently, the qualified participants exhibit the highest levels of satisfaction towards the components of participation in the QA process of small-sized schools in Thailand.

The investigation into research findings reveals a congruence with participation theory, which categorizes the levels or types of involvement into the following stages:

- Decision-making participation: in the initial stage, it is imperative to define institutional and developmental needs and the best people to reflect those needs are the school stakeholders. By involving ideas from the school supporters, the school can set various possible alternative developmental plans before prioritizing the areas of development most demanded by the schools. The stakeholders were involved in setting these policies and decision-making right from the initial stage;
- Implementation participation: in terms of project operations components, tasks should be assigned to identify who should be in charge of which obligations. Particular tasks such as coordination efforts and seeking assistance, among other considerations, should be allocated to specific working members;
- Benefits participation: in the benefits domain, focus should be placed not only on the benefits' quantitative and qualitative significance but also on their distribution within the group. This encompasses benefits and penalties for individuals and society as a whole; and
- Evaluation participation: notably, active participation in the evaluation process requires careful observation of views, preferences, and expectations. These influential elements can effectively transform individual behavior. In concordance with the findings of [53]. Who explored the development of educational qa among the schools in hemaraj district, phetchabun province, thailand, the following guidelines were suggested. In terms of participation in planning, administrators should hold meetings with all teachers to clarify and improve mutual understanding and knowledge exchange. This entails discussions about basic educational standards, as well as the establishment of performance indicators and assessment criteria. The rationale behind these meetings is that they facilitate a shared understanding and learning exchange, allowing all parties to comprehend the goals and requirements of the qa process. As developed in this research, the five components and 13 indicators of educational assurance should be integrated into the educational planning process to promote mutual comprehension of the requirement of a

particular school's developmental needs, which should result in a higher level of educational participation [54].

5.3. The investigation of the current conditions, desirability, and essential requirements regarding the involvement model in the QA procedures of small-sized schools

The study categorized the perspectives into five aspects: strategic planning, decision-making, implementation, benefit realization, and follow-up. The findings revealed that the current practices fell within the moderate range. In terms of the desired conditions, the overall practice level was rated at a high level. The average priority needs index ($PNI_{modified}$) was presented at 0.462, indicating that there is a moderate need for improvement. Upon further itemized examination, it is evident that participation in the implementation had the highest $PNI_{modified}$ (0.576), indicating that implementation participation is the most substantial demand for development. This may result from the fact that the majority of schools face challenges in conducting operations efficiently, primarily due to insufficient support, promotion, and organizational development understanding. The transition of policies into practice lacks clarity, and there is inconsistency in internal monitoring processes.

5.4. The office of the basic educational commission is currently developing a participatory model for QA in small schools

In their endeavor to enhance the participatory model for QA in small-sized schools, the researchers conducted a study exemplary on small schools that received the prestigious IQA Award in the academic year 2024. The recognized schools include Ban Non-Thong School, Ban Khok Sahakorn Thep Raksa School, and Ban Kamin Non-Hua Na School. The areas of expertise observed in these schools include:

- School management vision: according to the study, school administrators possessed a visionary approach to school management while demonstrating leadership qualities, academic expertise, and effective managerial skills.
- Teacher quality enhancement: the study revealed that teachers demonstrated professional competence, with a strong emphasis on student-centered learning. Teachers also employ innovative teaching methods with the ability to design learning materials and incorporate new technologies to ensure effective teaching.
- Parental involvement and support: it was identified that parents were significant contributors who played a supportive role in educational development. Moreover, parental involvement is crucial for mitigating undesirable student behaviors.
- Community leadership contribution, the community plays a vital role in promoting effective management practices including financial support, backing school management, and active participation in developing learning resources.

The development guidelines were aimed to enhance parental involvement in QA at small schools with limited resources. Recognizing the crucial role of parental involvement in enhancing educational quality and student outcomes, this research proposes strategies for improving parental participation in QA activities at small-sized schools.

- The strategies for school planning are initial elements to articulate educational success. Therefore, various groups of participants should be conglutinated in strategic planning. This inclusive approach ensures diverse perspectives are considered, enhancing the relevance and feasibility of educational plans. Despite their apparent role in educational support, studies often lack concrete and practical parental involvement strategies [55].
- Decision-making involvement for QA, collaborative decision-making processes are essential. To foster this kind of collaboration, administrators should facilitate meetings with teaching staff to discuss activities and projects that should be aligned with the collective approval in the school's annual operation plan. This approach fosters mutual understanding and agreement among all parties involved. Community and parents should play an integral role in assisting their child's learning and being full partners in their child's education [56]. Effective strategies to increase participation include disseminating schools' developmental projects to school staff, parents, and students. Consistently informing the involved parties should provide incentives for participation. However, these strategies have shown a varying degree of effectiveness across different regions [57]. Teachers' voluntary participation in innovative schools is crucial for school development. The administration should encourage the recognition of the teachers' participation in decision-making and designing of learning-oriented classes [58].
- Operational involvement: participation in school operations is critical for improving the quality of education and ensuring effective resource use. Various studies have explored different aspects of community and stakeholder involvement in school operations, highlighting both the benefits and

challenges associated with such participation. Consistent parental involvement in education is critical for children's character development, as well as promoting effective interaction processes at the parent-child level [59]. Community involvement in school activities increases accountability for learning outcomes and school resources, as well as encouraging the provision of local resources for educational purposes [60]. Elements of student participation, such as choice, influence, and collaboration, are strongly associated with well-being and academic achievement [61].

- Benefit realization involvement: the observed schools prioritized students' benefits in the school development plan to ensure that students receive a safe and comprehensive education as the primary goal. The school regulated safeguards against addictions or drug abuse, highlighting the school's role in student welfare. It was also observed that the schools had consistent managerial practices that effectively promoted a culture of generosity within educational organizations. The assignment of specific roles as givers and receivers facilitates members' participation in the educational project [62].
- Monitoring involvement: monitoring activities maintain and enhance educational quality. Schools should include their committees in the performance evaluation process, in alignment with the indicators in the self-assessment reports (SAR).

Participation in school monitoring involves various stakeholders, including school committees, parents, and school staff, in overseeing and ensuring the effective implementation of school projects and the academic performance of students. Based on recent research findings, this synthesis investigates the extent and factors influencing participation in school monitoring. School committees are actively involved in project identification and planning, but less so in budgeting activities. For most schools, factors influencing their participation include their ability to speak up in meetings, willingness to participate, and sources of information. Gender imbalance also constrains their participation. The participation issues in the small schools are more challenging in the schools with smaller sizes. Based on the findings, the researchers propose the following 16 development guidelines to enhance stakeholder involvement in QA activities within small schools: i) establish an inclusive strategic planning committee that includes teachers, parents, and alumni; ii) facilitate regular meetings for collaborative decision-making; iii) encourage strong working relationships among all stakeholders; iv) recognize and celebrate the contributions of teachers and parents; v) develop comprehensive student care systems; vi) support the creation of new teaching materials and instructional innovations; vii) ensure a hundred percent chance to attend basic education; viii) protect students from addiction and drug abuse; ix) involve parents and community members in performance assessments; x) utilize SAR for continuous improvement; xi) assign clear responsibilities for project implementation; xii) monitor the progress of activities against the operation plan; xiii) provide training for school administrators on stakeholders; xiv): develop policies that support stakeholder involvement in QA; xv) foster a culture of collaboration and mutual understanding; and xvi) all activities should align with the school's overarching goals and objectives. Even though educational development is done for the student's well-being, this group of educational stakeholders has been stigmatized in education planning. There is a pressing need to broaden the methods and tools for enhancing child participation and create opportunities that go beyond simple consultative involvement. This would enable kid participation methods that seek to improve children's lives by genuinely taking into account their own needs and viewpoints [63]. The children's involvement is similarly important as the parental involvement in QA in the small schools. An implementation of the developed guidelines should help create a more inclusive and effective environment for educational administration. The ideas on mutual educational collaboration should also be included in teacher education to brain-set the future teachers about their collaborative roles and to eradicate boundaries among the teacher-producing institutions [64] and consistent with research results: participation in school is a multifaceted concept that encompasses students' involvement in various aspects of school life, including decision-making, health promotion, and daily activities. This participation is crucial for fostering a sense of belonging, improving academic outcomes, and promoting overall well-being among students. Student participation in school activities is linked to improved academic performance and reduced antisocial behavior. Participation fosters a sense of being heard and having influence, which correlates with higher academic achievement and lower levels of antisocial behavior, ultimately enhancing student life satisfaction [65].

Participation in decision-making processes at school is crucial for fostering a sense of belonging and identification with the school. Higher levels of participation in school activities predict stronger identification with the school, which in turn reduces truancy and disengagement [66]. The integrative model of student participation suggests that the rationale behind promoting participative decision-making—whether pragmatic, moral, or developmental—affects the outcomes for students, teachers, and the school as a whole.

In summary, student participation in school is a vital component of educational success and personal development. While positive outcomes are evident, ongoing research and targeted interventions are necessary to address existing challenges and to promote inclusive and effective participation for all students. This is consistent with research results related to internal QA in educational institutions. Participation in school activities is positively associated with academic achievement and reduced antisocial behavior. Studies have

shown that when students feel listened to and have a say in school norms, they tend to perform better academically and exhibit fewer antisocial behaviors, which also enhances their overall life satisfaction. Student participation in decision-making is a critical aspect of school involvement. An integrative model suggests that student participative decision-making is influenced by the school's organizational culture and can have significant impacts on student, teacher, and school outcomes [67]. Students often perceive their participation as limited to extracurricular activities, with little involvement in teaching-related matters, highlighting the need for adult support and encouragement to enhance participation [68]. Community and parental involvement play a significant role in enhancing school participation. Community participation in school management can improve educational planning and monitoring, while parental involvement is crucial for supporting school activities and decision-making processes [69], [70]. Several barriers can hinder student participation in school activities, including lack of interest, mismatched skills, lack of confidence, fear of judgment, and time constraints. Addressing these barriers through targeted interventions can help create a more inclusive and engaging school environment [71]. Promoting student participation in school activities and decision-making processes is essential for improving academic performance, reducing negative behaviors, and fostering a sense of belonging among students. Addressing barriers to participation and enhancing community and parental involvement can further support these goals, creating a more inclusive and effective educational environment. Given the aforementioned considerations, it can be concluded that the developed model has the potential to escalate parental participation in school development, which should positively impact children's academic and nonacademic outcomes. However, it is essential to avoid overinvolvement to prevent potential negative effects on children's development. Schools should continuously evaluate and refine their parental involvement strategies to ensure consistent and effective parental participation.

Summary of key points: participation in school monitoring and evaluation is a process that involves multiple stakeholders, such as school committees, parents, and school staff. The primary objective is to ensure the effective implementation of school projects and to enhance students' academic performance. Research findings indicate the following:

Factors influencing participation: i) school committees: actively participate in project planning but are less involved in budgeting activities; ii) key factors: the ability to voice opinions in meetings, willingness to participate, and access to information significantly influence participation; iii) challenges in small schools: participation issues are more pronounced in smaller schools compared to larger ones; and iv) gender imbalance: gender disparities also constrain participation.

Development guidelines for enhancing participation: to promote stakeholder involvement in QA activities within small schools, the following development guidelines are proposed: i) establish an inclusive strategic planning committee comprising teachers, parents, and alumni; ii) facilitate regular meetings for collaborative decision-making; iii) foster strong working relationships among all stakeholders; iv) recognize and celebrate the contributions of teachers and parents; v) develop comprehensive student support systems; vi) support the creation of innovative teaching materials and instructional methods; vii) ensure universal access to basic education; viii) protect students from addiction and substance abuse; ix) involve parents and community members in performance assessments; x) utilize SAR for continuous improvement; xi) assign clear responsibilities for project implementation; xii) monitor progress against operational plans; xiii) provide training for school administrators on stakeholder engagement; xiv) develop policies that support stakeholder involvement in QA; xv) foster a culture of collaboration and mutual understanding; and xvi) align all activities with the school's overarching goals and objectives.

Importance of student participation: i) student participation in school activities is crucial for fostering a sense of belonging and improving academic outcomes and overall well-being; ii) participation in decision-making reduces truancy and strengthens students' identification with the school; and iii) an integrative model highlights that student participation positively impacts students, teachers, and the school as a whole.

Role of community and parents: i) community and parental involvement are vital in supporting school activities and decision-making processes; and ii) community participation in school management can enhance educational planning and monitoring. Barriers and solutions: i) barriers to student participation: lack of interest, low confidence, fear of judgment, and time constraints; and ii) solutions: targeted interventions can address these barriers, creating a more inclusive and engaging learning environment.

In conclusion: i) promoting the participation of students and other stakeholders is essential for improving educational quality and creating an effective learning environment; and ii) schools should continuously evaluate and refine their participation strategies to ensure consistent and effective stakeholder involvement. This study emphasizes the importance of inclusive participation in educational development and provides practical recommendations for creating a more inclusive and effective learning environment.

6. CONCLUSION

Summary of research findings, components and indicators of participation: the study identified five components and 13 indicators related to participation in the QA processes of small-sized schools under The Basic Education Office in Thailand. The researchers have identified the current situation, desirability, and necessity of participation. The current state of participation was at a moderate level. The rating for the desirability of participation was the highest level. Participation in the school implementation was the most urgent area of participation to be addressed.

Adoption of participatory models: the educational assurance participatory models in small schools were divided into five dimensions: i) participation in strategic planning I: administrators and teachers actively participated in strategic planning, fostering mutual understanding and awareness; ii) participation in decision-making: administrators and teachers collaborated in decision-making processes, taking into account feasibility and project characteristics; iii) participation in practice: administrators and teachers jointly analyzed suggestions for action plans, developed learning management plans, and made collective decisions; and iv) participation in benefits realization: administrators and teachers acknowledged the importance of beneficial actions for the school and students, emphasizing initiatives that bring overall benefits; v) participation in follow-up: administrators and teachers jointly planned projects or activities to establish a clear and continuous timeline.

The following findings were applied to the target schools: i) administration and management: targeted schools demonstrated efficient and systematic management systems, indicating successful development; ii) learning management: teachers exhibited knowledge and understanding of collaborative learning management development, enhancing the effectiveness of teaching activities; and iii) student quality: school administrators efficiently managed systems related to student quality and participation in QA processes.

Practical implementation: this research shows that implementation practice (the third aspect) received the lowest participation score. This area of participation should be addressed in the small schools to genuinely propel QA among these schools. Customization of the developed curriculum: the organizational units responsible for curriculum development should customize and implement the curriculum to suit their specific contexts. The 84-hour training curriculum developed in this research should be tailored to fit the nature of a specific educational context to help correct the participation issues in these areas.

Future research directions: a comparative study of participatory practices: i) future research endeavors should explore and compare participatory practices in schools of varying sizes and affiliations. In each context, researchers should use advanced statistical methods to analyze the distinct operational processes associated with participatory practices. Further research is recommended to identify and develop models of competencies or characteristics suitable for modern educational leaders. This research should align with effective management strategies in small-sized schools, considering the rapidly changing educational landscape; and ii) future studies should focus on resource mobilization and participation mechanisms by comparing how other ASEAN countries implement best practices for gathering resources from communities or external agencies to address budget and personnel shortages, as well as how these mechanisms enhance participation by those involved in benefiting from these mechanisms (e.g., providing learning resources in the community or improving students' quality of life).

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

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C : **C**onceptualization
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E : Writing - Review & **E**diting
Vi : **Vi**sualization
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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that we have no conflicts of interest.

INFORMED CONSENT

The research related to human use has been complied with all the relevant national regulations and institutional policies in accordance with the tenets of the Helsinki Declaration and has been approved by the authors' institutional review board or equivalent committee. This research proposal has been considered and approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee, Mahasarakham University, certification number 130-139/2566, and ethical approval has been given to conduct the above research study based on the research outline of the Human Research Ethics Committee.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data that support the findings of this study will be available in http://202.28.34.124/dspace/ and http://202.28.34.124/dspace/handle/123456789/2541 following a 6 month embargo from the date of publication to allow for the commercialization of research findings.

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