

MANAGERIAL PROBLEMS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTRES IN THAILAND

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Abstract: Early childhood development centres (ECDC) are vitally important government units responsible for taking care of preschool children age 3-6. However, ECDCs throughout the country are facing the problem in management that affects the development of children. In order to investigate the managerial problems, the researcher collected the data from 3,966 ECDCs nationwide. The four aspects of problem are standards problem, evaluation problem, leadership problem, and caretakers' problem. The research found that the standards and administration guidelines should be immediately improved. The evaluation process is still flawed and parent reporting is a useful indicator. The leadership is not perfect; the problem is higher in Subdistrict Administrative Organisations (SAO) than in municipalities. The caretakers' problem can be relieved if there are more caretakers looking after the children. And finally, the level of aggregated managerial problem in ECDCs is strikingly high in the ones in the Northeastern region and the ones with low annual budget.

Keywords: Early Childhood Development Centre, managerial problems, educational management, social development

Introduction

In 2011, there were 20,997 early childhood development centres (ECDC) in Thailand (The Office of the Education Council, 2012). Within those ECDCs, the total number of children registered was 1,073,352. It is inevitable that those children will, in the near future, become the working and active citizen of the country. However, the current situation in the social development in Thailand is bleak and fragile. The problems with the children and youths these days are becoming more diverse and severe; the notorious examples are low intelligence level of the youth population, drug-related problems, violence, child prostitution, teen pregnancy, human trafficking, and so forth. The ECDCs are the implementation of the policy initially laid out by the government in 1999 through the decentralization act, in order to be the governmental units that take care of preschool children in Thailand.

However, after years of policy implementation, ECDCs encountered a number of problems that occurred within themselves and caused by other government functions that hindered the progress. The obstacles found in the ECDCs affected not only the staffs and related government officials but also the most valuable children. Consequentially, the Committee on Children, Youth,

Women, the Elderly, and the Disabled, House of Representatives, Parliament of Thailand, studied the problems of ECDCs in 2012 (Committee on Children, Youth, Women, the Elderly, and the Disabled, 2012a; 2012b, 2012c; 2012d). The related governmental units in the study are The Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, The Ministry of Labour, The Department of Local Administration, Ministry of Interior, The Ministry of Education (Committee on Children, Youth, Women, the Elderly, and the Disabled, 2012a), The Department of Health, Ministry of Health, The Office of the Education Council, and The office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (Public Organization) (Committee on Children, Youth, Women, the Elderly, and the Disabled, 2012b). These units together with the ECDCs themselves have insightful perspectives on a wide-range of problems within ECDCs.

Objectives

This research looks into the managerial problems because they are one of the most obvious problems occurred in ECDCs nationwide. Therefore, the two main objectives of this research are:

- 1.) To identify the managerial problems in ECDCs
- 2.) To discover the causes of each type of problem and suggest appropriate recommendations

Literature Review

Early Childhood Development Centres

Since 1967, The Ministry of Interior have begun providing the communities (subdistricts) with early childhood development centres taking care of children age 3-6 under the responsibility of the subdistrict council (Mantana Hrigchan et al, 2008). ECDCs are the units that were formed to take care of and prepare for the readiness of children to have appropriate development in body, emotion, intelligence, and social ability (The Department of Local Administration, 2010). Various governmental units, The Community Development Department, The Department of Religious Affairs, The Public Welfare Department, The Department of Health, and the Office of the National Primary Education, formerly managed ECDCs; they all have different objectives in managing ECDCs (Benchawan Sornsri, 2013).

From 1998, after the foundation of Subdistrict Administrative Organisation (SAO) in 1994 through the legislative act, the government implemented the policy to decentralise the administration of ECDCs to SAOs, which have potential and readiness, to manage ECDCs. Therefore, the legislative act in 1999 indicates that SAOs are responsible for providing the early childhood care and education for children in the communities because SAOs are the organisations closest to the people (Mantana Hrigchan et al, 2008). Beginning in 2001, the Office of

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the National Primary Education, Ministry of Education, started transferring the responsibility of taking care of children aged 3 years to the Department of Local Administration (Pornthipa Maboon, 2011).

In order to provide the caretakers with sufficient competency, The Department of Local Administration partnered with Suan Dusit Rajabhat University to develop the curriculum that adequately educates the caretakers (Tossapon Hirunwong, 2012). There are four aspects of preschool children development that are indicated in the legislative act, the National Education Act, 1999, which states that the complete development of the Thai people is the development of body, emotion, social ability, and intelligence. These pillars have since been the main concerns in the development of preschool children (Prasert Boonmee, 2011).

Managerial Problem: Standards Problem

According to the Subcommittee on Preschool Children Development, under the Committee on Children, Youth, Women, the Elderly, and the Disabled, House of Representatives, Parliament of Thailand (2012a), there was a problem with “the standards” of ECDCs. The problem was that there were four official standards for ECDCs to follow; the standards officiated by the Department of Local Administration, Ministry of Interior, the Department of Health, Ministry of Health, the Office of Promotion and Protection of Children, Youth, the Elderly and Vulnerable Groups, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, and the Office of Basic Education Commission, Ministry of Education. These four standards have relatively similar foundation in children development with slight alteration as well as different requirements for the administration of ECDCs.

The Ministry of Education has been responsible for the preschool children education since 2003. The standard by the Office of Basic Education has 11 aspects of standard and 51 indicators covering the learner’s quality aspect, the educational service aspect, the learning community building aspect, the identity of the institution aspect, and the curriculum promotion aspect. The standard of the Department of Health has been established in 1999; it has six aspects and 27 indicators. The six aspects are the health promotion aspect, the children development promotion aspect, the food cleanliness and safety aspect, the environment cleanliness and safety aspect, the personnel aspect, and the parental and citizen participation aspect. The standard of the Department of Local Administration has four aspects of ECDC administration; the personnel aspect, the building and environment aspect, the academics and curricular activity aspect, and the participation aspect. Finally, the standard by the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security has three aspects, 14 indicators, and 85 criteria. The three main aspects of this standard are the ECDC administration aspect, the educational process aspect, and the children quality aspect. This standard by the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security is the latest

one officiated in 2011 (Subcommittee on Preschool Children Development, 2012).

According to the Subcommittee on Preschool Children Development (2013), the number of standards implemented in each ECDC might contribute to the managerial problems such as the duplication of the work process. There might also be other prevalent problems arisen from the number of standards such as the difficulty in understanding, the implementation difficulty, and the lack of pervasiveness, the inappropriateness and too many details. Hence;

H1: The more standards ECDCs use, the higher the level of standard problem

Managerial Problem: Evaluation Problem

The evaluation of the administration process of the ECDCs is also an important managerial problem. The study by Pipat Madsem (2013) found that the ECDC in the study did neither record the health indicators of the children nor report all the parents about them. Sometimes, the reports to the parents are incorrect even in the basic measures such as weight and height. The evaluation of the administration of ECDC by the responsible government units is not objective and concrete; furthermore, the ECDC did not receive sufficient guidelines (Jittirat Yangbuddha, 2011).

Likewise, the Committee of Children, Youth, Women, the Elderly, and the Disabled (2013) found that ECDC staffs in Payao believe that the evaluation is not the reflection of reality, not quality-driven, not continuous, and complex.

There are many responsible units for the evaluation of ECDC such as the Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (Public Organization) (Committee on Children, Youth, Women, the Elderly, and the Disabled, 2012b), the Provincial Social Development and Human Security Office, the Department of Local Administration, etc. The number of different evaluating units could also be responsible for the evaluation problem in ECDC. This research defines the evaluation problem as the problem that the evaluation process is difficult, complex, not quality-driven (number-driven), and not objective; it did not lead to further development. The indicator that could be related to the evaluation problem, parent reporting, is taken from the study by Pipat Madsem (2013). Hence, the hypothesis is as followed;

H2: The evaluation problem is higher in ECDCs that do not report the parents than the ones that do

Managerial Problem: Leadership Problem

In managing an organisation, leadership is one of the key aspects of consideration. In ECDCs, the key leaders are, for the Subdistrict Administrative Organisation, the Chief Executive of the SAO (from an election), and Chief Administrator of the SAO. The leaders of the municipality are the Mayor of the Subdistrict Municipality (from an election) and the Municipality

Clerk. These leaders, along with the head of education department of the SAO or the municipality, have utmost important task to formulate and implement policies for ECDC. The study by Pornthipa Maboon (2011) found that the leaders of the SAO did not specify the clear plans in short- medium- and long-term and it led to the administration problem of ECDC. Furthermore, the study also found that there was a transparency problem of the leaders of the SAO. On the other hand, according to the Committee on Children, Youth, Women, the Elderly, and the Disabled (2012e), the ECDC that was growing and flourishing was run by the municipality which has a leader with clear and progressive vision into the future. The leadership problem of this research focuses on the lack of vision, the discontinuity of the implementation, and the too frequent changes in leadership. From the previous studies, the municipalities are relatively bigger and have stronger leadership than Subdistrict Administrative Organisations. Hence, the hypothesis is;

H3: The leadership problem is higher in SAOs than in municipalities

Managerial Problem: Caretakers Problem

Of all the management problems of the ECDCs mentioned earlier, the problem with caretakers (or teachers) is probably the most researched, discussed, and found. Although there has been a partnership between the Department of Local Administration and Suan Dusit Rajabhat University, the caretakers are found to lack sufficient children development skills (Jittirat Yangbuddha, 2011). The skills that caretakers lack are the educational skills, the curriculum skills, activity skills, and evaluation skills (Prasert Boonmee, 2011). Jittirat Yangbuddha (2011) also found that the caretakers lack experience and not all of them have been granted the opportunity to study for a degree in children development. The attitudinal problem is also present; Pipat Madsem (2013) wrote that the personnel lack not only skills but also enthusiasm at work. The report by the Department of Health (2009) found that more than half of ECDCs nationwide face the problem that caretakers lack morale and sufficient skills. It is essential that the caretakers in the ECDCs receive appropriate education in order to develop children they take care of (Mantana Hrigchan et al, 2008).

One of the discovered reasons behind the caretakers' problem is the lack of caretakers themselves (Pornthipa Maboon, 2011) and they have too much workload (Committee on Children Youth, Women, the Elderly, and the Disabled, 2013). Hence, the hypotheses are;

H4a: the number of caretakers in the ECDCs is negatively correlated to the caretaker problem

H4b: the number of children in the ECDCs is positively correlated to the caretaker problem

Other Managerial Problems

The other problems often found in ECDCs nationwide are the insufficiency of physical buildings, activity areas,

outdoor equipment, and educational media (Prasert Boonmee, 2011; Pipat Madsem, 2013). And the key reason behind these problems is the lack of budget in ECDC administration (Prasert Boonmee, 2011; Pornthipa Maboon, 2011). Pornthipa Maboon (2011) suggested that in order to improve the administration of ECDCs, the government has to increase the funding.

One of the key sources of fund of local administrative organisations such as SAO and municipality is the revenue collected from the economic activities in the area. Hence, it is probable that the economic-well beings of the citizens in the area could lead to increased revenue and hence, the reduced problem. This research collects the samples from all the regions of Thailand and regional differences could be the interesting indicator of the aggregated level of managerial problem in ECDCs. The Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board (2013) reports the gross regional productivity per capita (GRP per capita) (Table 1) and the result indicates that Northeastern and Northern are the poorest two regions while the Eastern region is the richest.

Table 1: GRP Per Capita

	GRP Per Capita (Baht/Year)	
	2010	2011
North-eastern	45,755	48,549
Northern	68,321	72,925
Southern	112,661	125,270
Eastern	431,982	436,479
Western	105,257	108,727
Central	217,469	204,166
Bangkok	410,203	422,141
Average Total	159,106	164,513

Source: The Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, 2013

H5a: the aggregated levels of problem in ECDCs are different in each bracket of budget, the bigger the budget, the lower the problem

H5b: the aggregated levels of problem in ECDCs are different; the richer regions have lower level of problem

Conceptual Framework

From the literature review, the hypotheses are stated. Hence, the author of the research developed the conceptual framework of the managerial problems of Early Childhood Development Centres in Thailand (Figure 1). The framework illustrates the four dimensions of managerial problems together with the corresponding factors or causes. The number of standards, parent reporting, the status of ECDC, and the number of caretakers and children have the effects on standards, evaluation, leadership, and caretakers problems. On the wider outlook, the economic and social factors in

Thailand also have the impact on the overall managerial problems of ECDCs.

number of children in ECDC is tested by multiple linear regression analysis. Finally, the mean difference of the aggregated level of managerial problems in ECDCs in

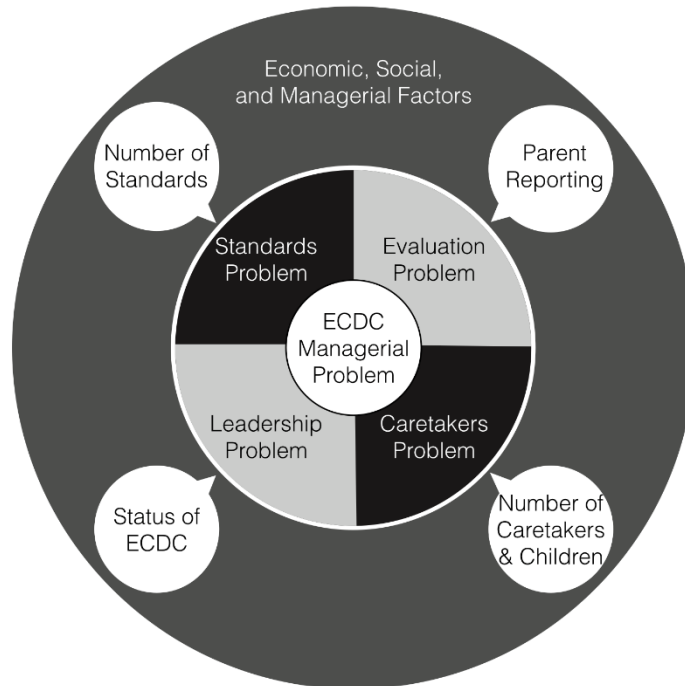


Figure 1: Managerial Problems of ECDCs in Thailand Framework

Methodology

The samples are collected by a cluster and snowball sampling method. The questionnaires are sent from the Committee on Children, Youth, Women, the Elderly, and the Disabled, House of Representatives to governor offices of the 77 provinces of Thailand. The governor office then collected the samples from at least 20 ECDCs under the responsibility of municipalities or Sub district Administrative Organisation (SAO) within the province. In total, 58 provinces returned the questionnaires. In the questionnaire, the items measuring the problems in the ECDCs are 4-point Likert Scale (similar to 5-point but the neutral option is excluded) including “Strongly Agree” (+2), “Agree” (+1), “Disagree” (-1), and “Strongly Disagree” (-2). Other items in the questionnaire measure, for example, the number of children, the number of caretakers, the status of the ECDC, the standard used, public relation activity, and the budget for ECDC. The procedures of the research begin with the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) of the managerial problems in ECDCs. One-way ANOVA is used to test the mean difference of “standards problem” across ECDCs that use different numbers of standard. T-test is used to test the mean difference of “evaluation problem” between ECDCs that report parents and those that do not. The “leadership problem” mean difference between ECDCs under the responsibility of municipality and Sub district Administrative Organisation (SAO) is also tested using t-test statistics. The correlation between the “caretakers problem” (endogenous) and number of caretakers and

each region and budget range is tested using two-way ANOVA.

Results

The total returned samples are 4,685 from all regions (North-eastern, Northern, Eastern, Southern, and Central). There are samples that belong to organisations other than Municipality and SAO such as PAO, Primary School, Private Schools, etc.; those samples are removed from the analysis. Samples with missing variables and outliers are also taken out of the analysis. The final total number of samples is 3,966. The total number of ECDCs in Thailand is 20,997 (The Office of the Education Council, 2012). Therefore, the collected 3,966 samples are accounted for 19 percent of the total population. Yamane (1967) suggested the minimum of 1,000 samples from the population of 20,000 for the precision of +/- 3 percent.

Table 2: Final Samples by Regions and Status

Region	Status		Total
	Municipality	SAO	
Central	312	719	1,031
Eastern	205	193	398
North-eastern	492	1,152	1,644
Northern	80	136	216
Southern	219	458	677
Total	1,308	2,658	3,966

Of all the final 3,966 samples, 1,031 are from Central region, 398 samples are collected from the Eastern region, 1,644 are from North-eastern, 216 are from the Northern region, and the Southern region has 677 samples (Table 2).

The next step is to do the exploratory factor analysis in order to find out the factors within the questionnaire. Table 3 shows that the result of EFA is aligned well with the groups of problems laid out earlier. The standards problems are Components 1 having the factor loadings ranging from .56 to .78. The evaluation problems are Component 4 having the factor loadings ranging from .57 to .82. The Component 3 is the leadership problems having the factor loading ranging from .77 to .88. And finally, the caretakers' problems are in Component 3; the factor loadings ranges from .50 to .78.

Table 3: Rotated Component Matrix of Problems (Varimax)

	Components			
	1	2	3	4
There are many standards, they are repetitive	0.56	-0.07	0.15	0.22
The standards are difficult to understand	0.75	0.03	0.09	0.24
The standards are difficult to implement	0.78	0.11	0.11	0.16
The standards are not pervasive	0.67	0.31	-0.01	-0.01
The standards are too detailed	0.69	-0.01	0.11	0.28
The standards are inappropriate	0.69	0.26	0.05	0.05
The evaluation process is complicated	0.33	0.07	0.08	0.74
The evaluation is too number-driven (not quality)	0.23	0.11	0.06	0.82
The evaluation does not lead to development	0.17	0.36	0.11	0.57
Leaders lack vision	0.13	0.26	0.87	0.08
Leaders do not continue the development	0.13	0.28	0.88	0.09
Leaders change policies too frequently	0.14	0.35	0.77	0.09
Caretakers lack continuous development	0.07	0.62	0.38	0.14
Changes in caretakers are too frequent	0.09	0.59	0.26	-0.03
Lack of caretakers	0.07	0.50	0.12	0.17
Caretakers lack maturity and skills	0.05	0.78	0.17	0.09
Caretaker's development is not appropriate	0.17	0.73	0.135	0.091

Standards Problem and the Number of Standards

To test the significance of difference between the standards problem mean scores of the ECDCs that utilise different numbers of standards, the ANOVA testing is conducted. The result in Table 4 shows that the difference between ECDCs that use different numbers of standards is not statistically significant (Sig. 0.81 is higher than the 0.05). Therefore, it can be concluded that levels of standards problem, across different numbers of standards utilised, ranging from 1.86 to 2.33 (Table 5) are not significantly different. The hypothesis 1, the more standards ECDCs utilise, the higher the level of standard problem, is rejected.

Table 4: ANOVA Testing of Standards Problem

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	52.67	5	10.54	0.46	0.81
Within Groups	88042.54	3827	23.01		
Total	88095.22	3832			

Table 5: The Summary of Standards Problem Mean Scores by Number of Standards

Number of Standards	N	Mean
4	349	1.86
3	861	2.09
6	10	2.1
5	95	2.16
2	1923	2.16
1	595	2.33
1	595	2.33

Evaluation Problem and the Parent Report

From the total number of ECDCs in this research, 3,624 of them stated that they report the children development progress to the parents, only 244 answered that they do

not report (Table 6). The t-test between the Evaluation Problem mean scores of ECDCs that report the result and the ones that do not (Table 7). The result indicates that the difference is statistically significant. The evaluation problem mean score of ECDCs that report the children development progress is lower, 1.5, than the ones that do not, 2.19. Therefore, the hypothesis 2, the evaluation problem is higher in ECDCs that do not report the parents than the ones that do, is accepted.

(See Table 6 and Table 7 on the next page)

Table 6: Evaluation Problem Mean Scores by Parent Reporting

Parent Reporting	N	Mean
Yes	3624	1.5
No	244	2.19

level of problem; the standardised coefficient (Beta) is -0.13. The number of children in ECDCs is, on the other hand, positively related to the level of problem; the standardised coefficient (Beta) is 0.12. Both the hypothesis 4a and 4b, the number of caretakers in the ECDCs is negatively correlated to the caretaker problem

Table 7: T-Test of the Difference of Evaluation Problem Mean Scores by Parent Reporting

t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
-4.53	286.18	0.00*	-0.69	0.15	-0.99	-0.39

Leadership Problem and the Status of ECDC

From the result in Table 8, the level (mean score) of leadership problem in ECDCs of the municipalities is at -0.26 from the total samples of 1,308; whereas, the mean score of leadership problem in ECDCs of the Sub district Administrative Organisation is at 0.08 from the total samples of 2,658. T-test is conducted to investigate whether the difference is significant or not. The result in Table 9 found that the mean scores of leadership problem in ECDCs of municipalities and ECDCs of SAO are significantly different. Hence, the hypothesis 3, the leadership problem is higher in SAOs than in municipalities, is accepted.

Table 8: Leadership Problem Mean Scores by Status

Status	N	Mean
Municipality	1,308	-0.26
SAO	2,658	0.08

and the number of children in the ECDCs is positively correlated to the caretaker problem, are accepted.

The Aggregated Level of Managerial Problem in ECDCs and Budget & Regional Differences

The aggregated level of managerial problem in ECDCs is calculated from the summation of the four aspects of problem discussed. The two-way ANOVA testing is done together with the post-hoc analysis (Scheffe) in order to test the hypotheses. The result in Table 11 shows that the mean scores of level of managerial problem in ECDCs in each region are significantly different. From the post-hoc analysis, the managerial problem mean score in ECDCs in the North-eastern region is significantly higher (4.04) than those in other regions (ranging from 1.11 to 2.11). Furthermore, the difference in budget allocated or available has a significant impact on the mean scores of managerial problems in ECDCs. The post-hoc analysis indicates that the managerial problem mean score of

Table 9: T-Test of the Difference of Leadership Problem Mean Scores by Status

t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
-2.98	396	0.003*	-0.34	0.11	-0.57	-0.12

Caretakers Problem, the Number of Children, and the Number of Caretakers

The multiple regression analysis is done in order to test the correlations between the number of caretakers, the number of children, and the mean score of caretaker's problem in ECDCs. Table 10 shows the result of the multiple regression analysis; both the number of caretakers and the number of children in ECDCs are significantly related to the level of caretaker's problem. The number of caretakers is negatively correlated to the

ECDCs, that has an annual budget less than 100,000 baht, is significantly higher than other brackets of annual budget. Although there is a difference between those with the annual budget of 10,000 to 500,000 (2.43), those with the annual budget of 500,000 to 1 million baht (1.82), and those with the annual budget of 1-5 million (0.80), the difference is not statistically significant. The hypotheses H5a and H5b are partially accepted.

(See Table 11 on the next page)

Table 10: Regression of Number of Caretakers and Number of Children on Caretakers Problem

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-0.58	0.12		-4.74	0
No Caretakers	-0.24	0.04	-0.13	-5.61	0.00*
No Children	0.01	0.00	0.12	5.20	0.00*

Table 11: Two-Way ANOVA Testing Problem of ECDC with Regional and Budget Differences

Source	Dependent Variable: Problem of ECDC			Post-hoc Analysis (Scheffe)						
	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	E	S	C	N	NE
Corrected Model	11706.15	19	616.11	4.99	0	E = 1.11				
Intercept	7992.19	1	7992.19	64.67	0	S = 1.92				
Region	1985.92	4	496.48	4.02	0.003*	C = 2.11				
Budget	2340.89	3	780.30	6.31	0.00*	N = 4.04				
Region * Budget	1881.21	12	156.77	1.27	0.23	NE = 4.20	*	*	*	
Error	451301.58	3652	123.58				.1	.1-.5	.5-1	1-5
Total	495227	3672				.1 = 4.83				
Corrected Total	463007.74	3671				.1-.5 = 2.43	*			
						.5-1 = 1.82	*			
						1-5 = .80	*			

R Squared = .025 (Adjusted R Squared = .020)

* Significance Level .05 ($p < .05$)

E = Eastern, S = Southern, C = Central, N = Northern, NE = North-eastern

.1 = less than 100k, .1-.5 = 100k-500k, .5-1 = 500k-1m, 1-5 = 1m-5m

Discussion

The results shed light on many issues regarding the managerial problems in ECDCs nationwide. To answer the first research objective, the author found four main managerial problems in ECDCs; the standards problem, the evaluation problem, the leadership problem, and the caretakers' problem. The exploratory factor analysis yields a satisfactory result separating the 17 questionnaire items on managerial problems into four types of problem identified. The research also addressed the second objective by discovering and testing the probable causes of those problems; the summary is in table 12.

(See Table 12 on the next page)

The standards problem is hypothesised to be correlated to the number of standards an individual ECDC uses. The result is contradicting yet interesting that the two are not correlated. Any number of standards an ECDC uses has the statistically similar level of standards problem. The probable reason is that the questionnaire asks about the problems they face following or understanding the standards and it is possible that all of the standards are not significantly different from each other. The result can be interpreted that although the standard problem would not be immediately alleviated if the number of standards used is reduced, it does not help having a lot of standards in an ECDC either. Still, the responsible governmental units should cooperate in order to reduce the number of standards and focus on improving the only one standard for ECDCs nationwide.

The evaluation problem involves the problem in evaluating the administration results and processes of the ECDC; the evaluation process can be complex, not quality-driven, and not objective. Without a better evaluation process, the ECDC lacks the opportunity to

analyse their problems and improve. One of the measures used to investigate is the parent reporting. Pipat Madsem (2013) found that an ECDC in the study had a problematic evaluation process and the parent report is flawed. This research found that although the ECDCs that do not report the parents are smaller in number, they have significantly higher evaluation problem. Therefore, it can be used as an indicator for the government to look into and investigate the problem of those specific ECDCs. The reason of the relationship is that the ECDCs that have defective evaluation process would be reluctant to report the dubious result to parents who are responsible for bringing their children to the ECDCs.

Different statuses of the ECDC are hypothesised to be correlated with the leadership problem. The result shows that the leadership problem is higher in ECDCs of SAOs than in ECDCs of municipalities. Although both SAOs and municipalities take care of the local Tambon, municipalities are larger, potentially wealthier, and better organised than the SAOs. The findings of the research resonate with the observations by Pornthipa Maboon (2011) and Committee on Children, Youth, Women, the Elderly, and the Disabled (2012e). The finding should raise the concerns of the government that has implemented the decentralisation policy for more than ten years. The decentralisation of sensitive and important units like ECDCs to local organisations that are not ready physically, financially, and so forth, could have an effect that backfires because those children could be incorrectly developed at such young ages.

The caretaker's problem in ECDCs is widely documented and this research looks into the correlations between the level of problem and the number of children and caretakers in ECDCs. The findings echo the previous belief that the lack of caretakers and the high workload are the main reasons (Pornthipa Maboon, 2011; the

Committee on Children, Youth, Women, the Elderly, and the Disabled, 2013). Although the standardised coefficients are not very high (-0.13 and 0.12), it is statistically significant that the higher number of children and the lower number of caretakers are correlated with the caretakers problem in ECDCs. Even though they are currently doing it now, the government should accelerate the process of educating caretakers as well as attracting new caretakers through various incentives in order to match the growing number of young population.

By looking at the big picture, the aggregated level of managerial problem in ECDCs is related to the regional and budget differences. The result shows that the difference in budget led to the varying levels of managerial problem. The most worrisome group of ECDCs are the ones with lower than 100,000 baht annual budget, which is gravely low. The other key variable is the regional difference. The levels of managerial problem are different in each region but the North-eastern region stands out as the most problematic one. One of the reasons could be that the North-eastern region is the poorest region in Thailand (The Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, 2013). The notion is strengthened because the second poorest region, Northern region, has the second highest level of managerial problem. Whereas the richest region in terms

of GRP, the Eastern region, has the lowest level of managerial problem. The wealth of the population is the goal of the national development but the findings show that it is also the mean to an end.

In conclusion, this research looks into the managerial problem of the early childhood development centres throughout Thailand. The problems include the standards problem, the evaluation problem, the leadership problem, and the caretaker's problem. The findings of this research show that the government could take many actions and/or develop beneficial policies that could alleviate the problems in ECDCs. The standards and administration guidelines should be immediately improved. The evaluation process is still flawed and parent reporting is a useful indicator. The leadership is not perfect; the problem is higher in SAOs than in municipalities. The caretaker's problem can be relieved if there are more caretakers looking after the children. And finally, the level of aggregated managerial problem in ECDCs is strikingly high in the ones with low budget. While the government should increase their spending on this issue, the municipalities and SAOs should also either find a better source of revenue from local people or the local private enterprises, or they need to allocate a bigger proportion of their total budget into ECDCs.

Table 12: Summary of Hypotheses and Findings

Problems	Hypotheses	Causes/Findings	Recommendations
Standards Problem	- The more standards ECDCs use, the higher the level of standard problem	The hypothesis is <i>rejected</i> . The higher number of standards used in ECDCs do not elevate the standard problem. Nevertheless, more standards do not help either.	The government should employ the single universal standard to prevent unnecessary procedural duplications.
Evaluation Problem	- The evaluation problem is higher in ECDCs that do not report the parents than the ones that do	The hypothesis is <i>accepted</i> . Although it is inconclusive whether parent reporting actually reduces the evaluation problem, it is a good indicator of it.	The government should monitor the evaluation of ECDCs that do not have an appropriate parent reporting system.
Leadership Problem	- The leadership problem is higher in SAOs than in municipalities	The hypothesis is <i>accepted</i> . The status of the ECDCs determines the leadership problem. Municipalities are less likely than SAOs to have the leadership problem.	The government should focus on the leader's development in SAOs' ECDCs.
Caretakers Problem	- The number of caretakers in the ECDCs is negatively correlated to the caretaker problem - The number of children in the ECDCs is positively correlated to the caretaker problem	The hypotheses are <i>accepted</i> . The more children and less caretakers lead to higher caretaker's problem. The number of children and caretakers are strongly related with the caretaker's problem.	The government should educate and incentivise new caretakers into the system in order to improve the insufficient caretaker's problem.
Overall Problem	- The aggregated levels of problem in ECDCs are different in each bracket of budget, the bigger the budget, the lower the problem - The aggregated levels of problem in ECDCs are different; the richer regions have lower level of problem	The hypotheses are <i>partially accepted</i> . Budget and regional differences are correlated with the overall managerial problem.	The government should find a way to increase the budget of the ECDCs with lower than 100k annual budget and the emphasis should be on the poorest, North-eastern, region.

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