Learning environment in Thailand:
A case study regarding teaching methods and motivation in a Thai school.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of our case study is to illustrate what teaching methods the teachers in an elementary school in southern Thailand use and if they motivate the students and in that case, how they do it. In the background we briefly report about Thailand, their school system and their development. The following presentation processes previous research that has been made within our chosen subjects. The theories are linked to our research questions, such as teaching methods, learning environments and approaches to motivate the students.

Through a qualitative method ten observations have been conducted and the result of our observations have been analyzed and discussed. The result shows that the teachers in our case study use very personal and different teaching methods. The Ministry of education (2006) describes that the educational reform that took place in Thailand should develop teachers’ education methods to be more student-centered. The result of our observation shows that the teachers are in different stages in this development. Some of the teachers have much to develop before they reach this goal. The teachers also motivate the students differently. Some teachers motivated the students through external motivation where the goal was to pass the examiner’s tests, while others used the students’ internal motivation.

The results cannot be generalized for all schools in Thailand. Since the study is relatively small, it only shows how a part of the teachers implemented their teaching at the school where the study was conducted.
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1 INTRODUCTION

We are two students who study to become teachers in Elementary School at the Linnaeus University. For our last semester we wanted to do our teaching practice abroad, because we wanted to experience something new and see how the school system worked somewhere else. Another reason was that we wanted to develop ourselves as teachers, but also as individuals to get a wider point of view.

Therefore we contacted the administration office at our school. We had a meeting and told them about our idea of doing our practice abroad and exploring another school system. The administration office told us about a scholarship, Minor Field Study (MSF) founded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). They told us that this scholarship is intended for students who want to get practice experience abroad and that was suitable for our intentions. After the meeting we applied for the scholarships and received it just a few days later.

When we got the scholarships from MFS the next step was to deliberate with our coordinator. We told her about the scholarships and our plan to do our practice and collect our empiricism for our degree project abroad. The coordinator was positive to our ideas so we started discussing where we wanted to go and do our practice and what our examine thesis was going to be about. We decided to do a case study in southern Thailand about the Thai teaching methods and if the teachers motivate their students to develop their educational skills. If the teachers do this, how do they approach the students?

We started to search for a school where we could do our practice and collect material for our case study. During our search of schools in southern Thailand we got in contact with a volunteer organization, Projects Abroad. Projects Abroad started during the 1990’s in England when some students wanted to take a semester off school and work in Eastern Europe. This was nothing you normally did during this time, so the students then got in contact with their geography teacher, Peter Slowe. He managed so the students could go to Romania and teach and after this Projects Abroad started their organization. This was in 1992. In 1997, Projects Abroad was still a small organization that had part time employees who helped university students who wanted to go abroad and collect work experience through teaching in Eastern Europe. When the inquiries of going abroad and volunteering increased and more developing countries needed help, Projects Abroad expanded as an organization and is now (2012) represented all over the world.

Projects Abroad helped us come in contact with a school in Ao Nang, Krabi. Projects Abroad also included us in a project called “teaching project” which was perfect for us because we also wanted to do our teaching practice in Thailand. So we started to do research about Thailand, their culture and their educational systems.

Thailand is a country which has developed its educational reform because the government realized Thailand needs to get a higher quality in their education. Kullberg (2010) describes Thailand as a country in a working process with educational issues. During our teacher education we read about many different teaching methods and ways to motivate students. This is something we both find interesting and therefore we chose to explore these elements of the teaching profession. The Ministry of Education (2006) in Thailand has high reaching goals but the goals do not always apply to reality. Therefore, in our following study, we
will present our results from our observations from the Thai classroom environments, but first we will guide you through previous research and theories.
2 BACKGROUND

In order to intensify understanding we are going to provide a background history about the school system and the education in Thailand.

2.1 Education in Thailand

In southern Thailand a majority of the population are Muslims or Buddhist which reflects their culture. During the past twenty years Thailand has been among the countries whose economic conditions changed because of globalization. With this globalization, the Thai government realized the importance of increasing Thai citizens’ knowledge and give them tools for the future (Kullberg, 2010).

In 1977 the Thai education system became a 6+3+3 educational system. The first six years represent the obligation to attend school and the +3+3 (which represents our lower secondary school and upper secondary school) is optional for students. Then the National Education Act (NEA) extended school attendance from six years to nine years and it was partly because different studies had shown that educational development in Thailand lacks quality compared to international standards (Fredriksen & Tan, 2008). The Thai education system is goal-oriented and through the system individual development should be possible. Down below the goal-oriented system is described briefly by Kullberg (2010):

Wisdom. An educated person should attain wisdom: the ability to understand causality; to differentiate between virtue and vices, right and wrong, and good and malicious deeds on the basis of truth; to intelligently solve problems; to recognize and understand rapid various changes; to be creative and possess an inquiring mind to keep up with technological progress; to appreciate Thai wisdom and culture for adoption by Thai society.

Spiritual development. An educated person should be able to train one’s mind to become morally developed; to be self-controlled of wrong-doings; to be self-controlled and self-disciplined in one’s behavior in accordance with moral code of conduct; to uphold religious principles; to be modest and moderate; to possess concentration and perseverance which are essential for working and living.

Physical development. An educated person should possess healthy physique normal to one’s age; be able to insure the good health of oneself and one’s family, and be able to develop one’s physical capacity suitable for work and occupational practices.

Social development. An educated person should possess proper social behavior at work and in the family, organizations and society; to extend help unselfishly; to possess communication skills and ability; to use proper Thai as well foreign language for communication purposes; to preserve the Thai national identity and culture; to recognize and observe the rights, duty and responsibility towards others, society, and mankind; to intend upon creating a peaceful society; to recognize and observe one’s own and others’ rights and freedom under the
democratic form of government with the king as head of state; to be able to utilize and conserve natural resources and to create a proper environment; and to contribute to enhancing an appropriate role of the nation in the world community.

(Ministry of Education 2009 in Kullberg 2010, p. 36)

2.1.1 Thai education reform

Thailand’s education system did not make the international standards of knowledge like the rest of the countries that went through economical condition changes; therefore Thailand was in need for the reform changes.

In 1999, Thailand took a national education law to make way for reform changes in teaching, learning and school management. Because of the economic crisis of 1997 the Ministry of education in Thailand needed to prepare the citizens for new challenges with the globalization (Hallinger & Lee, 2012). Michel (2010) says that the Thai education reform now is formed by two factors, political and economical, which collaborate. This collaboration changes Thai culture and the Thai education system. Because of the modernization and globalization Thailand has much to improve before they can achieve international education standards.

Hallinger & Lee (2012) and Mounier (2010) mention the importance of a quality curriculum that provides the teachers with necessary directions for high-quality teaching. Thailand’s goals are to become a knowledge society and by this new education reform Thailand gets the opportunity to develop a confidence in teaching methods and classroom environments. The Ministry of Education (2006) also wants to increase students’ abilities to become more creative and effective in their learning process, by engaging and enthusing young students with activities beyond typical desk education, since it will improve the educational achievement. The NEA (national education act) gives teachers educational service. By integrating more active learning, the NEA wants to improve students learning ability and the Thai government chose a reform which demands huge educational changes. The education reform is supposed to transform teachers’ education methods and students’ learning processes to become a student-centered teaching (Ministry of education 2006).

The National report of Thailand (Ministry of education, 2008) describes the National Education reform as an important investment for the Thai school system. By this reform, the quality of Thailand’s educational system is supposed to improve the teachers’ knowledge and also improve the curriculum to become more useful for the teachers in their teaching.

O'Sullivan (2006) describes in her article the importance of having high quality education in developing countries. Thailand however lack this quality which O'Sullivan (2006) express as crucial for the quality of the Thai Education system. The professionals (the government) do not address to the real problem. To see the problems, they need to examine the learning environment, the classroom and the school management, because it is there the teachers teach and the students learn.

The National Education Act provided a new legal framework for education in Thailand. They also try to restructure the educational system and redesign the model
of teaching and learning methods used by schools to produce more active, efficient and independent students.

### 2.2 Theoretical research

In this chapter we will introduce different theories about teaching and motivation both from an international perspective and from a Thai perspective.

#### 2.2.1 Teaching methods from an international perspective

Egidius (2005) means that the teaching worldwide is going through a change, or has gone through a change, from that the teacher always has been in focus to a more student-centered education. In a teacher-focused teaching the knowledge is conveyed to the students and skills are instructed. The student-centered teaching, however, is focused on the students and their development and learning. Stensmo (2008) describes similarly contents but use different concepts. Stensmo (2008) has done three case studies on the topic. The studies show that teachers’ leadership focuses on different leaderships and two of the most expressive ones are the task-oriented and student-oriented leaderships. Teachers are often set up in situation based education instead of being person centered. This study describes that task-orient leadership is important for the educational subject but many times leads to that the teacher forgets about the students’ individual needs. The study also shows that the teacher with the student-oriented leadership sees from a student perspective and builds the education from their abilities. According to Arfwedson (1998) class-teaching, which is a teacher-focused teaching, is one of the oldest and most commonly used teaching methods. Class teaching is based on students doing the same thing. The critics against this method are that it is (a) not that motivating for the students’, (b) not effective, (c) very dominating and (d) hard to individualize.

#### 2.2.1.1 Instructional strategies

Marzano et al. (2001) conducts a meta-analysis research on instructional strategies. By grouping the instructional strategies into nine categories it indicates a major increscent of student learning ability; (a) identifying similarities and differences; (b) summarizing and notetaking; (c) reinforcing effort and providing recognition; (d) homework and practice; (e) nonlinguistic representations; (f) cooperative learning; (g) setting objectives and providing feedback; (h) generating and testing hypotheses; and (i) cues, questions, and advance organizers. This research showed that incorporating teaching strategies of these categories can increase student outcomes “for all students in all subject areas at all grade levels” (Marzano et al., 2001, p. 7). These strategies are conductive for the classroom teaching because it is consistent with how the students’ brains work and how students collect new knowledge. It requires students to focus on the content for a sustained period of time, give specific
performance goals that include the activities and engage in their own process of making sense. (Marzano et al., 2001).

2.2.1.2 Project-based learning

Blumenfeld et al. (1991) describes Project-based learning (PBL) as a comprehensive perspective which is focused on teaching by engaging students in investigations, as Marzano et al. (2001) mention increase the student’s outcomes. PBL consists of two essential components: a question or a problem. These essential components should serve to organize and drive the activities. PBL is different from conventional activities that are designed to help our students to learn information without a driving question from the teachers. Proponents of PBL claim that students who investigate and seek for resolutions to problems and questions acquire an understanding of key principles and concepts. To get the students motivated it is important to choose a topic and activity that is interesting and valuable for the students. The students need to feel that they have the competence to engage in their work and complete the projects but also that can they focus on the learning progress rather than the outcome.

When the teachers educate the students in the PBL they need to:

- Create opportunities for learning and providing access to information.
- Support learning by scaffolding instruction and modeling and guiding students to make tasks more manageable.
- Encourage students to use learning problems, meta-cognitive processes.
- Assess progress, diagnose problems, provide feedback, and evaluate overall results.

(Blumenfeld et. al., 1991, p. 380-381)

Tongsakul & Jitgarun & Chaokunmerd (2011) have done the study: Empowering Students through Project-Based Learning Perceptions of Instructors and Students in Vocational Education Institutes in Thailand. The result of the study shows that there are eight factors empowering the students during PBL: 1) motivation to learn, 2) planning, 3) thinking, 4) goal-setting, 5) Intelligent awareness, 6) scientific process, 7) Facilitation and 8) share ideas. The factor analyses of the teachers indicate that there are nine factors empowered to the students through PBL: 1) Motivation to Learn; 2) Planning; 3) Thinking Skills; 4) Sharing Ideas; 5) Facilitation; 6) Learning by Doing; 7) Scientific Process; 8) Intelligent Awareness; and 9) Goal-Setting. The results of the teacher’s questionnaire show that the students and teachers rate the factors quite similarly. Both the students and the teachers rated motivation to learn and planning as the most empowering factor of PBL even though the teachers had nine factors and the students had eight.

2.2.2 Teaching methods in Thailand

According to Jensen (2005), the Thai classroom culture and the understanding of how young students’ minds process information, how they sort out strategies to increase students’ engagement and involvement in Thai classrooms are critical. Jensen (2005) means that the students who are engaged in their learning process require a balance of learning which includes passive, active and reflective learning.
activities. This learning process provides students with essential learning. Increased variety of teaching and learning approaches help students generate meaning and ultimately improve learning. (Jensen, 2005)

Leigh M., T, Laurene, J, & Tiffany A (2012) did a study about teachers’ instructional methods and the level of students’ engagement in classes with over 40 students in Thai school. They did observations in two groups of teachers before and after one of the groups had an intervention about how students’ brains work and how they learn. The predominant teacher activity in both groups before the intervention was group lecture. The teachers’ were typically in the front of the classroom instructing the whole classes. Note-taking was the most common student activity in these classes, and the average percentage of students engaged in the instruction in these classes ranged from 11% to 75%. Improvements in student engagement in the treatment teachers’ classrooms were observed after their participation in the intervention, despite the limited duration of both the training and the coaching.

2.2.2.1 Recital teaching

Kullberg (2010) has done an ethnography study over 12 years about a school on an island in southern Thailand. By observations she saw the most common teaching method: Recital teaching/recital method. The teacher speaks and the students repeat over and over again with their recitation voice. The students are supposed to memorize and repeat; this learning style is called rote-learning. Rote learning is a traditional method which the monks used a long way back in Thailand’s history. Fuller (2005) writes that this kind of learning where the students repeat a specific content only gives a shallow knowledge. She also writes that:” Rote-drill teaching also has the additional attraction that its cognitive simplicity leads itself to indoctrination.” Kullberg (2010) observed that some students were writing or doing other things during the lessons where rote-learning were applied. She meant that they learned to repeat without thinking. Kullberg (2010) also describes that the Thai school expresses that repeating and disciplinary types of education are the best ways to teach and learn. The observations showed that the teachers were very authoritarian and discipline was priori.

2.2.3 How the students acquire new knowledge

Egidius (2005) describes different ways to acquire knowledge. He believes that one should distinguish between content learning that enables us to recognize words, pictures etc. and skill learning which implores us to dedicate ourselves to different approaches and abilities. He also separates reproduction, which means that the students can reproduce their knowledge, from recognition and tacit knowledge. Recognition is when the students recognize things they “learned” but not reproduces the knowledge. Tacit knowledge on the contrary is knowledge that the students have without knowing it themselves.

Gardner (1989, 1993) also means that human beings have several different ways of learning and processing information and the different methods we use are relatively independent of each other, therefore the name: Multiple intelligences (MI). Connell (2009) describes how Gardner’s theories about MI and brain-based learning (BBL) spread to teachers around the world and which they started to be influenced by in
their teaching. In the beginning Gardner had narrowed out seven intelligences but now there are eight and two more is under discussion. The eight intelligences are:

- Linguistic intelligence includes the ability to learn and use language effectively in order to express oneself rhetorically or poetically. The intelligence also helps to remember information.
- Logical-mathematical intelligence implies the capacity to analyze different problems logically and achieve mathematical operations and how to study scientific issues. Mathematicians are often associated with this intelligence.
- Musical intelligence involves the ability to perform, compose and recognize musical patterns, rhythms and tones.
- Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence implies the potential to use mental abilities to coordinate the body and to solve problems through it.
- Spatial intelligence implies the ability to visualize together with the mind’s eye and through that recognize and use patterns.
- Interpersonal intelligence includes the capacity to understand people’s intentions, their motivations and desires. The intelligence helps these people to work with other people.
- Intrapersonal intelligence gives us the capacity to understand oneself and to be grateful for our feelings, fears and motivations and to use this knowledge to regulate our lives. Humans with a strong intrapersonal intelligence find pleasure in self-reflection and self-analysis.
- Naturalist intelligence makes the human being able to recognize, evaluate and appreciate the environment. (a.a.)

Mindy L. Kornhaber (2001), a researcher who works with Project Zero, has identified numerous reasons why the teachers and politicians in North America respond positively to Gardner’s model of multiple intelligences, for example:

... the theory validates educators' everyday experience: students think and learn in many different ways. It also provides educators with a conceptual framework for organizing and reflecting on curriculum assessment and pedagogical practices. In turn, this reflection has led many educators to develop new approaches that might better meet the needs of the range of learners in their classrooms. (Kornhaber, 2001 p. 276)

Just like the student, the teachers also have MI’s that are stronger than others which often leads to that these intelligences are prioritized in her/his teaching. Cornell (2009) means that teachers most likely connect better with students that resemble their teaching style. But Gardner (1993) and Cornell (2009) mean that the teachers need to use all nine multiple intelligences during their instructions and assignments each day to accommodate all students. Connell (2009, p. 28-29) also notes that “results gleaned from BBL provide a theoretical foundation for helping students learn and for helping teachers reach diverse learners in America and around the
world”. She also writes that educators around the world, there among Thailand, contacted her after Brain-based strategies to reach every learner was printed. The theories thus receive more and more attention.

2.2.4 Teaching environments

Dunn (2003) writes that already in the 1980’s, researchers who studied learning styles knew that the students learn in different ways and that the typical classrooms are not a good learning environment for many students. Results showed that many students barely can concentrate in classrooms with; chairs of wood, steel or plastic, bright lights or in silence. Studies also showed that students need short breaks, possibility to move and make their own choices. Merrill (2002) suggest learning environments where; (a) learners are engaged in solving real-world problems; (b) existing knowledge is activated as a foundation for new knowledge; (c) new knowledge is demonstrated to the learner; (d) new knowledge is applied by the learner; and (e) new knowledge is integrated into the learner’s world. Grabowski (2004) also finds learning improvement in classrooms where “the learner is an active partner versus a passive participant in the learning process” (p. 736), and when students are encouraged to join with their existing and new knowledge.

Blumenfeld (1991) describes that it is important that the teacher creates a classroom environment that will make the PBL doable. The classrooms need to “promote motivation to learn and encourage inquiry, risk taking and thoughtfulness by minimizing ability-related information and focusing on learning, not performance” (Blumenfeld et. al., 1991, p. 381). Stensmo (2008) explains that if the students engage in their education planning they will be encouraged because it makes them really take care of their own education process. Teachers need to adapt their teaching methods to get a successful learning environment. Students who get educated in creative and enhance learning environments create a confidence that motivates them in their learning process and motivates them to reach their own educational goals. When students face problems with their school assignments, it is important that the teacher provides them with feedback and tells them that it is alright to fail so they can learn from their mistakes.

2.2.5 Motivation

The school has an enormous effect on students’ futures and the school provides an investment for the society. The effectiveness research of the school provides us with an insight about differences of student’s attitudes towards their learning process and how these are affecting their schoolwork (Giota, 2002). Lerdpornkulrat, T, Koul, R, & Sujivorakul, C. (2012) study indicates that students who have high self-beliefs have a more positive attitude towards education and also provide better results. These students set higher goals and work harder to reach them (a.a.). To “study” is forms of learning where the student is driven by external motives, for example get higher grades and degrees. The opposite of external motives is internal motives
where the student instead searches for knowledge and wants to develop their skills (Egidius, 2005).

The motivational researchers tell us that there are some constructs that may be crucial for our students’ cognitive and affective results of their academic choices (Elliot & Church, 1997). Among these constructs Church & Elliot (2001) find the students' motivational goals. These goals have been measured in terms of a model of mastery, performance approach and performance avoidance goals. When students focus on mastery goals, they focus on mastering the task by themselves and also to make personal improvements. The students’ performance approach goal focus outwardly instead of inwardly like the mastery goals do. From a student point a view they see the results by grades and other external evaluations (Hyde & Durik, 2005). When students embrace the performance approach goal to education they want to enforce the ability to feel superior to other students who embrace the performance avoidance goal. They do not want to appear stupid compared to other students and they do not want to be in the spotlight. Studies show that by adapting mastery goals in the education gives positive consequences to enhance students' interest and their engagements in the education and if the students have avoidance goals it will affect student’s academic achievements and the intrinsic motivation (Church et al., 2001).

2.2.5.1 The teacher’s motivation skills

Giota (2002) explains that research shows that the teachers need to have a genuine interest of their teaching subject to motivate the students, otherwise it will affect the students’ commitment negatively in the subject and their education. The teachers’ curiosity of their subjects will construct more of a creative environment for the students. Giota (2002) also writes that teachers need to be alert and follow the students in their development because a student who has psychological process issues in the beginning of their schooling many times face issues in their future schooling. Ford (1992) mentions different motivation principles that teachers can use for motivating students. One of these principles, the responsive environment principal, means that the teacher takes care of the student’s own experience and translates the experience into the student’s individual goal. When teachers and students together make the individual plans, the students become motivated to take care of their own educational goals. The principal of human respect implies that the teachers should treat the students with respect and take care of students’ pre-knowledge. When there are large classes it is unfortunate for students because teachers may have difficulties to see the individuals.

Sjöberg (1997) describes motivation as a crucial factor for the student’s learning ability and without motivation in student’s education it will be devastating for their academic results and for the students’ external and internal motivations. It is shown in studies that teachers need to provide equal and high-quality education, if not, students will have learning tribulations. If the learning environment instead is stimulating, both external and internal motivation factors will enhance students’ motivation.
3 AIM

The aim of this case study is to see how the teachers in Thailand are using their knowledge in teaching. By doing observations in an elementary school we want to get an insight in Thai schools’ learning environment. The questions we would like to examine are which teaching methods the teachers use and if the teachers motivate the students.

Research questions
- Which teaching methods are used in the classrooms?
- Do the teachers motivate the students’? If the teachers motivate the students, how do they approach the students’?
When we received our scholarship from Minor Field (MFS), we started to search for a school in southern Thailand and during our search we got in contact with the volunteer organization, Projects Abroad. The school where we did our case study was also the school where we did our practice as teachers.

4.1 Interview

Before we went to Thailand we thought about doing structured interviews as an attribute to our observations but after we talked to the English teacher at the school, we realized that their level of English was very low. On site we understood that the English teacher and the principal were the only two who spoke English at all and their skills were low.

Dalen (2008) describes the difficulties with using an interpreter during the interviews. First of all it is hard to find an interpreter who is appropriate and qualified. It is important that the interpreter masters both languages very well and in the same time has the personal qualities to do a good interview and ask the questions in a good way. The only contacts we had in Thailand who mastered the languages sufficiently good worked with Projects Abroad and we felt that they could affect the teacher’s answers. Dalen (2008) means that the person being interviewed needs to feel comfortable with the interpreter and the interviewer to give honest answers. Since Projects Abroad is helping the school and sponsor them with materials and volunteers we felt that the school wanted to appear better then they might be in front of the staff of the organization. Therefore we decided not to do the interviews.

During our time at the school we often sat down and talked to the teachers and the principal. Because of the teachers’ lack of English, the English teacher and the principal had to help us and the other teachers to understand each other. When we later returned back to Sweden and started to process our material we realized that the teachers told us interesting facts that complemented our study. Kullberg (2010) describes that she often got the most out of her conversations when they were informal and relaxed. Trost (2010) call these conversations “incognito interviewing”. He writes that both researchers and living humans actually interview people every day without knowing the connection. He means that this could be an ethical issue since the interviewed is unaware of that he or she is being interviewed. But we still chose to use some of the information that came up during our conversations because the teachers talked very openly about their teaching and school.

4.2 Observation

We mainly focused on observations through classroom teaching and Davidson & Patel (2011) describe that through observations we can study behaviors and processes in a natural environment in the moment when it occurs. By the
observations we could observe from a distance how the teachers worked with their teaching methods. When we observed, we chose to do an unstructured observation, Davidson & Patel (2011) calls it unstructured observation because the observer does not observe after a specific schedule. Instead the observers observe “everything”. We felt that we could not do a structured observation because we did not know what teaching methods the teachers were going to use. Davidson & Patel (2011) distinguishes between observations where the observer participated in the lesson or where the observer is a passive observer. We chose to passively observe the teacher and students and tried to interfere as little as possible. Davidson & Patel (2011) also differs between observers who are familiar to the observant towards observers who are unknown. We had been at the school for over a week before we started with our observations, therefore the teachers and students were familiar with us. We were accordingly familiar passive observers. One important aspect is the language barrier, because we did not understand what the teachers and students talked about during the lessons.

### 4.3 Selection and procedure

We observed different teachers and students in our study. Thai school has an examination period in the end of September and after that a school-break. We did our observations in the first half of September, so the students and the teachers stood before the examinations time. This was a stressful time and the teachers did not want to be disturbed, so we had to ask the principal if we could observe. After his permission he asked the teachers to attend. Despite all the stress, several teachers participated. We did ten observations with six different teachers. The teachers taught a specific subject at the school so usually they had all the classes in their subject. Our school had two mathematic teachers whom we both observed. Out of the six teachers we observed ten lessons in five different subjects; mathematic, Thai, English, science and physical education. We observed five women and one male teacher but chose to not look at the teachers from a gender perspective. We observed three English lessons, three physical education lessons, two mathematics lessons, one science lesson and one Thai lesson. Some lessons were similarly while others were completely different to each other.

During our observations one of us wrote down words and the other one observed the overall teaching. Afterwards we sat down and reflected over the observations and clarified our notes. Before we went to Thailand we had decided our headlines for the study, teaching methods and motivation, we started searching for current research. During our practice in Thailand we searched for Thai research but it was hard because most of the research were written on Thai. When we got home we started to process our material and continued searching for more research. During our work we categorized our material and found our sub headlines.
Table 1 clarifies which teachers we observed and analyzed.

Before we started to do the observations, the teachers always welcomed us and let the students know that we were observing them. We observed during the whole lessons which all were an hour long. Since teaching and learning is cooperation between the teacher and the students we also observed the students and they were between 30-50 students per class.

4.4 Ethical aspects

In Vetenskapsrådet, The Swedish Research Council (2002) describes four ethical principles that they recommend researchers to follow:

- Informant requirement, which implies the researchers to inform the concerned about the studies’ aim and purpose.
- Consent principle; describe the participant’s rights to decide if they want to be involved in the study.
- Confidentiality requirement implies that all collected data information about individuals has to be confidential.
- Use requirement, means that the personal information from the participators only could be used in research purposes.

Before we arrived in Thailand, we talked to our contact at Projects Abroad who informed the school management about our study. When we came to the school, we spoke to the principal and the English teacher, who was our mentor, about our aim. We told them that we were interested to see how Thai teachers teach and help the students in their developing of educational skills. We also talked about confidentially
and they assured us that we had permission to take photographs of the surroundings, students and teachers. We never talked about the informal interviews during the conversation, because our intentions were not to have them in our study. That is why we chose to keep the school anonymous.
5 RESULTS

Our aim with this case study was to investigate how the Thai teachers teach. What teaching methods did the teachers use? Did the teachers motivate the students in their learning process? If the teachers did motivate them, how did they do it?

The result we acquired cannot be seen as representative for elementary teachers in Thailand in general. We can only generalize and see the trends from the selected classes and the teachers we observed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Teacher nr.</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>P5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>P6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>P6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Physical education</td>
<td>P6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Physical education</td>
<td>P5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Physical education</td>
<td>P5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>1h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>P4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>P3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>1h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>P2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>1h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>P6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1h</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 clarifies the observations we executed more detailed. This table also shows which classes we observed and how many students that were taught.

5.1 Teaching methods that the teachers used in the classroom

Our first result chapter contains our result regarding teaching methods and strategies. While processing our result we could distinguish between a range of teaching methods and narrow out the most commonly used methods in the school we studied. Our result will be represented under these teaching methods.

The teachers worked very differently and used different teaching methods which provided students various opportunities to embrace new knowledge. Some teachers used teaching methods that allowed the students to work and acquire new knowledge by using their strongest learning style. Other teachers worked by using the same
teaching method during the whole lesson which fewer the opportunities the students to choose a learning style that suits them.

5.1.1 Recital teaching

One teaching method some teachers used were the method that Kullberg (2005) called: recital teaching. The teachers were reading aloud and the students were repeating after them. Sometimes the teacher also wrote sentences on the board that the students also repeated after her. The students were supposed to repeat exactly after the teachers, use the same tone and voice level. The method were not only used while the teachers taught the students’ knowledge in their subject they also used the method during task instructions. For example, teacher no.1 was reading aloud and the students repeated after her while following with their fingers in their books. When they were reading a shorter text the teacher asked one student to read the text aloud in the classroom. She started to read the text but in the middle she started to struggle and instead of searching in the text she just tried to remember the sentence. After a while she started over and “read” the whole text. She could not read the text she just learned the text in a rhythm and did not understood it.

Teacher no. 5 taught also taught by using recital teaching. She used the method during the whole lesson. The students did not get the chance to discuss and make their own conclusions - they were just supposed to follow the teacher. The students always read aloud together in a choir, the teacher never listened to one student.

5.1.2 Bodily-kinesthetic teaching

Teacher no.2 used his body simultaneously as he gave the students vocal instructions. For example he taught the students different stretching exercises by first showing them simultaneously with his body and then he let the students try. Meanwhile the students executed the exercise he walked around and instructed the students by touching them and physically let them feel how the exercise should be executed. All through the lessons teacher no.2 gave his students feedback on their assignments just like teacher no. 6.

5.1.3 Project-based learning

Teacher no.6 classroom were more openly and the students could ask questions whenever the needed to. The teacher held the students centered in her education and built the lesson after them. She worked with problems and questionaries’ which Blumenfeld et. al. (1991) described as the core of Project-based learning (PBL). Teacher no. 6 had a dialogue with the students and together they discussed problems. The teacher asked supplementary questions to the students to make sure that they understood and when we talked to her she told us that: “I need to ask questions to the students to make sure that the follow and understand me and the work we do.” During the lesson we observed the students worked with the science conceptions and sang rigmaroles about them. They executed experiments and discussed the results they achieved and compared it to the hypothesis they sat up before. They worked both individually and in groups.
5.1.4 Teaching right from wrong through punishment

Some teachers taught their students by punishing them when they gave the wrong answers or behaved against the teacher’s rules. Teacher no. 3 for example hit the students with a stick on their hands or thighs if they gave the wrong answer or tried to ask a classmate or let them stand up against the wall.

Analyze

During our observation we observed that the teachers in our case study worked very differently from one another but a similarity we saw were that the lessons were mostly very strict and the classrooms were quiet. The teachers talked the most in these classrooms and the students were just allowed to talk when the teachers gave them the word. Teacher no. 6 stood out against the other teachers and held the students centered in the education and worked after their needs. Her classroom were also democratic and openly. By comparing teacher no. 6 and teacher no. 5 lessons, the observations showed that teacher no. 6 taught in a way that created more opportunities for the students to acquire the knowledge then teacher no. 5 teaching method did because she varied her teaching. Teacher no. 5 never listened to one student in a time which made it impersonal and the lesson was not individualized for the students.

5.1.5 How the teachers worked with the emotional learning environment

All the teachers in our observations demanded a quiet classroom were all the students had full focus on the teacher, except teacher no.6 she demanded the students to be quiet when she our a classmate were talking but they were allowed to discuss with each other during for example the experiment. The students were also allowed to walk around and go to the toilets if they needed to which the other teachers did not accept. In their classrooms the students were supposed to sit still and stretch their backs.

In the beginning of teacher no. 6 lesson she gave the students a test. After the lesson she told us that: “I gave the students a test in the beginning of the lesson because I want to check the students pre-knowledge before the next lesson when we are going to work with a new topic. It is important for me to plan the lesson after the students pre-knowledge and ability so the students can follow me.”

Analyze

Concerning this category the teachers worked pretty similarly. The teachers demanded the students to be quiet and give the teacher their fully concentration. One teacher stood out and was more openly and let the students discuss with each other.
5.2 How the teachers used different approaches to motivate the students

Our second result chapter contains our result regarding motivation. The teachers motivated the students in different ways. While processing our result we could distinguish between different motivating strategies, our result will be represented under these.

5.2.1 External motivation, performance approach goals and performance avoidance goal

As we mentioned before some teachers used punishments as a motivation for the students. The students know that they will be hit or punished if they do not give the right answer or behave after the teachers rules which became a motivating factor for the students. Egidius (2005) describes punishment as a external motive, the students tries to perform well to avoid punishment. These teachers did not give the students who gave the right answer credit or encouragement; they just nodded and continued with the assignment. In some classes the teachers pointed out the students who they wanted to answer the questions or right something in the board. Some students seemed worried by this and were afraid of being punished. For example teacher no. 2 pointed out students who he wanted to redo some assignment that he was not satisfied with. The students had to do these in front of the whole class.

5.2.2 Internal motivation and mastery goals

Some of the teachers gave the student encouragement when they performed well, some vocally and others with body language as thumbs up. Even here teacher no. 6 distinguish from the other teachers by encourage the students a lot and helped the students find the right answer if they gave the wrong answer. Sometimes she lifted the problem in the class and let the students discuss it. When they performed well she smiled and clapped her hands. The students were calmer and raised their hands willingly and did not seem stressed when they were answering questions.

When we talked to the teachers they described the final tests as the goal for the students. They needed to pass the final test in the end of the school year to move up a level. If they did not pass one test in a specific subject they needed to redo the whole year in the same grade. Some teachers also expressed uncertainty about how they should help the students who did not pass these tests. The teachers just told us that they did not have the resources to help them because of the numerous of students. According to the teachers the final tests was the essential goal for the students and from our observation we could not see that the teachers had any interim targets.

Analyze

The teachers motivated the students differently and mostly gave the students criticism when they did something wrong even though some teachers gave them positive feedback. The essential goals for the students were the final tests. The
students that did not pass these tests were not getting any specific help from the teachers because they did not have the time to give them these extra help they needed.

5.2.3 The physical learning environment as a motivation factor

All the teachers on the school had their own classroom for their subject that they taught in. The classrooms looked very different; some were filled with colors and posters while others were totally blank. Teacher no. 6 and teachers no. 1 classrooms were filled with different objects and the walls were painted in bright full colors and had many different educational posters. There were also many different educational books concerning the subject. The other classrooms were had grey walls with just a photo of the royal family, besides that the walls were empty and there were no educational materials. Teacher no. 2 had all his lessons outside on the schoolyard and had some educational materials in an inventory.

Teacher no. 6 described for us that she wanted her classroom to be inspirational for the student while teacher no. 5 told us that she did not want to have materials in the classroom thought it would disturbed the students in their concentration. The teachers were however in an agreement concerning the orderliness and cleaning. The students cleaned the schoolyard and the classroom every morning before the school started.

Analyze

The teachers had a disagreement between whether to have educational materials in the classroom or not, which reflected on their classrooms but orderliness and cleaning were a prior for all teachers.

5.2.4 Teacher's interest and engagement in their subject

All the teachers had knowledge in their subjects; some seemed more interested than others and engaged the students more. All the teachers were very confident in their subject and radiated a confident that the student should learn from them. Teacher no. 1 was interested in the English subject but struggled when she talked the language even though she told us that she had gone to the university for five years. She told us that it was hard to develop her language skills because she did not have someone to talk the English language with. During her lessons she always taught after the students English book even though it were on a level that were too hard for the students. Many of the teachers worked in a certain way and did not change if some students did not follow except teacher no. 6 who planned after the student’s knowledge level. She also let the students interrupt her if they had any questions or did not understand. She was very enthusiasm during the lessons which seemed too rubbed off at the students. Teacher no. 3 on the other hand was so strict and hard that the students were afraid of being punished.
Analyze

The teachers had knowledge in their subject but were differently engaged in their subject. One teacher was very enthusiastic while others were more strict and hard. Some teachers worked in a certain way and did not change it if the students did not understand or followed.
6 DISCUSSION

The discussion begins with a methodological discussion of the method’s advantages and disadvantages. This is followed by a performance discussion of our result. As a conclusion, we suggest further research.

6.1 Method discussion

We feel that the choice of observations method was the best approach for our questionnaires’ regarding teaching methods. Davidson & Patel (2011) emphasize observations since the researchers can study the behaviors and processes in a natural environment. During our observations we could see how the teachers taught and used different methods. We also feel that we had an advantage because we were two who observed. While one of us was writing, the other one could have an overview and overall picture. Another advantage is that we could discuss the observation together afterwards and supplement our observation protocol with the things one of us missed. We also preferred using unstructured observations because we did not know what we could expect. For example all the teachers we observed used very different teaching methods therefore schematics would be difficult to produce.

Regarding our other questionnaires’, if the teachers motivated the students and how they did it, the observations were more difficult to interpret because of the language barrier between us, the teachers and the students. We could only observe how the teachers motivated the students by their teaching methods, engagement to the subjects and their use of body language. Our result may have been a bit different if we could actually understand what the teachers said.

Interviews with the teachers and the students had probably made the study wider with further perspectives. Since we cannot speak Thai we would have had to find an interpreter to help us during the interviews or receive help from the English teacher. But since the English teacher did not have enough knowledge in the English language and professional relationship with the other teachers she would not be a reliable interpreter. As Dalen (2008) explains the interpreter has to master both the language and have personal qualities in interviewing. We searched for an interpreter that had those qualities but we did not find anyone suitable. Kullberg (2010) describes that she got the most out of her conversations with the other teachers when they had informal conversations like colleagues. This was something we also experienced and that was why we chose to include some of them in our study. Trost (2010) mentions that it could be an ethical issue because the teachers do not know that they are being interviewed which we considered before we made our decision to use them. The teachers were open when they talked about their work and wanted to share their experience but we chose to keep the school anonymous just in case of the teachers feeling exposed.

We did ten observations during our time at the school and we only observed some of the teachers one time which may not be representative for them and their teaching
style. Our study is also conducted in one school in a shorter period of time and cannot be representative for all schools in Thailand.

6.2 Result discussion

Under following chapter we discussed our result compared to our background with current research regarding our headlines.

6.2.1 Teaching methods that the Thai teachers used

The Ministry of education (2006) describes that the educational reform in Thailand shall transform teachers’ education methods and students learning processes to be a student-centered teaching. Stensmo (2008) describes two of the most expressive leaderships that teachers use which are task-oriented and student-oriented leaderships. In our result we found that some teachers are more focused on the task and what the students are meant to accomplish instead of ensuring the students individual requirements. Teacher no. 6 and teacher no. 2 are paying greater attention to the student as individuals instead as of teaching the whole class together all the time which Arfwedson (1998) describes as “class teaching”. They have individual dialogues with the students during the lessons. From our observations we interpret that the student-oriented leadership is more effective on the students because they are more active during the lessons. The students are in some lessons relatively active too, but probably just because they are afraid of being punished. Egidius (2005), compared to Stensmo (2008) distinguishes between teacher-centered and student-centered education. Some teachers are centered during almost all of the lessons while some teacher shifts from being centered to making the students centered. Stensmo (2008) writes that teachers that use a student-centered leadership sees from a student perspective and builds the education based on their knowledge.

The Leigh M. & T, Laurene & J, & Tiffany A (2012) study shows that the most common teaching method in Thailand is lecturing and the most common student activity is note-taking. This is something that we observed during some teachers’ lessons. Based on Marzano’s (et. al., 2001) meta-analysis research on instructional strategies shows that note-taking can be a successful strategy if the students are focused on the content of the lesson. During some of the lessons this strategy are used most of the time which made the students unfocused. The Leigh & Laurene & Tiffany (2012) study indicates that the students’ engagements are low when they are note-taking. Kullberg (2010) also describes recital teaching, which is a variant of lecturing, as the most common teaching method in Thailand. She saw the students repeating and writing or painting other things during the rote learning. We saw similarly student activities during our observations. The students repeated the sentences after the teachers but focused on another task. Teacher no. 1 told us that it was hard to activate all the students during the lesson because there were large classes. The Leigh & Laurene & Tiffany (2012) study investigated teaching methods in larges classes and lecturing was the most common there. Teacher no. 5 had 49 students in her class which could be a reason for her to choose recital teaching as method.
Blumenfeld et. al. (1991) present the Project-based learning (PBL) as a comprehensive perspective which focuses on teaching by engaging the students in investigations. We observed one teacher, teacher no. 6, that lets the students work with questionnaires and problems, the teacher helps and shows the students but let them make their own conclusions. Together they are generating and testing hypotheses and the teacher asks supplementary questions to make sure that the students are following the processes. Teacher no. 2 gives the students feedback on their achievements and tries to reinforce their efforts. From our results we interpret that the students who are more integrated in the lessons activities get a deeper knowledge. Grabowski (2004) also meant that improvements show in the students’ learning process when the students are active. When students are engaged in their learning process, they require a balance of learning which also includes passive, active, reflective learning activities. (Jensen, 2005)

Gardner (1989, 1993) describes eight different intelligences. During our observations we can see occasions for the students to use all eight intelligences but it is just during one lesson the students have the ability to use all eight intelligence and it is the during teacher no. 6 lesson. The teacher uses different methods and is more open for the students to learn in their most suitable way. Teacher no. 1 teaching methods on the other hand just adapt to two intelligences: Linguistic intelligence and interpersonal intelligence. According to Gardner (1989, 1993) and Connell (2009) this could be devastating for students who have not developed this intelligence. Egidius (2005) also describes different ways to acquire knowledge. The student that “read” individually during one English lesson recognized the sentence the class repeated after the teacher but did not understand it. Egidius (2005) mentions this as the biggest disadvantage with that learning style. Accordingly to the result of our observation of this student the teacher’s method does not suit her learning style because she did not understand what she had been taught.

6.2.1.1 How the teachers work with the emotional learning environment

According to Dunn (2003) studies shows that students can barely concentrate in silent classrooms and that students needs shorter breaks and the possibility to move around in the classroom and make their own choices. All teachers, except teacher no. 6, demand the students to be quiet during the lesson except when they are supposed to speak. During some lessons the students are told to sit still and stretch their backs. Merrill (2002) suggests learning environments where; (a) learners are engaged in solving real-world problems; (b) existing knowledge is activated as a foundation for new knowledge; (c) new knowledge is demonstrated to the learner; (d) new knowledge is applied by the learner; and (e) new knowledge is integrated into the learner’s world. Teacher no. 6 lesson was consistent with the learning environments that Merrill (2002) suggests. The students are engaged, the teacher demonstrate new knowledge and like she tells us she often does pre-tests to find out what existing knowledge the students have so she can activate them as a foundation for the new knowledge she is going to present. Teacher no. 1 does not teach on the students’ level of knowledge, the assignments are too difficult for the students to pass.
6.2.2 How the teachers use different approaches to motivate the students

According to Giota (2002) and Sjöberg (1997) the importance of motivating students in their learning process is crucial for the students’ academic future and also for the schools’ encouragement towards the students are important investments for the society. During our observations only one teacher actively tries to motivate the students by using different motivation methods.

When the teachers motivate the students it creates a higher-quality education and the students’ self-beliefs, positive attitude will achieve higher education results (Lerdpornkulrat, T, Koul, R, & Sujivorakul, C., 2012). By enhancing the students’ self-beliefs in their learning process the teacher involves the students by making them participate more during the lesson. Teacher no. 6 activates the students during the lesson. The students participate in the experiment, answers questions and have open discussions with her which the teacher means is important for her so she can see if the students understand the lesson’s aim. Some teachers only lets the students participate by having them repeat after them which according to Egidius (2005) is an activity that is driven by external motives. Some teachers in our case study punish the students if they do not give her the right answers which also become an external motive and they also points out students who do not reach the goals that were set up for the lesson. Our result shows that the students who are driven by external motives become afraid to give the wrong answers to the teachers and therefore the students rather stay quiet. Church & Elliot (2001) explains that students who get motivated by the performance goals want to feel superior to other students and be in the spotlight while the students who do not reach the goals do not want to be pointed out, like some of the teachers do. Teacher no. 6 on the other hand focuses on students’ abilities and creates mastery goals for them instead of the performance goals. Hyde & Durik (2005) describes the mastery goals important for the students, because they need to learn to take responsibility for their own education.

During one of our conversations with the teachers they tell us that students must retake a year if they do not manage to achieve passing results. They tell us about students who have to retake years in school over and over again though they do not pass the examination tests. The teachers express uncertainty when we talk about how to help these students. They only tell us that there are many students that do not pass the examination tests and they do not have the resources to help them. During the observations we observe students that we know had retaken the same class more than once. Elliot & Church (1997) and Giota (2002) both describe that teachers need to motivate the students with low self-confidence even more and that is according to our conversation with the teachers their biggest concern because they do not have the time to help them all.
6.2.2.1 The physical learning environment as a motivation factor

Our observations took place in different classrooms. The learning environments in the classrooms affect the students’ external and internal motivations. If the external and internal motivations factors are in interaction, students develop a good learning process (Egidius, 2005). The classrooms in our observations are very different. Some classrooms are filled with colours, learning books and educational posters regarding the subjects. Sjöberg (1997), Blumenfeld (1991) and Stensmo (2008) indicates that studies show that it is important for the students to have a classrooms that provides an effectual learning environment which will tribute to a high-quality learning process for the students. When the teaching environments are motivating the students both externally and internally, this will affect their learning process positively. Some classrooms did not have anything on the walls which according to Sjöberg (1997), Blumenfeld (1991) and Stensmo (2008) would not be as creative and enhancing as classroom that is filled with educational materials and colours. Teacher no. 1 classroom had a lot of educational materials and colours but we do not think these were something the English teacher done by her. The organisation we travelled with, Projects abroad, had volunteers’ helping out in the English subject many times during the year. It was the volunteers’ that had painted the walls and left a lot of the materials so we do not know whether the teacher liked it or not.

Teacher no. 2 lessons were held outside on the schoolyard. Gardner (1989) meant that students that prefer naturalist intelligence probably get more motivated by being outside because the students recognize and feel more comfortable in the nature. The schoolyard was very beautiful and inspiring with big areas and soccer fields which also could motivates the students in the subject.

6.2.2.2 Teacher’s interest and engagement to their subject

Tongsakul & Jitgarun & Chaokumnerd (2011) result, in their study about PBL, shows that both teachers and students prioritize motivation to learn. Giota (2002) means that the teachers’ interest in their subject is a critical factor for her/his ability to capture the students and motivate them in their learning process because it is reflected in their teaching. The result from our observations shows that the teachers have a more or less genuine interest of their subjects which also affected the lessons and the students. Teacher no. 6 is very engaging in her subject and teaching which impacts on the students in a positive way. Teacher no. 1 has an interest for the subject but lacks skills in different parts of the subject which Giota (2002) also described as an important factor. According to Giota it is more important that the teachers have a genuine interest then very deep knowledge. Teacher no. 1 may have less knowledge in her subject but she could be more motivating for the students because of her interest for the subject.

Stensmo (2008) explains that the students that are involved in their educational planning become more motivated because they have a greater responsibility in their education. The Tongsakul & Jitgarun & Chaokumnerd (2011) study also shows that planning is one of the most important factors according to both the students and the
teachers in their study. Teacher no. 1 taught after the chapters in the education book and did not involve the students in the planning. Ford (1992) explains that it is important for the teacher to teach on the student’s level of knowledge and take care of the student’s pre-knowledge. Teacher no. 6 told us that she did pre-test with the student’s to check the knowledge before planning further lessons. The pre-tests helped her plan the lessons on the right knowledge level. Ford (1992) writes that teaching on the student’s level of knowledge will motivate the students by providing them with a peaceful learning environment. According to our observation the students in this class more engaged during the lesson than the students in the other classes.
7 CONCLUSION

In our introduction we mention that Thailand is a country in a working process concerning the education and school system. Our study shows that Thailand has not reached their educational goals hitherto but some teachers are developing in the right direction. Some teachers still use old teaching methods while others have developed and now use Western teaching methods. Regarding the teachers’ strategies to motivate the students some teachers developed more student-centered strategies than others. Our result shows that the teachers need to improve their knowledge regarding teaching methods and motivating strategies.
8 REFERENCES


