

Review Article

# Area-based Management: Special Application to New Rajabhat University Cluster (Si Sa Ket, Roi-Et, and Chaiphum Rajabhat University), Thailand

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## Abstract

Rajabhat universities were originally established as teacher training schools over a century ago and have been legalized and renamed as Rajabhat universities in 2004. Their main mission is to serve local development, especially teacher training which is their expertise. A few teacher training policies have been adopted and implemented to develop suitable local-based teachers but the results have not been satisfied yet. So, area-based teacher training has been adopted, but again it seems unclear because the concept, which has been used in both basic and higher education levels in Thailand, is mainly focused on geographical area. So the concept should be reviewed and applied to design the new teacher training program successfully. After the authors searched more on the topic, it enriched our understanding to contextual factors of the geographical areas that constitute the meaning of area. This article aims to review and apply of concept to teacher training responsible by the new university cluster of Rajabhat University in Thailand. The main contents of the article include Area-based Concept and Management, Area-based Education and Management, and Background of New Rajabhat Cluster. Moreover, it is hoped to be beneficial to other setting as well. The virtue of area-based education is local network engagement, which makes teacher training responsible to locality.

## Keywords

Area-Based, Higher Education, Management, New Cluster, Rajabhat University, Thailand

## 1. Introduction

Preservice training and in-service training have been the main mission of Rajabhat universities ever since the first training school was initially established over a century ago [1]. Ever since, the network of teacher training institutions has been growing both numbers and missions [2-4]. At present, there are 38 Rajabhat universities, situated in different parts of Thailand, focusing on education for local development. But many problems challenge Rajabhat universities and more cooperation is needed. Recently a new cluster of three uni-

versities, namely Si Sa Ket Rajabhat University, Roi-Et Rajabhat University, and Chaiphum Rajabhat University, has been assigned a new mission: Area-based teacher training, aiming at the cooperation of these three universities to provide quality preservice teacher training for the new graduates who know their areas well and employ themselves in their locality to as new generation teachers. The authors, who are lecturers at Si Sa Ket Rajabhat University, take responsibility to conduct a research which title is "A Proposed Strategy of Systems

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and Mechanism for Quality Teacher Training According to Area-based Context of New Rajabhat University Cluster (Si Sa Ket, Roi-Et, and Chaiyaphum)". The article is written based on the literature review of one variable: area-based management. The objectives of this article are to share our finding on the literature review and seek feedbacks on the matter. The scope the article will cover the concept and management based on area-based context, application of the concept to education and educational management, context of new Rajabhat University Cluster and missions, and finally the application of area-based concept to teacher training in the cluster.

## 2. Area-based Concept and Management

### 2.1. Concept Reviewed

As mentioned above that area-based concept has been adopted and applied to educational management worldwide. In case of Thailand, the concept has been adopted and applied at both higher education and basic education levels. However, the definition of area-based commonly refers to geographical areas such as educational service areas of basic educational management [5], and regional cluster of Rajabhat universities [6].

Thai official document posted in Decree 2010 [7] designed area-based provinces to integrate provincial management based on geographical areas and those provinces planned their work together. Guidelines on area-based management stated that the management should focus on sustainable development principles for wellbeing of the citizen, both short and long terms, and facilitate and response to people's needs in the areas.

Eu Jutamas [8] warned that area-based approach was not only working with people in the area, but by inspiring them to identify the problem, and involve in solving the problem together. It was a grass-root working approach. Participation of all parts, people, local organization, government agencies, and private sectors.

Sommai Prajitsat [9] mentioned on area-based management that it was a new concept, adopted to solve problems in Thailand more recently because it was an approach that focused on local problems instead of those problems that were recommended from the central. Local people should play key roles. Besides, each area had different cultural, political, and social context. These factors were crucial for problems solving.

Based on Thai academics and government officials, area-based concept and management was similar with site-based decision and problem-solving approach. That is new trend in leadership and management, but the important issue in case of Thailand is how 'area' is defined. Now, let us explore some notices from western academics.

Smith & Sobel [10] pointed out that area-based concept was important because each area consisted of different con-

text factors such as environmental, social, economical, cultural and art factors. Communities are learning and living of people in the areas. Students learn from and within local contexts. Similarly, Melaville, Berg & Blank [11] stated that students learned from and in local settings that led them to better understand and appreciate their communities. So, understanding locality would help students perceive overall pictures of the community and that would foster them to love and want to participate in improving the community. So, those writers, mentioned above, focused area-based as community with similar contexts.

Definition of area-based planning and management proposed in UN environment program (United Nations environment program) [12] states that it is an approach that enables the application of planning and management measures to an area or zone which does not have to be clearly defined boundary to achieve a desired outcome. That means geographic boundary is not a key factor to area-based management, but contextual factors.

In western academic communities, area-based management has been used in variety settings such marine management, as defined in UN environment program [12, 13], construction management [14], community development [15] and education [10, 11, 16], and as well as community-based management or place-based management in educational settings.

Although different authors named and defined the term, area-based, differently, the main concept includes (1) Decentralized decision making by the location defined as area or community, (2) The boundary of the area should be drawn based on similar characteristics or area-contextual variables such as environmental, social, cultural, political, and economical factors, and (3) participation and engagement of all networks in the area and stakeholders are key management practice to achieve area-based management goals.

### 2.2. Area-based Management

Based on the concept of area-based approaches, by Urban Settlements Working Group [15], that provide multi-sectoral supports, and work with multiple stakeholders, consider the needs of population living in the area as priority, area-based approach consisted of 4 characteristics, namely, Multi-sectoral, Multi-stakeholder, Consider the whole population, and Specific geographic areas with high needs. Likely, successful area-based management applies techniques such as people-centered; active participation; multi-sectoral and multi-agency assessment; focus on immediate needs, sufficient time, iterative, flexible and adaptive; build on existing systems; and multi-agency contribution. Area-based management consists of four stages, namely Initiation, Assessment and data collection, Establish Community Centers, and Implementing and Monitoring. Another model of area-based management was used by [17] consisted of 7 components, Vision, Principles, Anticipate Outcomes, Governance Structures, High Level goals and objectives, Strategies in support

of goals and objective, and Action Plan. The authors believe that this model relied the implementation on Action Plan, meaning if the Action Plan is well formulated and clearly communicated, the implementation of the plan should go well, too.

Forced Migration Review [18] reported on Area-based approaches: an alternative in context of urban displacement, stating that Area-based concept was not a new idea, but it has been applied to urban management since the decade of 1970s. However, the concept is still updated and useful. Effective area-based management should embed the following characteristics

- (1) Targeting specific geographical area: Geographic,
- (2) Considering needs, capacities, and access to service across all sectors: Multi-sectoral,
- (3) Considering all population in the area: Inclusive, and
- (4) Involving all those sectors in that location: Participatory.

Back to Thai context, Somkiat Chidthaisong [19] proposed Area-based Management Process as one of the components of Area-based Model for Enhancing the Quality of Educational Management in the Educational Service Area, consisting of three stages: Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating. Planning included area-analysis, goal setting, and choosing alternative activities to achieve goals. Implementing included network building, active coordinating with key figures of the area, building good relation and effective communication, and integrating school and community activities. Evaluating focused on information to improve education, especially the information on performance according to the standards, key indicators of personnel performance, ethic and transparency management, and school rewards. Context factors of the area included personnel quality, social and cultural state, economic state, physical state, and budgeting. While Eu Jutamart [8] pointed out 6 stages of overall area-based working, namely Readiness Preparation, Tool Development and Lecturer, Survey and Data Analysis, Planning and Stakeholder-based Proposal, Integrating plans to local government offices, and finally, Knowledge Management and Distribution.

Inclusion, Area-based Management refers to planning and running the organization based on influenced factors of a specific and focused geographical area with similar contexts of environmental, social, cultural, political, and economical variables to achieve local needs by employing the site-based decision-making approach with participation of population and networks in the area. The management process might include (1) Local need identification, planning and organizing working forces, operating and controlling, evaluating and recycling the process.

### 3. Area-based Education and Management

Area-based education has been formerly known as com-

munity-based or place-based education [10]. Schools or educational institutions, in general, are not operated in vacuum, but under context of community. However, community or place bears new meaning, by referring to the process of using the local community and environment as a starting point to teach subjects that are included in the curriculum, emphasizing hand-on and real-world education [16]. The aims of doing so are to help students to better learn about their community, love and work to improve the community. Some scholars, especially in Thailand, prefer to use 'area-based education. Supeerapat Pimmas [20], for example, wrote an article stating that the Area-based education referred to the change of educational management role from centralization to decentralization. This means that the central educational unit decreases decisions on educational operation and let the schools decide for themselves. Similar trends were school-based management and Area-Based Collaborative Research.

No matter what scholars name or define, Place-based, Community-based, or Area-based, the term holds similar concept as Area-based Concept and Management, mentioned in Section Two. So the authors adopt and apply the same concept to educational setting and management.

### 4. New Rajabhat University Cluster and Mission

As mentioned above that this article is a part of literature review for the research titled 'A Proposed Strategy of Systems and Mechanism for Quality Teacher Training According to Area-based Context of New Rajabhat University Cluster (Si Sa Ket, Roi-Et, and Chaiyaphum)'. To highlight the context of the New Rajabhat University Cluster, a brief description of the university cluster is summarized as follow [21-23].

Three Rajabhat universities include in the cluster are Si Sa Ket, Roi-Et, and Chaiyaphum University and all of them are situated in Northeastern Part of Thailand, but they are no border. However, they compile similar characters, for examples, number of faculties, budgets, lecturers, supporting staffs, and students.

#### *Si Sa Ket Rajabhat University*

Si Sa Ket Rajabhat University was established in 1995 in Si Sa Ket Province, Northeastern Part of Thailand on about 500 Rais land, (242 Acres). There are 6 faculties or equivalent offices, Humanity and Social Science, Nursing Science, Business and Finance, Arts and Science, Education and Development, and College of Laws and Governance. In 2024, the university had 551 lectures and supportive personnel and hosted about ten thousand students. Curriculums and programs provided by Faculty of Education and Development, whose responsibility is preservice and in-service teacher training, included Teacher Profession Certificate, Bachelor's Degree in Education, Master Degree in Education Administration, and Doctoral Degree in Educational Administration.

*Roi-Et Rajabhat University*

Roi-Et Rajabhat University was established in 1997 in Roi-Et Province, Northeastern Part of Thailand on about 961 Rais land, (465 Acres). There are 7 faculties or equivalent offices, Laws and Governance, Nursing Science, Business and Finance, Arts and Science, Education, and Information, Technology and Graduate School. In 2024, the university had 470 lectures and supportive personnel and hosted about five thousand students. Curriculums and programs provided by Faculty of Education, whose responsibility is preservice and in-service teacher training, included Teacher Profession Certificate, Bachelor's Degree in Education, Master Degree in Education Administration, Strategy and Development, Local Governance, Teaching English, and Doctoral Degree in Educational Administration.

*Chaiyaphum Rajabhat University*

Chaiyaphum Rajabhat University was established in 1995 in Chaiyaphum Province, Northeastern Part of Thailand on about 1,400 Rais land, (677 Acres). There are 5 faculties or equivalent offices, Nursing Science, Business Administration, Arts and Science, Education, Engineering, and Public Administration. In 2024, the university had 360 lectures and supportive personnel and hosted about a thousand students. Curriculums and programs provided by Faculty of Education, whose responsibility is preservice and in-service teacher training, included Teacher Profession Certificate, Bachelor's Degree in Education, Master Degree in Curriculum and Instruction, in Education Administration, and Doctoral Degree in Educational Administration.

## 5. Conclusion and Application to Teacher Training in the New Cluster

Three main ideas could be summarized from the review presented above, (1) Teacher education is still the focused mission of the new university cluster, (2) Area-based education and management are important concepts applicable to local service and improvement of the cluster, (3) The cluster should be aware that local and international are new challenge for them.

Teacher education has been a long-time mission of Rajabhat university, whose root is a teacher training school or college. The transition of the institutions from schools to universities, where other areas of specialization could be developed and provided, but preservice and in-service teacher training is included in all members of the cluster and should be continued their best practices.

Area-based concept might mean different for academics, but the concept will be more useful and more effective implementation if the concept is comprehended in the combination of geographic, influenced factors of the area, locality-focused goals. Geographical boundary should be drawn according to common shares of environmental, social, cultural, political, and economical factors. These area-based factors

should be used for planning, implementing, and evaluating teacher training mission of the cluster. New teacher graduates should appreciate their communities, decide to work in their locality, improve education and life in the communities, and become good local citizens. And finally, cluster university administrators, lecturers, and supportive personnel should have a clear vision that their mission is to serve locality, but apply both local and international wisdoms, information, knowledge, and theories.

## Abbreviations

UN United Nations

## Author Contributions

**Saman Asawapoom:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Project administration, Validation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing

**Pongsak Thongpanchang:** Data curation, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Resources, Validation, Writing – review & editing

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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