

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

According to the Ministry of Education of Thailand or MOE, many countries including Thailand are turning to a knowledge-based society. Many organizations have been encouraging their people to study both inside and outside the class. As a result, many projects have occurred to support the educational system of Thailand by giving funds for students who are in low income families. An interesting fund is called “One District One Scholarship Project” or the ODOS project.

The major aim of the ODOS project is to give an opportunity to Thai youths to study abroad in order to bring updated knowledge and new technology to help develop Thailand.

The Office of the Civil Service Commission or the OCSC, which is responsible for overseeing the Royal Thai Government scholars abroad, describes the characteristic of the ODOS project as follows:

One District One Scholarship is the scholarship provided to upper secondary school students all over Thailand to pursue their Bachelor Degree. As the name of the scholarship suggests, the Scholarship is given to all districts (and sub-districts) throughout the country. The scholarship recipients are selected through their academic excellence and low family income bracket. It provides educational opportunities for scholars to further their studies in Thailand or abroad. The Scholarship specifies that scholars must choose to study in non-English speaking countries that are excellent in various fields.

The ODOS project that began in 2004 (B.E. 2547) is known as the ODOS batch 1 and continued to 2006 (B.E. 2549) is also known as the ODOS batch 2 during P.M. Taksin Shinawatra’s Government. The recipients of the ODOS project have the right to select the countries to study themselves. The countries that the students had selected to study are France, Japan, Germany, China, Sweden, Denmark, Spain, Italy, Russia, Canada, the Netherlands, Malaysia, India, Egypt, and Switzerland.

According to the statistics of the ODOS students carried out by the OCSC, there were a total of 1,479 students in batch 1 and batch 2 from the beginning. However, the country that most students had selected to pursue their Bachelor degree was the Republic of France. There were 365 students who selected to study in France which accounts for 24.68% of the ODOS students who are studying abroad. Compared to the ODOS students who are studying in other countries, the number of the ODOS students who could not complete their programs and had to return to Thailand was high.

Recently, the statistic of the OCSC in October 2008 reported that the number of ODOS students studying in France was 276 out of 1,242, which accounts for 22.22%. However, there were some differences between ODOS batch 1 and batch 2. Before going aboard ODOS batch 1 students had attended a 10-day-orientation program which provided them with general information about the selected countries, whereas ODOS batch 2 students had an opportunity to attend a 15-day-orientation and a 3-month language preparation course.

For these several reasons, it could be said that ODOS batch 2 students had a better opportunity than ODOS batch 1 students in terms of cultural and language adjustment. Therefore, this research will be conducted to find out whether a 3-month language preparation course has any influence on the self-adjustment between two groups of the ODOS students.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study aims to answer the following question

Main Problem

1.2.1 How well do the two batches of ODOS students (batch 1 and 2) adjust themselves in a foreign cultural and academic environment?

Sub-Problems

1.2.2 Which group of the ODOS students can adjust better: batch 1 or batch 2?

1.2.3 What are the suggestions for Improvement for the next ODOS project?

1.3 OBJECTIVES TO THE STUDY

Main Objective

1.3.1 To compare the success of self-adjustment in foreign cultural and academic environment between two batches of ODOS students (batch 1 and 2), while they are living in France.

Sub-Objectives

1.3.2 To compare the ability of adjustment between two group of students

1.3.3 To identify whether the French language course that the ODOS batch 2 students attended in Thailand has contributed to their successful self-adjustment in France

1.3.4 To provide suggestion for future ODOS students

1.4 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Definitions of terms of the study are the following:

Self-Adjustment: refers to the ODOS students' success in adjusting to new environments especially foreign cultural and academic environment.

Foreign cultural environment: refers to a foreign cultural environment in the form of cultural differences that the ODOS students need to adjust themselves while they are living in France i.e. food, weather, greeting, language in everyday use and community.

Academic environment: refers to a new environment in the form of different academic perception that the ODOS students need to adjust themselves while they are living in France i.e. language in academic matters, perception of knowledge attended in course (in France classroom learning means applied and analytical thinking, while Thai classroom focuses on learning to pass an exam) and academic evaluation.

The ODOS student: refers to the recipients of the One District One Scholarship project who are pursuing a Bachelor Degree both in Thailand and abroad. The ODOS students are divided into two groups. There are *ODOS batch 1 students* who received the scholarship in 2004 and *ODOS batch 2 students* who received the scholarship in 2006.

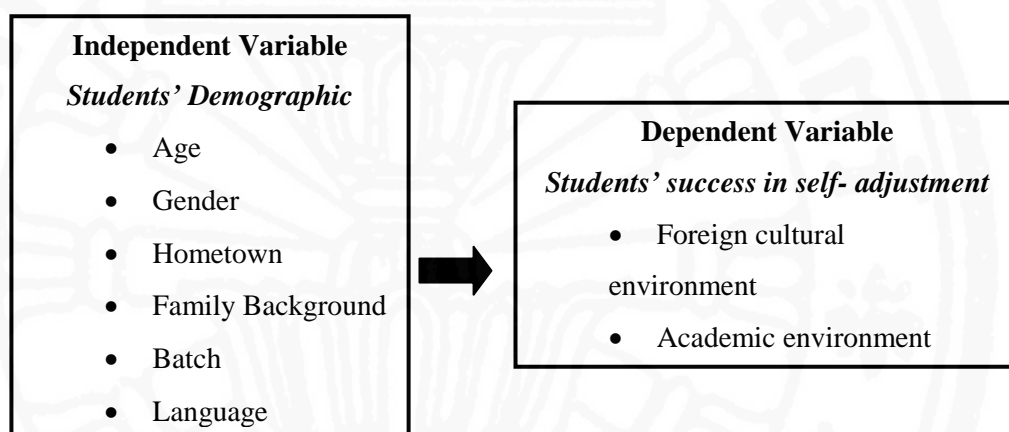
Framework of the Study

The study will include the success of adjustment, demographic characteristics of the ODOS students and the components or element

Independent Variables

The independent variables which are attributed to the ODOS students are the demographics of the students. (shown in Figure 1)

Figure 1. Conceptual diagram of the ODOS students' adjustment.



1.5 HYPOTHESIS

The recent study of Chirkov and his colleagues reveals that the motivation for moving abroad to get an education is a powerful predictor of international students' adjustment (Chirkov, Safdar, Guzman & Playford, 2007). Since the family income of the ODOS students' is low, they need to grasp the opportunities to get higher education without troubling their family. Erikson's statement on individual development (1968) which was cited in Poduska (1980) mentioned that "the ability to adapt oneself to changing circumstances is a mark of maturity." Since the Self-concept is developed through experiences, time is needed to adjust oneself to a new environment. Besides, batch 1 students have been staying in France two years longer than the batch 2 students.

H₁: ODOS batch 1 students will successfully adjust themselves to a new foreign environment better than batch 2 students.

However, as mentioned previously, ODOS batch 2 students had an opportunity to attend a 15-day-orientation and a 3-month language preparation course before going abroad while ODOS batch 1 students only attended a 10-day-orientation program.

H₂: ODOS batch 2 students will successfully adjust themselves to the foreign cultural environment better than batch 1 students do.

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The samples in the study consist of two batches of ODOS students who are studying in France during 2008-2009 academic year; the first group went to France in 2004 and the second group went to France in 2006. The ODOS students who have already come back from France and are furthering their study in Thailand are not included in the Study. The self-adjustment in foreign cultural environment in this study will relate to culture i.e. food, weather, greetings, language outside the class and interaction with foreigners; however, this study will exclude dressing, French local culture, and interaction with Thai students. In addition, the self-adjustment in foreign academic environment in the study will focus on managing study plans, academic subjects i.e. language proficiency in academic matters interaction with lecturers and classmates, the method of teaching and dealing with facilities for academic purpose; on the contrary, it will not include interaction with other Thais in the classroom.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The result of this study will reveal the differing perceptions of adjustment to a new environment between batch 1 and batch 2 ODOS students. The advantage of conducting the Study is to decrease the number of students who return from France to study in Thailand. It is expected that the research will lead to a better understanding of why and how these students can become more adjusted to foreign culture and academic environment. Furthermore, the results of the research will help guide the concerned government organizations in how to prevent and solve problems for ODOS students who are studying abroad.

1.8 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The study on “self-adjustment of students in One District One Scholarship (ODOS) Project: a case study of the comparison between batch 1 and batch 2 of ODOS students in France” consists of five chapters:

Chapter One: Introduction to the study background, statement of problem, objectives of the study, definitions and variables, scope of the study, and significance of the study.

Chapter Two: Literature review explaining definition of the term adjustment, the self-concept, the concept of cultural dimension, and relevant studies.

Chapter Three: Subjects, materials, procedures of data collection and analysis.

Chapter Four: Findings report and data analysis.

Chapter Five: Summary of the study, summary of findings, discussions, conclusions and recommendations for further research.