

## Unpacking the “Crisis” Discourse on Small Schools Policy in Thailand

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Policy talks, newspaper articles and public rhetoric on Small Schools are surrounded with the “crisis” discourse. The scandalization of Small Schools includes it is being resource ridden, ineffective and unequal. Small Schools are endowed with limited financial and human resources – not enough money and not enough teachers to run the schools. Consequently, students are left with badly managed schools and poorly run curriculum. These narratives result in a straightjacket policy recommendation of closing the schools or consolidating with larger schools in the area. This paper unpacks the “crisis” discourse in managing and leading Small Schools in Thailand – what are the foundation philosophy and factors impeding the development of Small Schools? The “crisis” discourse is built around three factors. Firstly, it is grounded on the economic centric view of education. Cost-benefit analysis makes Small Schools bad contenders for “quality schooling.” Secondly, the wind of “decentralization” puts pressure on Small Schools calling for administrative cadre at the schools to be independent and self-sufficient. Thirdly, the reliance on ONET as an equivalent of “quality” education obviates one’s understanding on Small Schools and what their potential can be. Such analysis calls for a more comprehensive view of leadership. Small Schools need leaders who can mobilize resources for the schools and lead meaningful classroom development. The combination of management driven and instructional leaders requires Small Schools leaders to be equipped with multiple skills to manage from above and lead from below.

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