



The management of lunch program for primary schooling and pre-schooling students

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E.2560, Chapter 5 – Duties of the State, Section 54 stipulates that the State shall ensure that every child receives quality education for twelve years from pre-school to the completion of compulsory education free of charge. The State shall ensure that young children receive care and development prior to education under paragraph one to develop their physical body, mind, discipline, emotion, society and intelligence in accordance with their age, by also promoting and supporting local administrative organizations and the private sector to participate in such undertaking.

To ensure that every child receives quality education for twelve years includes the provision of sufficient necessities to support an education accomplishment; in particular, the management in providing lunch during academic year in accordance with above constitutional provision. And the 20-year National Strategy (B.E.2561 – 2580) – the Human Capital Development and Strengthening dimension – aims that the human capital development and strengthening are key driving forces for quality of national development in conformity with relevant provisions of law i.e., the Annual Appropriation Act that allots general academic subsidy to local administrative organizations for the operation of lunch program or the Fund for Primary school lunch program Act B.E.2535. It is discovered that the State has continually provided resources and fundings to support the lunch program for primary-schooling and pre-schooling students, which is co-hosted by Ministry of Education and Ministry of Interior. However, there currently are about 884,670 students – out of 3,831,367 students or about 23.08% – in the lunch program, nationwide, who still have malnutrition (March, 2020). Plus, there are facts periodically presented on medias that the operation of school lunch program is still under appropriate level of efficiency.

The Ombudsman was mindful of the status quo, then assigned the bureau of State duties inspection to figure out the reason of State agencies not fully comply to Chapter 5 – Duties of the State. Based on the data analysis and the Ombudsman discussion with related



agencies – Director, Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC); the system developer of automatic Thai school lunch program, the community nutritionist – as well as the regional site visits i.e., Surat Thani province, Chonburi province, Khon Kaen province, Mahasarakham province, Kalasin province, Samut Songkram province, and Chiangrai province, it discovered that the inefficiencies of responsible agencies in managing lunch program for primary schooling and pre-schooling students were from

1. The annual budget allocation of financial subsidy for lunch program in academic institutes, around the country, was delayed over the beginning of semester and resulted in a tardy acquisition process and shortage of fund in providing lunch. The school, then, chose to reduce quantity and quality of food which accordingly impacted the nutrition level.

2. The failure to employ the community nutritionist, nationwide, in observance to fraud prevention measures for student lunch program budget, specified by Department of Local Administration, Ministry of Interior. This resulted in a shortage of nutritionist who is responsible for students' nutrition issues in several areas nationwide.

3. The average cost of lunch in the Educational Opportunity Expansion School was under 20 baht because the budget of lunch program excludes secondary schooling students in the Educational Opportunity Expansion School (the primary school that contains secondary schooling program).

4. The e-bidding execution on more than 500K budget allocation for student lunch financial subsidy – in accordance with Public Procurement and Supplies Administration Act, B.E.2560 – enlarged an average lunch cost, per student, from the bidder's extra profit. This resulted in a deduction of average lunch cost per student to under 20 baht which also significantly remarked lower quality lunch.

5. The regulations and guidelines – in managing excessive subsidy for lunch program – followed by Ministry of Finance and several academic institutes are contradictory to the ones followed by Department of Local Administration. This caused Department of Local Administration a delayed action in considering subsidy for lunch program; paused an allocation to the academic institutes; and impacted student lunch providing in terms of proper quality and quantity.



The Ombudsman intended to sustainably resolve upper problem through integrated management mechanism from all relevant agencies in order to provide – to primary-schooling and pre-schooling students – a care and wellness in accordance with The Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E.2560, Section 54 and the 20-year National Strategy (B.E.2561 – 2580). By virtue of Section 230 (3) of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E.2560, the Ombudsman, reported – to the consideration of Cabinet – the fact of State agencies failure to fully comply with Chapter 5 – Duties of the State and recommendations as follows.

1. The delay in allocating annual budget of financial subsidy for lunch program in academic institutes around the country.

1.1. Recommended a development of mutual electronic database between Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Education for the purpose of retrieving useful data in a management of lunch program and generating real time output; for example, the time that the allotted budget of lunch program is transferred – the date that Office of the Decentralization to the Local Government Organization Committee acknowledged and announced the allocation, the date Office of the Decentralization to the Local Government Organization Committee submitted the request of budget allocation for lunch program to Department of Local Administration, the date that Budget Bureau and Comptroller General's Department approved budget to Department of Local Administration, the date that Department of Local Administration received allotted budget, the date that the Local Government Organization received allotted budget from Department of Local Administration and the date that school received allotted budget from the Local Government Organization – in order to support a timely budget allocation, to accommodate relevant agencies for the sakes of transparency and harmonization. In addition, the Ombudsman assigned Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Digital Economy and Society, National Electronics and Computer Technology Center (NECTEC) to mutually support the development of electronic database and must be completed by 360 days.



1.2. Recommended Department of Local Administration to establish a regulation in disbursing subsidy for school lunch program within 7 days after completely receiving all required documents.

2. The failure to employ the community nutritionist, nationwide.

2.1. Recommended the Local Government Organization to develop its staffing plan with a minimum of 2 nutritionists per district area covering this two-year epidemic duration of Corona Virus 2019 (COVID – 19). The next phase is to have at least 1 nutritionist in each sub-district area. And the later phase is to have a nutritionist in every Child Development Centers and schools under supervision of Local Government Organizations and Ministry of Education, including the Border Patrol Police Schools and Phra Pariyattidhamma Schools. And the progress must be updated in a 6-month timeframe until nutritionists are fully employed in all local areas.

2.2. In case of employment impossibility by any reasons, recommended Department of Local Administration to develop a guidebook and a qualifications enhancement course as well as an extra compensatory funding for the food and nutrition teachers responsible for lunch and the baby-sitters at the Child Development Center including the public health technical officers or nurses working at Tambon Health Promoting Hospital for areas missing the local nutritionists. In addition, recommended to develop the Village Health Volunteers – through trainings, skills improvement and guidebooks – who are familiar to the student family.

2.3. Recommended Ministry of Public Health to assign the nutritionists at the public health centers and at local hospitals a mentor role by establishing standard of practice and reference of provincial nourishment and culture.

2.4. Recommended Ministry of Education and Ministry of Public Health to develop a mutual staffing plan (staffing needs, staffing allocation, staffing budget) in producing graduates, staffing development plan, and comprehensive program in managing community-based food and nutrition for children health and well-being in which Thai Health Promotion Foundation supports and serves as a liaison with Ministry of Interior, Ministry of



Education, Ministry of Public Health, and local universities with degree program in Home Sciences, Food and Nutrition e.g. Rajabhat university, Kasetsart university, other provincial universities, Boromarajonani College of Nursing, College of Public Health, given a 10-year timeframe of completion (10-year plan during B.E.2564 – 2573) in order to have a long-term solution on a nutritionist shortage problem.

3. The average cost of lunch in the Educational Opportunity Expansion School was under 20 baht because the budget of lunch program excludes secondary schooling students in the Educational Opportunity Expansion School (the primary school that contains secondary schooling program)

3.1. Recommended Ministry of Education to request an assistance from Office of the Decentralization to the Local Government Organization Committee in preliminary use of their own income to fund lunch for secondary-schooling students in the Educational Opportunity Expansion School and to perform a review on accurate number of students. If necessary, Ministry of Education should process a request of supplementary appropriations to the Ad-hoc Committee on the consideration of Supplementary Appropriations Bill for the B.E.2564 fiscal year or for that particular year.

3.2. Recommended Ministry of Education to support a school request for funding lunch program in the primary schools – only the part of performance profit from the execution of funding for lunch program in the primary schools – from the School Lunch Project Fund Bureau, Ministry of Education, according to Section 4 in conjunction to Section 11(2) of the Fund for Primary school lunch program Act B.E.2535, to encourage students to do in-house farming – growing rice/vegetables/ fruits, raising pigs/fishes, processing, etc. – and add up these farming products into lunch program.

4. The e-bidding execution on more than 500K budget allocation for student lunch financial subsidy – in accordance with Public Procurement and Supplies Administration Act, B.E.2560.



Recommended Ministry of Finance to suggest the Public Procurement and Supplies Administration Policy Commission to propose an exemption of executing through e-bidding process – in accordance with item 31 of the Ministry of Finance’s ministerial regulation RE: Public Procurement and Supplies Administration, B.E.2560 – for the procurement of student lunch program in primary-schooling and pre-schooling levels. Ministry of Finance presented the complete proposal – to the State Audit Office of the Kingdom of Thailand – and accordingly to be proclaimed as the Royal Decree, by virtue of Section 6 and 7 paragraph 3 of Public Procurement and Supplies Administration Act, B.E.2560.

5. The regulations and guidelines – in managing excessive subsidy for lunch program – followed by Ministry of Finance and several academic institutes are contradictory to the ones followed by Department of Local Administration.

Recommend the Cabinet to address this problem of contradictory regulations and practices in managing excessive subsidy for lunch program and work out the solution to the maximum advantage for students. The cabinet is able to use the regulations of the School Lunch Project Fund Bureau RE: Bureau’s receiving money, disbursing money, saving money and acquiring profits – under the Fund for Primary school lunch program Act B.E.2535 – as a guideline – for a lunch program responsible person – in advancing cash to observe 1-week timeframe of expenditure, as appropriate.