

Can SchoolNet Bridge the Digital Divide in Education in Thailand? Perspectives from Policy Makers to End-users

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ABSTRACT

The SchoolNet Thailand, a computer network for Thai schools, was launched by the National Electronics and Computer Technology Center (NECTEC) in 1995 to link secondary schools in Bangkok Metropolitan and provincial areas to the Internet. Under NECTEC's eight-year development of increasing the quality of education, the SchoolNet project has more than 5,000 schools as members. Since then, SchoolNet has become a part of EdNet, the national education network that has the aim to provide Internet connections to schools all over the kingdom. The purposes of SchoolNet Thailand are to develop information technology skills for teachers and to create online lessons covering subjects such as computer, mathematics, science, foreign and Thai languages. As well as develop its website for exchange news and information on activities and training. SchoolNet is the student-centric educational network that provides equal opportunities for students to get access to the Internet, and the contents and delivery of educational services. Based on NECTEC's evaluation report in 2005, the problem of Internet connection still exists in small secondary schools and some schools that have limited budget. This research proposal investigates the role of SchoolNet in the post-NECTEC era in bridging the digital divide in education among Thai students in terms of access to technology, access to information made available by technology, and access to educators trained in the combination of technology and information into the education experience. The research question will find out how the three accesses can satisfy educational needs both in terms of Internet connection, the contents and delivery of educational services. We will conduct survey research. The sampling frame is secondary schools that are members of the SchoolNet project. Participants will be secondary school principals, teachers, and students. We will use the stratified sampling method to get participants from each regional area to take part in this study. Moreover, this study uses two techniques to collect data consisting of three sets of survey questionnaires. The Likert scale is used to measure satisfaction level of the content and delivery services. We use descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage rates, arithmetic mean, and standard deviation to analyze data. The data are analyzed using the program SPSS for Windows. We also interview policy makers of the Ministry of Education of Thailand for their future plan and visions on this network.