

# **Developing Educational Quality in Basic Education in Thailand: Guidelines for Internal Quality Assurance in Schools and Preparation for External Quality Assurance**

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## **Abstract**

This article examines the development of educational quality in Thailand's Basic Education Sector, focusing on Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) approaches and preparations for External Quality Assurance (EQA). Rooted in the National Education Act of 1999 and its amendments, the study highlights the critical role of quality assurance in enhancing educational standards to meet 21st-century demands. Despite legislative frameworks, significant challenges hinder effective implementation, affecting overall educational quality. The analysis identifies strengths and weaknesses within the current quality assurance system and offers actionable recommendations to improve IQA mechanisms and better prepare schools for EQA, ultimately aiming to elevate educational outcomes in Thailand.

## **Keywords**

Internal Quality Assurance, External Quality Assurance, Basic Education, Strengths and Weaknesses of QA Systems

## **Introduction**

Education is a fundamental cornerstone for national development, especially at the basic education level, which lays the foundation for essential knowledge and skills for young people. Quality assurance in education is a crucial mechanism for elevating educational standards to meet the needs of society and national development in the 21st century.

In Thailand, education quality assurance is enshrined in the National Education Act of 1999 and its amendments (Second Amendment, 2002), mandating that all educational institutions conduct internal quality assurance (IQA) and undergo external quality evaluations (EQA) to enhance the quality and standards of education. Despite these legislative measures, the implementation of quality assurance in Thailand's basic education sector faces several challenges and obstacles, impacting the overall quality of education in the country.

This article aims to present the development of education quality in Thailand's basic education sector by exploring internal quality assurance approaches within schools and preparation for external quality evaluations. It will analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the current quality assurance system and provide recommendations for improving internal quality assurance mechanisms and preparing schools for external quality evaluations.

## **The Current State of Basic Education Institutions in Implementing Educational Quality Assurance**

The current state of basic education institutions in implementing internal educational quality assurance and preparing for external quality evaluations can be summarized from the observations made during school visits. As a supervising professor for student teachers in higher education institutions, responsible for overseeing the academic operations of basic education institutions in various provinces in the southern region (Songkhla, Phatthalung, Satun, Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat), I have witnessed the efforts to develop and improve the quality assurance system to make it more effective. However, there remain several challenges that schools need to continuously address and develop. The goal is to integrate the quality assurance system into the organizational culture, thereby leading to routine improvements in the quality of education.

When interviewing or conversing with school administrators and observing the academic operations of schools, certain observations regarding the current state of internal educational quality assurance and preparations for external quality evaluations emerged. There are nine key issues related to the current state of basic education institutions in implementing educational quality assurance:

### **Issue 1: Changing Educational Concepts and Policies**

As most educational institutions adapt to the new concept of continuous quality improvement rather than merely aiming for evaluation, there has been a shift in policies to align with changing educational standards and evaluation criteria. This adjustment remains a significant challenge, particularly in fostering understanding and acceptance among staff at all levels regarding the changes, especially in educational concepts and policies.

### **Issue 2: Developing Internal Quality Assurance Systems and Mechanisms**

Various schools have undertaken efforts to enhance the efficiency of their internal quality assurance systems by integrating them into regular operations and management. Educational quality development plans that align with the context and needs of the institutions have been formulated. However, problems persist in the concrete and continuous implementation of these plans.

### **Issue 3: Creating Participation and Quality Culture**

Despite efforts to engage staff at all levels in quality assurance activities and to build a quality culture within the institution, some personnel still perceive these efforts as additional burdens. There is also a lack of awareness regarding the importance of continuous quality improvement.

### **Issue 4: Developing Information Systems and Knowledge Management**

Educational institutions are working on developing information systems to support quality assurance by utilizing technology for data storage and analysis, as well as knowledge management for sharing best practices. However, there are limitations in developing the technological skills of staff and utilizing data for policy decision-making by administrators, which still lacks comprehensive implementation.

### **Issue 5: Preparing for External Quality Evaluations**

Even though schools are preparing for external quality evaluations by analyzing performance against educational standards, creating self-assessment reports, and rehearsing evaluation processes, there are still issues in linking internal quality assurance with external evaluations. This includes aligning the operations according to internal quality assurance standards with the external evaluation criteria.

### **Issue 6: Developing Quality Assurance Personnel**

Schools still rely on individual teachers responsible for educational quality assurance as the mechanism for conducting and reporting quality assurance activities. Although there are training and development programs to enhance knowledge and skills in quality assurance, there is a lack of continuity in applying this knowledge to actual practice. Additionally, frequent transfers or changes of personnel responsible for quality assurance result in a lack of continuity in the work.

### **Issue 7: Building Networks and Collaboration**

Some educational institutions still lack initiatives to prioritize building collaborative networks for quality assurance with other schools and external organizations, which are essential for mutual learning and sharing experiences. Additionally, there is a lack of practical application of best practices, which hampers the continuous transmission of quality assurance knowledge into effective practices.

### **Issue 8: Adapting to Changes in Educational Criteria and Standards**

Schools face challenges in keeping up with changes in external quality evaluation criteria and educational standards. There is a need for better awareness and understanding of new criteria, and adapting work processes to align with these changes continues to impact the development of the quality assurance system.

### **Issue 9: Academic Leadership of School Administrators**

Effective academic leadership is crucial for driving quality assurance as a tool to develop educational quality according to basic educational standards. However, there is a disconnection between academic and curriculum management and the implementation of annual quality development plans. This disjointed approach makes it seem as if quality assurance is separate from academic and curriculum management, even though they are inherently interconnected.

In summary, the current state of quality assurance in basic education institutions is influenced by various factors that affect the development of educational quality. Quality assurance should be used as a tool, mechanism, and goal to elevate and drive educational quality according to set standards. This can be analyzed by examining the strengths and weaknesses of the quality assurance system in basic education in Thailand, drawing insights from various academic studies and concepts over time.

## **Strengths and Weaknesses of the Educational Quality Assurance System**

The current state of quality assurance operations in basic education institutions leads to an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the educational quality assurance system in basic education in Thailand. Summarized from the synthesis of documents and key concepts (Office of the National Education Commission, 1999; Wiji Srisa-arn, 2015; Suwimon Wongwanich, 2010; Paitoon Sinlarat, 2014; Somwang Pithyanuwat, 2011; Wichai Wongyai, 2013; Apinan Sirirattanchit, 2015), the strengths and weaknesses are identified as follows:

### **Strengths of the Educational Quality Assurance System**

Point 1: The educational quality assurance system operates under a legal framework. Thailand has the National Education Act, which mandates the implementation of an educational quality assurance system. This provides a clear legal basis for its operation.

Point 2: The implementation of external quality assessment is overseen by a dedicated agency. The Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) has been established as a public organization responsible for conducting external quality assessments. Having a specialized agency in charge of this task is beneficial, as it ensures assessments are conducted from an external perspective.

Point 3: Continuous development of the system. The criteria and methods for educational quality assessment are regularly revised and improved in line with the cycles of external quality assessment. This ensures that the system remains relevant to changing contexts.

Point 4: Efforts to build a quality culture within educational institutions. There is a growing awareness of the importance and value of the quality assurance system, which helps to encourage institutions to continuously improve their quality. This leads to enhanced educational management quality.

### **Weaknesses of the Educational Quality Assurance System**

Point 1: Excessive documentation workload. Despite efforts to reduce the paperwork burden to accommodate assessments, educational institutions still face overwhelming documentation requirements. This reduces the time teachers and educational staff have for improving teaching and learning, ultimately affecting the quality of education.

Point 2: Evaluation focused more on outcomes than processes. Evaluations often emphasize quantitative results rather than the quality of teaching and learning processes. This can lead to teachers and institutions developing a negative attitude towards the system, viewing it more as an audit rather than a supportive or mentoring process.

Point 3: Lack of genuine stakeholder participation. Quality assurance efforts are often perceived as the sole responsibility of administrators and teachers, leading to a lack of real involvement from students, parents, and the community in the educational quality assurance process.

Point 4: Inconsistency between evaluation criteria and diverse contexts. This issue highlights that certain evaluation criteria may not be suitable for the varying contexts of different educational institutions, especially in remote areas. Applying a single standard that lacks flexibility for different contexts can result in disparate evaluation outcomes.

Point 5: Lack of concrete application of evaluation results. In reality, many educational institutions struggle to use evaluation results effectively to improve the quality of education. The recommendations from educational quality assessments often do not appear in development plans or become concrete goals for educational quality improvement.

Analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of the quality assurance system for basic education institutions, based on documents and key concepts from Thai education scholars, reveals these issues. These problems are linked to the reasons why educational quality assurance and assessments often fail to achieve their intended goals or educational standards.

### **Reasons for the Lack of Success in Internal Quality Assurance**

The failure of educational quality assurance to achieve success—where outcomes do not meet educational standards, or where the quality assurance process has not become a key mechanism in educational management and does not align with external quality assurance criteria—can be attributed to several key factors:

#### **Reason 1: Misunderstanding of Quality Assurance**

Many staff members in educational institutions may perceive quality assurance as an additional burden rather than an integral part of their regular work processes. There is often a lack of understanding of the true goals of quality assurance, with an emphasis on merely passing evaluations rather than genuinely improving quality. Furthermore, there is a misconception that internal and external quality assurance are separate and unrelated processes.

#### **Reason 2: Lack of Participation from All Levels of Personnel**

Quality assurance efforts are often limited to those directly responsible, without the cooperation of all personnel within the organization. There is a lack of awareness and participation from staff at all levels in the quality assurance process, and some personnel may view it as solely the responsibility of the administration or the designated quality assurance team.

#### **Reason 3: Lack of Systematic Planning and Implementation**

This may arise from the absence of clear and contextually relevant quality assurance plans within the institution. There is often a failure to integrate quality assurance with regular tasks and the institution's development plans. Additionally, the quality assurance process may not fully or continuously follow the PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle.

#### **Reason 4: Lack of Development in Information Systems for Quality Assurance**

Inefficient data storage and collection systems result in incomplete, inaccurate, and outdated information. There is often a lack of effective use of information technology in managing data for quality assurance, and the analysis and utilization of data for quality improvement are not efficiently conducted.

**Reason 5: Lack of Continuous Development of Personnel in Quality Assurance**

Personnel often lack the knowledge and skills necessary for effective quality assurance. There may be insufficient or irregular training and development of staff in quality assurance, as well as a lack of strong team-building to drive quality assurance efforts forward.

**Reason 6: Lack of Support from Administrators**

The failure of quality assurance efforts may be due to administrators not placing sufficient importance on the process. This includes a lack of clear policies and direction for quality assurance efforts or inadequate allocation of resources necessary for its implementation.

**Reason 7: Lack of Integration Between Internal and External Quality Assurance**

There may be no application of external quality assessment results to improve and develop internal quality assurance systems. Institutions may lack proper preparation for external evaluations, and the internal quality assurance process may not align with external evaluation criteria.

**Reason 8: Lack of Quality Culture in Educational Institutions**

This can occur when there is no instilling of values and positive attitudes towards continuous quality improvement. The environment and atmosphere that promote quality development might be lacking, and personnel may not see the importance of ongoing quality improvement.

**Reason 9: Lack of Systematic Monitoring and Evaluation**

There may be no regular tracking of progress in quality assurance efforts, no evaluation of performance, or use of results to make improvements. Additionally, there may be no consistent reporting of quality assurance activities to stakeholders.

**Reason 10: Lack of Integration Between Quality Assurance and Educational Quality Development**

Quality assurance may be viewed as separate from educational quality development. There might be no use of quality assurance results to improve teaching and learning, and no connection between quality assurance and curriculum development, teaching practices, and assessment.

**Reason 11: Lack of Continuity in Implementation**

Quality assurance efforts might be rushed only in preparation for upcoming evaluations, lacking continuous development and improvement between evaluation cycles. Changes in responsibility or administration can also lead to discontinuity in efforts.

**Reason 12: Lack of Networking and Knowledge Sharing**

There may be no collaboration networks for quality assurance with other educational institutions, no exchange of knowledge or lessons learned from successful schools, and no application of best practices from external sources to improve the institution's own quality assurance system.

**Reason 13: Lack of Effective Communication and Understanding**

There may be inadequate communication regarding the goals, processes, and outcomes of quality assurance. This includes a lack of understanding among personnel about their roles and

responsibilities in quality assurance and unclear or inconsistent communication of quality assurance information.

#### **Reason 14: Lack of Adaptation to Changes in Criteria and Standards**

Institutions may struggle to keep up with changes in external quality assessment criteria, fail to monitor and understand evolving educational standards, or lack preparation for changes in the quality assurance system.

#### **Reason 15: Lack of Stakeholder Involvement**

There may be no opportunities for parents, the community, and other stakeholders to participate in quality assurance. Institutions may fail to listen to feedback and suggestions from stakeholders in quality development, and there may be no collaboration with external agencies in improving educational quality.

To summarize, the failure in educational quality assurance efforts can be attributed to various factors as mentioned above. Addressing these issues requires collaboration from all stakeholders, including administrators, teachers, staff, students, parents, and the community. This cooperation is crucial to creating understanding, adjusting attitudes, and jointly developing an efficient internal quality assurance system that aligns with the context of each educational institution. Such efforts will lead to genuine improvement in educational quality and ensure readiness for effective external quality evaluations.

### **Development and Preparedness Strategies for Schools to Meet Quality Evaluation Standards:**

#### **Strategy 1: Establishing a Quality Culture in Educational Institutions**

The Total Quality Management (TQM) concept by W. Edwards Deming forms the foundation for building a quality culture in schools. Edward Sallis (2002) adapted this idea to education, emphasizing the involvement of everyone in the organization in continuous quality improvement. Schools should raise awareness and understanding of the importance of educational quality among all staff levels, set clear quality policies, promote teamwork and participation in quality development, and provide continuous professional development in quality assurance.

#### **Strategy 2: Developing an Internal Quality Assurance System**

According to Professor Dr. Somwang Pitiyanuwat (2011), schools should focus on self-development using Deming's PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle. Schools should create development plans that align with their specific context and needs, implement these plans systematically and continuously, regularly monitor and evaluate the execution, and use the evaluation results for continuous improvement.

#### **Strategy 3: Developing Information Systems for Quality Assurance**

Professor Dr. Paitoon Sinlarat (2014) emphasized the importance of using information technology in managing data for quality assurance, in line with Daniel J. Power's (2002) Decision Support Systems concept. Schools should develop comprehensive and up-to-date databases, utilize

technology for data storage, analysis, and reporting, and train staff in using IT for quality assurance.

#### **Strategy 4: Implementing Authentic Assessment**

Grant Wiggins and McTighe Jay (1998) proposed the concept of authentic assessment, which focuses on evaluating students' actual performance. Associate Professor Dr. Suwimon Wongwanich (2010) emphasized assessment for learning improvement. Schools should design assessments that reflect students' real competencies and skills, employ diverse assessment methods like observation, interviews, portfolios, and encourage students to participate in self-assessment and peer assessment.

#### **Strategy 5: Developing Academic Leadership**

Michael Fullan (2007) highlighted the importance of academic leadership in driving change and improving educational quality. Professor Dr. Teera Runcharoen (2007) stressed the role of school administrators in enhancing educational quality. Schools should develop leaders with strong academic leadership skills, involve administrators in supervising and improving teaching and learning, and build academic cooperation networks both within and outside the school.

#### **Strategy 6: Building a Professional Learning Community (PLC)**

Richard DuFour and colleagues (2010) introduced the concept of a Professional Learning Community, which emphasizes collaboration among teachers to improve teaching practices. This aligns with Associate Professor Dr. Wichai Wongyai's (2013) idea of collaborative professional development for teachers. Schools should facilitate time and space for teachers to share knowledge and collaboratively improve teaching, encourage classroom research to enhance teaching quality, and foster a culture of knowledge exchange and constructive feedback.

#### **Strategy 7: Developing Learner-Centered Curriculum and Instruction**

John Dewey emphasized the importance of learning environments where students construct knowledge themselves. This is in line with the ideas of Professor Dr. Sompong Jitradub and colleagues (2008), who advocated for learning aligned with students' development and interests. Schools should focus on developing curricula that reflect the context and needs of learners, promote diverse and hands-on teaching methods, and create learning environments that encourage self-directed learning.

#### **Strategy 8: Preparing for 21st Century Skill Development**

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2006) proposed a framework for the essential skills students need for future success. This resonates with Professor Dr. Kriangsak Chareonwongsak's (2012) focus on developing skills required in the modern world. Schools should update curricula and teaching activities to foster 21st-century skills, train teachers to effectively promote these skills, and create environments and resources that support the development of such skills.

The above strategies provide a comprehensive approach for schools to prepare for quality evaluations, not only aiming to meet evaluation standards but also promoting long-term educational improvement. These efforts ensure that quality assurance becomes an integral part of continuous educational development, ultimately enhancing the overall quality of education in the long run.

## **Promoting Educational Quality Development in Thailand**

To enhance the long-term quality of education in Thailand, several strategies can be adopted to establish a robust quality assurance system. These strategies are based on innovative and transformative educational concepts:

### **Concept 1: Creating an Innovative Quality Culture**

This concept, based on Michael Fullan's (2011) work, emphasizes fostering an organizational culture that promotes continuous innovation and learning. Key strategies include encouraging innovative thinking at all levels within educational institutions, establishing reward systems for creative ideas and educational innovations, and organizing platforms for sharing educational innovations between schools.

### **Concept 2: Developing Transformative Educational Leadership**

Kenneth Leithwood and Doris Jantzi's (2006) concept of transformational leadership in education underscores the need for leadership that can drive change. Strategies include developing school leaders with a vision and the skills to lead transformation, promoting decentralized decision-making and participation, and creating networks of educational leaders to share experiences and best practices.

### **Concept 3: Assessment for Learning and Development**

Inspired by Dylan Wiliam's (2018) concept of "Embedded Formative Assessment," this approach advocates shifting from assessment for accountability to assessment that enhances learning. Strategies include redesigning assessments to support learning and development, implementing effective and constructive feedback systems, and promoting the use of assessment results to continuously improve teaching and learning.

### **Concept 4: Building Cross-Organizational Professional Learning Communities**

Expanding on Richard DuFour's (2004) idea of Professional Learning Communities, this concept involves fostering collaborative learning across schools and external organizations. Strategies include creating networks between schools, universities, and the private sector, organizing joint professional development activities across organizations, and developing collaborative research and development projects to elevate educational quality.

### **Concept 5: Utilizing Technology for Comprehensive Educational Quality Improvement**

This concept applies Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis's (2012) "Ubiquitous Learning" approach to improve educational quality. Strategies include developing digital platforms for learning and quality assurance, promoting the use of Big Data and AI to analyze and enhance educational quality, and creating high-quality online learning systems that are accessible anytime and anywhere.

### **Concept 6: Developing an Integrated Curriculum for the Future**

This concept is based on the OECD's (2019) "Future-ready Learning," which focuses on preparing students to navigate future changes effectively. Strategies include developing curricula that integrate interdisciplinary knowledge and skills, promoting project-based learning that connects with real-world problems, and designing assessment systems that measure higher-order thinking skills and the ability to apply knowledge.

### **Concept 7: Building Partnerships with Community and Society**

Drawing from Joyce L. Epstein et al.'s (2011) "Community Schools" concept, this idea emphasizes the collaboration between schools, communities, and businesses to enhance educational quality. Strategies include creating partnerships for curriculum development and learning activities, utilizing community resources for student learning and skill development, and integrating community service projects with academic learning.

Incorporating these concepts and strategies into the educational quality assurance framework will foster genuine educational improvement. By promoting innovation, leadership, technology use, and collaboration across sectors, these approaches aim to elevate the quality of education in Thailand in the long term, ensuring that students are well-prepared for the challenges of the future.

### **Creating a Culture of Quality: A Key Factor in Driving Educational Quality Assurance**

A culture of quality is a fundamental foundation for the sustainable development of educational quality. Building a culture of quality within educational institutions is, therefore, a key factor in driving educational quality assurance. To establish this culture of quality, there must be clear goals and processes that lead to creating shared awareness and responsibility.

A culture of quality helps all levels of staff within an educational institution recognize the importance of educational quality and take joint responsibility for continuous quality improvement. By fostering participation and collaboration, it encourages a culture of quality that motivates involvement and cooperation among staff, students, parents, and the community in the development of educational quality.

This culture of quality also inspires self-development and organizational growth by motivating staff to commit to continuous improvement, promoting learning and innovation. A culture of quality fosters an atmosphere of learning and innovation within educational institutions, leading to sustainable quality development.

A culture of quality ensures that the development of educational quality is ongoing and sustainable, rather than merely meeting requirements or evaluations.

To build a culture of quality within educational institutions, it is necessary to consider the specific context of the organization. The approach to creating a culture of quality in educational institutions can be divided into 10 key strategic areas:

- 1. Leadership Development Focused on Quality:** Strategies may include developing leaders with a vision and commitment to building a culture of quality, encouraging leaders to model quality work practices, and providing workshops to develop quality management skills for leaders at all levels.
- 2. Participation of All Levels of Staff:** Strategies may include creating an open and effective communication system within the organization, establishing quality teams

- with representatives from all areas of the institution, and organizing regular brainstorming activities to improve educational quality.
3. **Continuous Staff Development:** Strategies may involve creating a staff development plan aligned with the institution's quality goals, promoting ongoing learning and self-development through training, seminars, and study tours, and establishing mentoring systems and knowledge exchange among staff.
  4. **Building Shared Values and Beliefs:** This involves strategies such as jointly establishing core values related to the quality of educational institutions, organizing activities to foster understanding and acceptance of these quality values, and consistently communicating and reinforcing these values through various channels.
  5. **Creating Quality-Focused Systems and Processes:** Key strategies include developing an effective internal quality assurance system that aligns with the context of the educational institution, applying various quality tools like PDCA, Six Sigma, and Lean to improve educational quality, and establishing a systematic approach to monitoring and evaluating quality-related performance.
  6. **Motivation and Recognition:** Strategies in this area include implementing a system to reward and recognize outstanding personnel for their contributions to quality, organizing competitions for innovative educational quality initiatives, and establishing a performance evaluation system that emphasizes quality improvement.
  7. **Communication and Awareness:** Strategies involve creating a comprehensive communication plan for quality that targets all relevant audiences, conducting continuous educational quality awareness and promotion activities, and developing diverse communication channels to reach all target groups.
  8. **Promoting Learning and Innovation:** This requires strategies such as creating an environment conducive to learning and innovation, establishing professional learning communities, and promoting classroom research and the development of innovative teaching methods.
  9. **Building Collaborative Networks:** Strategies include forming collaborations with other educational institutions, government agencies, and the private sector to improve educational quality, organizing knowledge-sharing and lesson-learning activities with networks, and encouraging parent and community involvement in educational quality improvement.
  10. **Utilizing Technology to Support Quality Development:** Strategies involve developing information systems for educational quality management, integrating digital technology into teaching, learning, and management processes, and promoting the use of Big Data and AI for analyzing and improving educational quality.

## Discussion

Creating a culture of quality within educational institutions is a process that requires collaboration from all parties and time to establish sustainable practices. Implementing the various components and strategies requires integration and continuity to build a strong culture of quality, which will lead to sustainable educational quality development. This foundation is crucial for the successful implementation of educational quality assurance. Additionally, when applying these strategies, the context and readiness of each educational institution should be considered. It is advisable to start with strategies that are highly feasible and align with the institution's issues and needs, then

systematically expand to other strategies. Continuous monitoring and evaluation will allow institutions to refine and improve strategies, leading to a strong and sustainable culture of quality.

### **The Relationship Between Building a Quality Culture in Organizations and Quality Assurance in Basic Education Institutions**

Building a quality culture in organizations and quality assurance in education are two closely interconnected concepts in the context of basic education institutions in Thailand. Both concepts share the common goal of enhancing the quality of education and achieving sustainable development for students.

Having a quality culture in an organization involves instilling values, beliefs, and behaviors that focus on continuous quality improvement at every level of the organization, according to the context of the educational institution. This quality culture is reflected in the work of teachers, administrators, and educational personnel who are committed to improving teaching, learning, and the educational environment. Meanwhile, quality assurance in education is a process that schools use to control, monitor, and evaluate the quality of education according to established standards, aiming to ensure that students receive a high-quality education.

It is evident that the relationship between these two concepts is crucial for improving the quality of education in Thailand because they reinforce each other. A strong quality culture supports the effective implementation of educational quality assurance. When personnel in an educational institution embrace values and beliefs that prioritize quality, they will appreciate the value of the quality assurance process and fully cooperate.

This relationship fosters sustainability because quality assurance conducted without a quality culture may merely comply with requirements. However, when a quality culture is deeply rooted, quality improvement becomes a part of the school's way of life, leading to continuous and sustainable development.

It also promotes innovation, as a quality culture encourages creative thinking and the development of educational innovations, which can be used in the quality assurance process to raise educational standards.

Furthermore, it creates engagement by encouraging the involvement of all stakeholders in the school in quality assurance, not just administrators or teachers, but also students, parents, and the community. Additionally, it fosters a positive attitude, as having a quality culture transforms the perspective on quality assurance from a burden to an opportunity for development, leading to a more positive attitude among personnel toward evaluation processes and a readiness to embrace change.

However, building a strong relationship between quality culture and quality assurance in the context of Thailand still faces challenges, such as:

- a) **Misunderstandings:** Schools often perceive quality assurance as merely document preparation for evaluation, leading to a lack of genuine development of a quality culture.
- b) **Lack of Continuity:** Frequent changes in policies and administrators can disrupt the continuity of building a quality culture.
- c) **Overwhelming Workload:** Teachers and educational personnel often have heavy workloads, leaving insufficient time for fully developing a quality culture.

To strengthen the relationship between quality culture and quality assurance in basic education institutions in Thailand, the following actions should be taken:

- a) **Creating Understanding:** Provide training to educate personnel on the importance of quality culture and quality assurance in education.
- b) **Promoting Leadership:** Develop school administrators into change leaders capable of creating and maintaining a quality culture.
- c) **Improving Systems:** Reduce the burden of documentation and focus more on improving student outcomes and teaching processes.
- d) **Creating Motivation:** Establish a reward system that recognizes schools with outstanding quality cultures.
- e) **Promoting Knowledge Exchange:** Create networks among schools to share experiences and best practices in building a quality culture.

In conclusion, the relationship between building a quality culture in organizations and quality assurance in education is crucial for improving the quality of education in Thailand's basic education institutions. Strengthening this relationship will contribute to sustainable educational quality improvement and, ultimately, to the effective development of students.

## Conclusion:

The approach to internal quality assurance within educational institutions and preparation for external quality evaluations should begin with an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the current quality assurance system. Following this, recommendations should be made to improve internal quality assurance systems and to better prepare educational institutions for external evaluations.

### Key strategies include:

- a. **Building Shared Understanding:** Educate personnel at all levels about the quality assurance system and evaluation criteria.
- b. **Setting Standards and Goals:** Develop an educational quality improvement plan that aligns with the institution's context.
- c. **Developing Information Systems:** Establish a comprehensive and up-to-date data management system.
- d. **Consistent Implementation:** Continuously follow and execute the quality improvement plan.
- e. **Regular Self-Evaluation:** Conduct periodic self-assessments to monitor and evaluate progress.

- f. **Fostering a Quality Culture:** Instill values that emphasize continuous quality improvement within the organization.
- g. **Document Preparation:** Organize and systematize documentation that demonstrates the institution's performance.
- h. **Mock Evaluations:** Conduct internal evaluations that simulate the external assessment process to ensure readiness.
- i. **Encouraging Participation:** Involve all stakeholders in the quality assurance process.
- j. **Continuous Improvement:** Analyze and use evaluation results to refine and improve practices.

By systematically preparing in this manner, educational institutions can confidently face external quality evaluations, ultimately leading to sustainable improvement in the quality of education.

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