Article information:

Users who downloaded this article also downloaded:

For Authors

If you would like to write for this, or any other Emerald publication, then please use our Emerald for Authors service information about how to choose which publication to write for and submission guidelines are available for all. Please visit www.emeraldinsight.com/authors for more information.

About Emerald www.emeraldinsight.com

Emerald is a global publisher linking research and practice to the benefit of society. The company manages a portfolio of more than 290 journals and over 2,350 books and book series volumes, as well as providing an extensive range of online products and additional customer resources and services.

Emerald is both COUNTER 4 and TRANSFER compliant. The organization is a partner of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and also works with Portico and the LOCKSS initiative for digital archive preservation.

The inter-relationship between violence and education amidst armed conflict in Southern Thailand

Sudarat Tuntivivat

Sudarat Tuntivivat is a Lecturer at the Behavioral Science Research Institute, Srinakharinwirot University, Bangkok, Thailand.

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to investigate direct, cultural, and structural violence in education system in the midst of armed conflict in Southern Thailand.

Design/methodology/approach – The exploratory qualitative case study conducted in-depth interviews and focus groups with 40 participants, consisting of students, parents, teachers, guidance counselors, principals, experts, education specialists, and administrators from seven schools across the three southern border provinces.

Findings – The study reveals some misconceptions of violence, normalization of direct violence in armed conflict, and pinpoints the ways in which cultural violence is used to legitimize structural and direct violence in the education system, as well as adverse effects and ethno-religious segregation in schools and the larger society.

Social implications – Some policy recommendations are offered to address violence and promote sustainable peace through the education system in Southern Thailand.

Originality/value – This paper offers new perspectives on the inter-relationship between education and violence and adverse effects on violence in the education system in the midst of armed conflict in Southern Thailand.

Keywords Violence, Discrimination, Islamic education, Terrorism, Segregation, Ethno-religious conflict

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The ethno-religious conflict between the Thai Buddhist state and Malay Muslim minority in Southern Thailand began in the eighteenth century and continues today as one of Asia's most serious insurgencies (Brooks, 2015; McCargo, 2014). The causes of this conflict are complex, ranging from historical resistance to human rights abuses and socioeconomic marginalization. A considerable number of international and Thai scholars have explored the current unrest in Southern Thailand from the perspective of conflict and conflict resolution (McCargo, 2014; Joll, 2010; Yusef, 2007). There is a general consensus that education policy has played an important role in contributing to the conflict (UNICEF, 2014). As a partial result, public education in Southern Thailand is under attack (O'Malley, 2010). Academic researchers on education in Southern Thailand have been reluctant to investigate education in emergencies and the impact of armed conflict on education (International Crisis Group, 2009; Human Rights Watch, 2010). Typically, academic researchers attempted to explore and address the barriers of education in the multicultural society (Farrungsang, 2008; Sungtong, 2012) Islamic education, (Liow, 2010; Wisalaporn, 2010) and education reform (Nitjarunkul et al., 2014).

A recent study analyzing conflict news in Thai mass media from 2013 to 2014 revealed that the root cause of the conflict in the Southern Thailand is classified as a structural conflict

(90.8 percent) or conflict of interest (9.2 percent). Surprisingly, there is no mention of it being considered a cultural conflict (Yoelao *et al.*, 2015). Until now, no research has been conducted about direct, cultural, and structural violence in the Thai education system. It is the contention of the author that since deadly violence takes place in schools amidst regular armed conflict in Southern Thailand, previous researchers have overlooked the non-deadly types of violence in schools, which in turn serve to contribute to cultural norms that legitimized structural violence and make this phenomenon appear normal in everyday activities. The purpose of this research was to investigate direct, cultural, and structural violence in education system in Southern Thailand. To frame and inform the analysis, this paper uses Galtung's (1990) violence triangle. This article begins with a literature review of that analyses how the historical development of cultural and structural violence has led to direct violence in Southern Thailand.

Historical narratives, forced assimilation, and an upsurge in violence

The history of the three southern border provinces originated in the first century with an ancient Malay Hindu-Buddhist kingdom called Langkasuka (Funston, 2010). Islam started spreading to the region after the beginning of the thirteenth century and ultimately the area came to be under Islamic rule. Thailand recurrently invaded Patani and in 1786 Thailand's dominion over Patani become more solidified. The most critical context was the colonial rivalry between France in French Indochina and Great Britain in Myanmar and the Malay peninsula, which put Siam in the middle as a buffer state. Siam's buffer state function was consolidated during the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909 that also officially brought the former Malay sultanate of Patani under the control of the Siamese king, which lead to an on-going struggle to establish an independent Malay Muslim state (Harish, 2006). At the same time, to maintain Siam's precarious position as an independent buffer state, the Siamese king promoted Siamese nationalism, based on allegiance to the Siamese nation, monarchy, and Buddhism. In 1932, Siam's absolute monarchy was replaced with a constitutional monarchy, and Patani became Thailand's three southern provinces of Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat. In 1939, the Thai Government announced massive assimilation polices and the Thai Culture Mandate. The nationalist policy advocated a homogeneous society in which a specific idea of Thai identity was promoted while other identities were discouraged and banned, creating resentment among the Thai Malay Muslim minority (Human Rights Watch, 2010). In 1945, the Patronage of Islam Act established a patron of Islam and also appointed a symbolic leader of Muslims in Thailand. Nonetheless, the Malay Muslims remained loyal to their own ethno-religious leaders (Yusef, 2007). The modern history of Southern Thailand can be seen as the evolution of this cultural and structural violence. The forced assimilation is consistent with the characteristics of cultural and structural violence (discussed further below) and served to fuel anti-government sentiment leading to direct violence.

The resurgence of direct violence began in Southern Thailand when the insurgents attacked a military installation and 20 schools in January 2004, followed by massacres by government security forces during the Krue Se Mosque and Tak Bai incidents months later (McCargo, 2014; Pongsudhirak, 2006). Further escalation of direct violence increased structural violence as the enlarged military presence coupled with the government's response to the insurgency has brought about serious human rights violations against the insurgents. Yet the accused officials have not been punished (Human Rights Watch, 2010). Hence, the insurgent movement has managed to gain sympathy among local communities (May, 2009). The problem has worsened since the enforcement of the Emergency Decree on Public Administration in Emergency Situations in 2005, which provides government officials with immunity from criminal, civil, and disciplinary liability. In spite of the Thai Government assuming extensive emergency powers and initiating negotiations to deal with the violence in the south, the casualties continue. In the past 12 years, there have been 6,543 deaths and 11,919 injuries as a result of this conflict.

Violence in the education system in Southern Thailand

The Compulsory Primary Education Act of 1921 officially established the modern secular education system and required Thai Malay Muslim children to attend public schools profoundly influenced by Thai Buddhist cultural norms. In 1939, the assimilation policy banned *pondoks* and Islamic education while public schools were used as vehicles to promote Thai Buddhist cultural norms,

prohibiting Thai Malay Muslim identities until 1976 (O'Malley, 2010). Then, the Thai Government faced numerous challenges in responding to separatist recruitment and indoctrination in unregistered *pondoks*, and frequently made mass, arbitrary arrests of Thai Malay Muslim students and teachers (Human Rights Watch, 2010). Subsequently, in 1982 the government required *pondoks* to register with the Ministry of Education in order to receive financial support. The registered *pondoks* that have combined secular and religious curricula are called private Islamic schools. Later, the Thai Government allowed public schools to tailor curricula to better related to the Thai Malay Muslim identity in 1999 (National Education Act, 1999). In January 2004 when the conflict resurged, nearly 700 schools (76 percent) out of 925 schools across Southern Thailand had to be temporarily shut down (Human Rights Watch, 2007). Over the past 12 years, one in three public schools, or 297 out of 876, have been burnt by the insurgent groups. Pattani province has the highest number of incidents with 133 schools burnt, followed by 83 schools in Narathiwat Province, and 81 schools in Yala Province (Ministry of Education, 2015). Therefore, there is an increasing military presence in many public schools in order to protect teachers and students from insurgent attacks (Brooks, 2015).

Theoretical framework

In order to assess the different forms of violence in the education system in Southern Thailand, this study used Johan Galtung's (1990) Violence Triangle outlining direct, structural, and cultural violence. Galtung defined violence as the avoidable impairment of fundamental human needs for survival, wellness, freedom, and identity. If the fulfillment of a need is possible, but not realized, it is avoidable and considered to be violence. Direct violence involves an immediate relationship between the perpetrator and the recipient of violence, most obviously in the form of physical violence like murdering teachers and attacking schools (Galtung, 1969). Structural violence occurs when the perpetrators of avoidable violence are not easily identifiable and are built into the structure and shows up as unequal life chances based on public policies, urban-rural gap, and poverty (Galtung, 1971). Cultural violence is any aspect of a culture that can be used to legitimize violence in its structural or direct form. Cultural violence is the prevailing norms and values that legitimize the structural violence making it seem natural like discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, or language (Galtung, 1990). Furthermore, Galtung's (1990) Violence Triangle indicates that cultural and structural violence cause direct violence. Direct violence is visible as behavior that reinforces structural and cultural violence in the triangle. However, direct violence does not come out of nowhere; its roots are cultural and structural.

Research methods

This case study took place in the three southern border provinces of Thailand: Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews and focus groups with the 40 key informants, including students, parents, teachers, guidance counselors, and principals from public schools, private schools, vocational colleges, technical colleges, polytechnic colleges, and private Islamic schools, and educational opportunity expansion schools across three southern border provinces. The other set of key informants were religious leaders, experts, education specialists, and administrators of centers of education in the special development zone of southern border provinces. There were 24 key informants who identified as Thai Malay Muslims and 16 were Thai Buddhists; 22 were female and 18 were male; 21 were in Pattani, 12 were in Yala, and 7 were in Narathiwat. These key informants were purposely selected and ethical approval for the research was obtained in November, 2014. Data collection took place over two weeks during two field visits in February 2015 and January 2016, as well as some phone interviews between the two field visits in July 2015. The content analysis used to analyze both interviews and focus group discussions.

Results

This research found that different key informants have different views on actors' motivations to carry out direct violence in schools. Most interviewees tend to believe the main reasons behind threats to disrupt the social order are to exercise and maintain power and resources in the three

Southern border provinces. The Thai Buddhist key informants consider this extreme violence as warning, threatening, and retaliation against the Thai Government. On the other hand, many Thai Malay Muslims claimed on-going direct violence are political plots and collusion arranged by the Thai Government. While the key informants have some differing opinions on the impact of direct violence on education, most of them, Thai Buddhist and Thai Malay Muslim, seem to point out few effects of direct violence on children's education which is contrast to the perceptions of the general public outsides of the region. The next section will address the misconception about violence.

Normalization of direct violence in armed conflict

While many insurgent attacks have targeted schools and murdered teachers on their way to and from schools, local students and teachers do not feel threaten by direct violence and considered insurgent attacks as having only a minor effect on pupils' participation in education. This is due to deadly violence take places in the three southern border provinces regularly so students and teachers are developing some psychological and social processes through which emotion, perception and actions come to be seen as normal and become taken-for-granted in everyday life. As a result, they feel that direct violence is normal for them. As a male Muslim private Islamic school principal said "Forgot about the insurgency, the situations in the south is normal and has no effect on children education," which is similar to a female Buddhist public school teacher who mentioned "The conflict has no effect on children's education whatsoever, if someone is scared of the attacks they will go to other schools nearby," while a female Thai Malay Muslim public education specialist claimed children are less likely to fear of the insurgent attacks as time go by because they become aware and familiar with the conflict "Children were afraid of the violence when they were young. However, they feel normal now because they grew up with the conflict," a female Thai Buddhist student from private school mentioned "Yes, I was scared when I was young, but now I am not scared," a Male Thai Malay Muslim teacher from Educational Opportunity Expansion School claimed he and most people are unaffected and indifferent toward the direct violence "I am unaffected by the situation and believe most people who were born and raised in Pattani are also indifferent about the situation. Well, there are always bombs here and there, but within a few days everything is back to normal." A female Thai Malay Muslim vocational student, whose father was killed during the insurgency claimed the violence is normal for her "For me, the insurgent attacks are so normal. Well, Pattani is my birthplace so I am not afraid. I think it is just my fate if one day I will die from the attacks, but this does not make me worried. I think bombing is just so normal for me and this province."

Since the violence erupted in 2004, there have been increasing military presence in many public schools in order to protect teachers and students from the insurgent attacks. Regardless, the teachers are not disturbed by the attacks and feel normal despite military presence in schools. A female Thai Buddhist public school teacher mentioned "There are troops to guard schools here because this school was bombed a few years ago. The troops still escort teachers from home to school every morning. At 8 am the troops checking whether or not teachers have arrived schools safely. At noon, the troops have lunch with us and at 3-4 pm the troops takes the teachers back home." Likewise, private Islamic school teachers and students are not bothered by the insurgent attacks as a male Malay Muslim private Islamic teacher said "Private Islamic schools are also attacked by the insurgents, but I am not afraid. The security is not an issue here!" Despite the overwhelming majority of media portrait attacks on schools effect children to drop out from schools, force schools to cut their hours, destroy school buildings and materials, and diminish quality of children's education, but most teachers still feel normal as a female Malay Muslim teacher from public school mentions. The conflict situation only affects the teaching process when the incident occurs in the particular schools. For example, the school might be closed during the attacks or reduce teaching time because teachers and students are traveling far away from home to school. Otherwise, everything is normal, the teaching process is normal. In a trauma inducing environment such as an armed conflict of the three Southern border provinces, children and teachers witness repeated direct violence this exposure may gradually elicit less and less of an emotional reaction. Therefore, this makes the local students and teachers feel normal to the violence.

Long history and on-going forms of cultural violence in public schools

The form of Buddhist practice in public schools has been used to legitimize a uniform Thai identity that has been built into the education system for decades and is considered a threat to Islamic values, thereby segregating Thai Malay Muslim students from mainstream education. This is an example of what Galtung (1990) meant cultural violence is the prevailing norms and values that legitimize the structural violence making it seem natural. Obviously, public education has contributed to the structural violence as the mainstream curriculum is dominated by Thai Buddhist cultural norms that are not sensitive to the local cultural, historical, and ethno-religious contexts. Thus the policy reform attempt to address the issue by allowing local curriculum in the public schools. Subsequently, Thai Malay Muslim teachers and students prefer to set up their own traditional Thai Malay Muslim activities separate from Thai Buddhist practice in order to accommodate their religious beliefs.

This study found a normal Thai ritual observation like *wai kru* meaning "pay respect to the teacher," is considered a threat to Islamic values. Therefore, many public schools set up dual activities to separate the *wai kru* ceremonies in order to honor both religions. However, this type of dual activity can lead to ethno-religious segregation, and some adverse effects. Especially, the religious leaders and religious teachers seem to be powerful agents of change because the Thai Malay Muslim teachers and students in public schools received information from them that the *wai kru* ceremony threatens Islamic values. Therefore, the Thai Malay Muslims requested a separate *wai kru* ceremony. On the other hand, some Thai Buddhist teachers seem offended and frustrated because the *wai kru* ceremony is a common ritual that has been normalized in the public education system for many decades. A male Thai Buddhist teacher elaborated on the tension around the *wai kru* ceremony in public schools that affected students' grade and interaction between Thai Buddhist and Thai Malay Muslim students, "Thai Buddhists and Malay Muslims are not celebrating *wai kru* together anymore. Formerly, we did the *wai kru* together, but now we completely separate to avoid conflict as the Muslims said it is sinful for them to practice Buddhism. Moreover, some Muslim teachers prohibit Muslim students from helping Thai Buddhist students organize *wai kru* activities by threatening them with bad grades in the Islam classes." In some public schools, the dual learning activities have adverse effects on Thai Buddhist students who gradually become a small minority, as one Thai Buddhist principal from public school mentioned, "For the *wai kru*, like many schools in the region, we set up two ceremonies for Thai Malay Muslim students and Thai Buddhist students. In some years, since there are too few Thai Buddhist students (20 out of 420 students), we barely have Thai Buddhist *wai kru*."

The public policy addressing issues of cultural violence result in structural violence

The Thai Government requires Thai Malay Muslim students to attend public school until sixth grade to learn the Thai language and mainstream Thai culture, after which they are allowed to choose their own schools. Since most Thai Malay Muslims continue to use the Malay language to preserve their own linguistic heritage. Therefore, language is a barrier of education for Thai Malay Muslim students in public school despite numerous policy reform attempts to address this issue. Consequently, the majority of Thai Malay Muslim parents often transferred their children to *pondoks* teaching only Islam after sixth grade. As a male Thai Malay Muslim educational specialist mentioned, "Children have rights and are encouraged to pursue their education. The problem is children cannot read or write Thai." This is an example of what Galtung (1990) meant cultural violence.

For many decades, the government putted numerous efforts on addressing ethno-religious different in schools, many polices have positive effects on children education while some policies result in ethno-religious segregation and structural violence. In 1982, the Thai Government allowed private Islamic schools to register in the education system. As a result, an overwhelming majority of Thai Malay Muslim parents have transferred their children from public schools to private Islamic schools, leading to more segregation between Thai Buddhist and Thai Malay Muslim students. Moreover, this policy also increase structural violence because many private Islamic schools teaching combined religion and secular education are mainly interested in registering with the Ministry of Education to receive financial support, and do not adhere to regulations or accountability, thereby resulting in poor quality education and low standardized test scores compared to public schools in the area and nationwide. One male Thai Malay Muslim

teacher from a private Islamic school claimed, "Most private Islamic school owners only care for high numbers of student enrollment to get as much as money as they can, but they don't care about the quality of education." Another male Thai Malay Muslim teacher from a private Islamic school mentioned that the private Islamic school owners want to get as much government funding as they can, so they try to retain and keep a higher number of students in spite of poor academic performance or bad behavior. "Because the school owners get money from the government by numbers of student enrollment, so they try to retain as many students as possible. Some students don't even come to school, but I passed them to keep them registered. We rarely remove students from school – only those students who get into big trouble or cause serious danger to schools might be withdrawn." The ease of the registration process of private Islamic schools also leads to poor quality education because many newly established private Islamic schools have fewer school facilities and teaching materials compared to public schools. Despite the quality of education in private Islamic schools is much lower than public schools, overwhelming majority of Thai Malay Muslim parents continually send their children to private Islamic schools.

The inter-relationship between culture-structural-direct violence and education

This study found ethno-religious background and poverty are major factors influence Thai Malay Muslim children to attend ill-equipped *pondoks* or private Islamic schools within their community lead to vicious cycle of poverty which create resentment and result in the retaliation against the Thai Government. As a male Thai Malay Muslim from a center of the special development zone of the southern border provinces mentioned, "I am a Muslim! My father was a community leader in rigorously Islamic areas. However, he sent all his children to a good public school. In the old days, people told him sending children to public schools far away from home was bad because children cannot learn Islam. However, my father did not care and all his children are successful – we all have good jobs. On the other hand, many Muslim families are not interested in public education, they only believe in Islamic studies which leads to no jobs. Therefore, many Thai Malay Muslim children are *tok khiao* (Thai slangs in this context meaning innocent children deceived to be poor). These children really have no choices because their parents only send them to *pondoks* near their home so they often get into the vicious cycles of drug and poverty," a male Thai Buddhist public teacher elaborated an impact of social-economic status on education of Thai Malay Muslim children and the role of religious leaders in influencing them to attend *pondoks* or private Islamic schools: "Many wealthy Thai Malay Muslim families register their children in English programs in public school because they understand the importance of secular education. On the other hand, the rich tend to convince the poor to send their children to private Islamic schools because the rich are the owners of those schools. Those poor believe them because they are the authority figures who perform religious ceremony for the Muslim communities."

The owners of the private Islamic schools who mainly interest in receive financial support from government and do not adhere to the public regulation seem to reinforce structural and direct violence. As a male Thai Malay Muslim director of a technical college mentioned, "Nowadays, the government gives large funding to private Islamic schools and those schools often open for business. The school owners are ripping off their teachers by paying them a 4,000-5,000 baht salary despite the fact that the minimum wage for public teacher is 15,000 baht. So what do you expect? No quality teaching of course!" This is due to many Thai Malay Muslim teachers can only teach Islam so they are unqualified to work in public schools. So they have no choices but to teach private Islamic schools with much lower incentives lead to deprivation. A male Thai Buddhist deputy director from a vocational college also addressed the concern over some private Islamic school teachers perceive themselves trap in the social inequality problems lead to resentment toward the Thai Government result in volunteering to be a part of insurgency by saying, "Most religious teachers who graduated from the Middle East, like Afghanistan and Pakistan, can only teach Islam in schools with a 4,000-5,000 baht salary compared with Thai teachers who got 15,000 baht salaries. This reflects inequality between Muslim teachers and Thai teachers. Some of them even become heads of the insurgency because they think the Thai Government treats them unfairly." This is an example of what Galtung (1990) meant cultural violence is the prevailing norms and values that legitimize the structural and direct violence making it seem natural. Clearly, the causes may be invisible but the consequences are profound.

The adverse effects on Thai Buddhist students and families

The Thai Government puts various efforts into addressing issues of structural inequality, especially disputes of the Thai Buddhist public officers' discrimination against the Thai Malay Muslim minority. Therefore, public school teachers are very concerned about the needs of Thai Malay Muslim students due to fear of penalty and disciplinary action. At the same time, these public teachers unintentionally neglect the needs of Thai Buddhist students who gradually become a small minority in the region, as a Thai Buddhist principal from public school mentioned: "Ten years ago a Thai Buddhist public teacher was dismissed from his job within 24 hours due to discrimination against Thai Malay Muslim students. Therefore, we must aware of their cultural norms. Now, all the food in our canteen is halal." Moreover, there are many scholarship opportunities for Thai Malay Muslim students that might be unfair for underprivileged Thai Buddhist students who also need scholarships.

The other adverse effect of violence on education is that Thai Buddhist families from neighboring provinces repeatedly receive information on deadly violence in public schools from mainstream media. Therefore, they are reluctant to send their children to study in the three southern border provinces. Instead, the wealthy Thai Buddhist families send their children to public schools outside the region because the quantity and quality of teaching of public schools in the region is decreasing tremendously due to threat of direct violence, cultural violence, and structural violence. Many Thai Buddhist children study outside the three southern border provinces usually decide to settle outside their hometown because of better job opportunities and also they cannot cope with the deadly violence in their hometown. Therefore, the Thai Buddhist population in the region is gradually decreasing from 20 to 7 percent.

Discussion and conclusion

Since the current round of violence erupted in 2004, the Thai Government has delivered a strong defensive measure for public schools to protect teachers and pupils from direct violence. On the other hand, the government has unintentionally allowed invisible cultural and structural violence to occur in the education system which reinforces negative attitudes, perpetuating differences and resulting in discrimination that can lead to serious barriers to pupils' learning (Galtung, 1990). Negative attitudes can take the form of ethno-religious discrimination and the lack of critical awareness with regards to the reproduction of ethnocentrism in the mainstream curriculum, school rituals, and pupils' learning activities. In this context, the public schools continue to reflect a strong message that the centralized government promotes mainstream cultural norms that cannot be trusted by the local community (Brooks and Sungtong, 2015; Brooks, 2015). This is problematic despite the establishment of dual curricula and activities since the school learning environment is unable to meet the needs of a wide range of diverse ethno-religious and linguistic backgrounds. Moreover, many public teachers fail to recognize the ethno-religious-linguistic constructed power differential in the school so the schooling practice tends to be fragmented, uncoordinated, and isolated. Subsequently, the Thai Malay Muslims are rebelling against the mainstream culture, which leads to social exclusion and segregation in public schools and the larger society.

The Thai Government has launched various policy reforms attempting to address direct violence in Southern Thailand. The adverse effects of education reform simplifying the registration process of private Islamic schools are increasing the number of ill-equipped Islamic private schools and expanding ethno-religious segregation while decreasing the number of students in public schools in the region. Moreover, the inequality of the education system is most evident in the rural areas which have sustained poverty. The majority of Thailand's better-funded schools are situated in the big cities and main provincial towns while ill-equipped rural schools which lack resources remain the only place where poor rural children can learn. In this context, the rich are able to send their children to better-funded schools outside the region which provide them with better education, exposure to different cultures, and enable them to get respectable jobs. On the contrary, the poor rural children, especially Thai Malay Muslim children, often have no choice but to study in poor quality and ill-equipped *pondoks* or private Islamic schools within their communities and are thus trapped

in a vicious cycle of poverty. This structural violence has reinforced the power of the ruling elite and social hierarchy in both ethno-religious communities. Particularly, the religious leaders have strong influence and have become important agents of change in Thai Malay Muslim communities and education system in Southern Thailand. This socially embedded structural violence has no direct harm but kills pupils slowly through supporting a vicious cycle of poverty and deprivation (Galtung, 1971). At the same time, the Thai authorities constantly suspect those Islamic schools of recruitment and indoctrination for insurgent groups and have frequently made mass, arbitrary arrests of underprivileged Thai Malay Muslim students and teachers. This created further resentment for some of the deprived teachers, leading them to join the insurgency groups in 2004.

Policy implications

Based on the results of this study, this paper provides a variety of policy implications and recommendations as follows: first, address policy reform in order to reduce ethno-religious segregation. Therefore, it is necessary to review the causes and consequences of public policies on dual activities in public schools and the dual education system in the three southern border provinces. Second, support a multicultural learning environment for all children from diverse backgrounds by enabling students to participate in all activities together to create positive relationships and social cohesion between students of different ethno-religious backgrounds. Third, advocate to public teachers about the importance of multicultural teaching and learning activities necessary in the multicultural conflict areas. Moreover, ensure all teachers are completely aware of and informed about the learning needs of all students, and are mindful of their role and responsibility to support all students equally despite their ethno-religious background. Fourth, generate multicultural curriculum and learning activities in schools by creating a bilingual Thai-Malay language program or a trilingual Thai-Malay-Chinese program in which all students feel able to draw on their cultural norm, linguistic, and knowledge background. Fifth, organize communities around schools to understand, develop, and strengthen the positive relationship between different ethno-religious groups in school as well as support outreach activities to promote trust and meaningful relationships between public schools and local communities. Sixth, monitor the quality of education in private Islamic schools and provide sufficient funding, technical support and career development for private Islamic teachers so they can have some sense of security and respect in their community and the Thai society. Seventh, assess the impact of military presence in public schools while continuing to ensure school safety and security. Eighth, the normalization of violence in armed conflict is actually an indication of pathology adaptation, emotional numbing, and cognitive desensitization which can lead to other mental and behavioral problems. Therefore, it is import to provide psychosocial support to the local students and teachers who are constantly exposed to direct violence in order to prevent them from developing mental health issues and aggressive behaviors by establishing psychoeducation and psychological and mental health screening and services at the local community level. Ninth, build trust and develop diplomatic relationships with religious leaders and teachers who seem to be an important of change of the education system in region. Tenth, collect and disseminate demographic data of students and their education to assess the relocation trend of students and families from different ethno-religious backgrounds. Eleventh, manage the funding mechanisms of public schools and private Islamic schools and ensure they are based on the needs of students in rural areas, rather than just the elites, in order to ensure that education does not contribute to cultural and structural violence or reinforce direct violence.

References

Brooks, M.C. (2015), "School principals in Southern Thailand: exploring trust with community leaders during conflict", *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, Vol. 43 No. 2, pp. 232-52.

Brooks, M.C. and Sungtong, E. (2015), "Principal perceptions of armed military guard in Southern Thai schools", *Planning and Changing*, Vol. 45 Nos 3/4, pp. 356-80.

Farrungsang, B. (2008), *Education in Multicultural Society*, Faculty of Education, Prince of Songkhla University, Pattani, available at: http://kb.psu.ac.th/psukb/handle/2010/9557

Funston, J. (2010), "Malaysia and Thailand's Southern conflict: reconciling security and ethnicity", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 32 No. 2, pp. 234-45.

Galtung, J. (1969), "Violence, peace & peace research", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 6 No. 3, pp. 167-91.

Galtung, J. (1971), "A structural theory of imperialism", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 8 No. 2, pp. 81-117.

Galtung, J. (1990), "Cultural violence", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 27 No. 3, pp. 291-5.

Harish, S. (2006), "Ethnic or religious cleavage? investigating the nature of the conflict in Southern Thailand", *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International & Strategic Affairs*, Vol. 28 No. 1, pp. 48-69.

Human Rights Watch (2007), "No one is safe", *Insurgent Attacks on Civilians in Thailand's Southern Border Provinces*, Vol. 19 No. 13, pp. 1-102, available at: www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/thailand0807.pdf

Human Rights Watch (2010), "Targets of both sides", *Violence against Students, Teachers, and Schools in Thailand's Southern Border Provinces*, Human Rights Watch, New York, NY.

International Crisis Group (2009), "Recruiting militants in Southern Thailand", Crisis Group Asia Report No. 170, International Crisis Group, Bangkok, available at: www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/thailand/recruiting-militants-southern-thailand

Joll, C. (2010), "Religion and conflict in Southern Thailand: beyond rounding up the usual suspects", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 32 No. 2, pp. 258-79.

Liow, J. (2010), "Religious education and reformist Islam in Thailand's Southern border provinces: the roles of Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir and Ismail Lufti Japakiya", *Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 21 No. 1, pp. 29-58.

McCargo, D. (2014), "Southern Thailand, from conflict to negotiation?", Lowy Institute for International Policy, Sydney, available at: www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/southern-thailand-conflict-negotiations

May, T. (2009), "Armed conflict and resolutions in Southern Thailand", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 99 No. 5, pp. 922-31.

Ministry of Education (2015), "Office of the Minister Newline", available at: www.moe.go.th/websm/2015/apr/116.html (accessed November 19, 2015).

National Education Act (1999), "An education reform act for further development of the Thai people", National Education Act, available at: http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Thailand/Thailand_Education_Act_1999.pdf (accessed November 5, 2015).

Nitjarunkul, K., Sungtong, E. and Placier, P. (2014), "Challenges of educators in the context of education reform and unrest: a study of southern border provinces in Thailand", *Asian Social Science*, Vol. 10 No. 18, pp. 232-9.

O'Malley, B. (2010), *Education Under Attack*, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Paris.

Pongsudhirak, T. (2006), "Conflict and terrorism in Southern Thailand", *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International & Strategic Affairs*, Vol. 28 No. 1, pp. 160-3.

Sungtong, E. (2012), "Multicultural education: what every school administrator in the three southern border provinces should know", *Journal of Education*, Vol. 23 No. 1, pp. 17-34.

UNICEF (2014), "Thailand case study in education, conflict and social cohesion", UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, Bangkok, available at: http://learningforpeace.unicef.org/resources/thailand-case-study-in-education-conflict-and-social-cohesion/

Wisalaporn, S. (2010), *Education Management of the three Southern Border Province*, Office of Education Council, Bangkok.

Yoelao, D., Junprasert, T., Tuntivivat, S. and Chaiakkarakan, N. (2015), "Conflicts in Thailand during 2013-14: an analysis of conflict news in mass media", *International Journal of Behavioral Science*, Vol. 10 No. 2, pp. 69-78.

Yusef, I. (2007), "The Southern Thailand conflict and the muslim world", *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 27 No. 2, pp. 319-39.

Further reading

Deep South Incident Database (2015), "State of conflict in Southern Thailand", available at: www.deepsouthwatch.org/node/7942 (accessed December 5, 2015).

Corresponding author

Sudarat Tuntivivat can be contacted at: juntuntivivat@gmail.com