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NEWSLETTER
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Advancing Early Childhood Development in Surin

Strengthening model child development centers through regional collaboration

By Sunisa Deenang and Hathainan Sukharom

Working together for brighter begining for every child.

LEARNING EXCHANGE

19–20 August 2026 | Experience-sharing among Surin Rajabhat University, Roi Et Rajabhat University, Udon Thani Rajabhat University, and the Dek Noi Pattana Foundation

The Dek Noi Pattana Foundation (DNPF) joined faculty members from Surindra Rajabhat University (SRRU) and Roi-Et Rajabhat University (RERU) in organizing a learning exchange on model early childhood development centers with colleagues from Udon Thani Rajabhat University (UDRU).

The event was held at SRRU's Faculty of Education and included study visits to Ban Muang Kae ECD center in Tha Toom district and Ban Bua Khok ECD center in Bua Khok, Surin Province.

The meeting aimed to review guidelines for developing model early childhood centers, share coaching experiences for teachers and caregivers across regions, and establish a framework for expanding the partnership to other Rajabhat universities and northeastern provinces.

KEY FINDINGS

Three key findings emerged from the study visit:

1 Key Points from DNPF Management

DNPF management presented an overview of the foundation's work and strategic direction as it marks 10 years in early childhood development. The key issues shared with the meeting were as follows:

- Investing in the first five years of a child's life is among the country's most cost-effective investments, as 90% of brain development occurs during this period. Thailand has more than 17,000 early childhood development centers, requiring continuous improvement in the quality of teachers and caregivers.

- Local administrative organizations (LAOs) have long played a central role in overseeing early childhood development centers and remain key partners in the foundation's work.

- Collaboration with SRRU and RERU have demonstrated the Rajabhat network's potential and created a pathway to extend the partnership to other Rajabhat universities in the next phase.

- The Foundation's executives emphasized that inspiring teachers, caregivers, and stakeholders at every level is essential to sustainable early childhood development—not merely relying on forms or tools.

- Participants discussed funding and resource-allocation guidelines to expand the model center network into more areas, along with coordination with relevant agencies, including the Department of Local Administration (DLA).

The project's success depends on a strong collaborative network committed to supporting every aspect of implementation and advancing human resource development, particularly in early childhood.

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Turning Collaboration into Action

Coaching & Shared Learning

2 Exchange of opinions between coaches from ECD Centers in Surin and Roi Et provinces

Coaching teams from SRRU and RERU shared their experiences working in their respective provinces. The key points are summarized below:

- **SRRU team:** Seven early childhood teachers serve as coaches under memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with selected districts. Funding covers materials, equipment, and field visits, while coaching is delivered both online and on-site.

- **RERU team:** Foundation representatives coordinated with administrators and local government officials for more than a year to establish a shared approach before formally signing an MOU. RERU also supported advocacy through a panel discussion at the Korat ECD Forum in August and involved pre-service Faculty of Education students in coaching and supporting ECD centers in Roi Et.

- Both teams agreed that ECD centers should be selected based on the readiness and commitment of local administrators and childcare teachers, with gradual expansion to other centers in the network.

- The teams shared strategies for addressing common challenges, including teacher rotation and retirement teachers, allocating coaching time across assigned centers, and maintaining coaching on a continuous basis.

Six Principles for Growth

3 Guidelines for Coaching Teachers and Caregivers and Expanding the Network

Based on discussions between the coaching teams and Foundation management, the meeting identified the following principles for expanding the network of model early childhood development centers:

1 Coaching should first **build trust** and strong relationships with teachers and caregivers rather than simply deliver content. **The approach should be adapted** to each area instead of using a single fixed format.

2 **Field visits:** Plan coaching coverage and schedules systematically, and group centers with similar contexts to enable effective joint coaching.

3 **Use local expertise:** Engage retired and experienced teachers as network members who can support the lead coach and ensure continuity when the coach is not on-site.

4 **Select pilot centers** based on the readiness of local administrators and teams, then expand gradually to other centers in the network.

5 **Establish a cooperation** mechanism with local governments by promoting an MOU among Rajabhat University, local government organizations, and the Dek Noi Pattana Foundation that clearly defines roles, responsibilities, and budget support.

6 **Expand the network** to new areas by applying these principles through Rajabhat universities and additional northeastern provinces, while developing a new cohort of coaches from each university's early childhood education faculty.

Policy Recommendations

Policy Recommendations for Early Childhood Development Centers

Based on these three key issues, UDRU representatives who attended the experience-sharing forum in Surin in August propose the following recommendations for management's consideration:

1 Join the Dek Noi Pattana Foundation's cooperation network, following the partnership models established by Surindra Rajabhat University and Roi Et Rajabhat University.

2 Form a team of early childhood teachers to serve as local coaches, with funding for materials, equipment, and regular field visits.

3 Coordinate with local government organizations, whose involvement is critical to selecting pilot child development centers and planning network expansion based on principles from this learning exchange.





Local Early Childhood Expo Seminar

Co-Thinking, Co-Creating, and Co-Developing Through Local Empowerment

Assistant Professor Thitinan Udomsan
Roi Et Rajabhat University

The Department of Local Administration (DLA) hosted the seminar “Co-Creating, and Co-Developing Early Childhood” as part of the inaugural **“Local Early Childhood Expo: Co-Thinking, Co-Creating, and Co-Developing Early Childhood through Local Empowerment.”**

The seminar was held from 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. on Friday, August 14, 2026, at MCC Hall, The Mall Korat, in Nakhon Ratchasima Province. Dr. Tinsiri Siribhodi of UNICEF moderated a panel on practical ways to use local mechanisms and partner networks for early childhood development, inviting participants to share their experiences working with local authorities.

Representing the Dek Noi Pattana Foundation (DNPF), Ajarn Thitinan of Roi Et Rajabhat University emphasized the following points:

The “Igniting Early Childhood Development, Transforming Isan’s Future” event earlier this year highlighted the approach used in Surin and Roi Et provinces. Surindra Rajabhat University and Roi Et Rajabhat University collaborate with the Dek Noi Pattana Foundation (DNPF) and local communities to help children reach their full potential. This cross-sector partnership has produced tangible results and continues to advance the region. National and international partners include NIDA, UNICEF, the World Bank, and the Department of Local Administration. Experience in both provinces shows that local administrative organizations—including local, provincial, and subdistrict authorities—play a central role in transforming early childhood development centers into high-quality model centers through locally relevant activities, such as the following:



- Design an ecosystem and learning environment to promote the development of children in 4 areas: physical, emotional and mental, social, and intellectual. Along with integrating local wisdom such as media and toys from natural materials in the community, according to the principle of "good media, good space, good landscape".
- Develop brain skills and life skills (EF – Executive Functions) through the process of "Thinking Telling Prevention" to empower early childhood teachers and caregivers under the DLA to provide learning experiences that are appropriate for the times by linking operations with the SAO and municipalities, which are the parent agencies and budget allocations for the Early Childhood Development Center.
- Prepare a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with local administrators to promote early childhood development as an "urgent agenda for the area".

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Ajarn Thitinan of Roi Et Rajabhat University, representing the Dek Noi Pattana Foundation (DNPF) at the seminar.

An important lesson from the event "Igniting Early Childhood Development, Transforming Isaan's Future" is that early childhood development centers are the infrastructure of human development and should be the main mechanism to drive local early childhood work.

- Authorities should upgrade early childhood development centers from "daycare facilities" to "areas for foundationing brains and reducing inequality" because the 0–6 years old period is the time when investment provides the best value.
- In addition to the Education Division, the local government should integrate its work with the Public Health Division, which is in charge of nutrition and development, and the Social Welfare Division, to support the systematic development of early childhood.
- The main challenges are SAO regulations and procurement procedures, which can hinder access to open-ended learning materials, and traditional expectations among teachers and parents that prioritize early memorization and literacy over life skills and executive function (EF).

Technical Support

Roi Et Rajabhat University acts as an "academic mentor" by supporting knowledge, research, and systematic assessment tools to build confidence in the local government in driving policies. At the same time, local administrators such as chief executive of the SAO, and the municipality must understand the importance and dare to seriously allocate budgets to the Education Division and Early Childhood Development Centers.

The Role of the " Dek Noi Pattana Foundation" as an intermediary for cooperation.

The Foundation serves to connect international experts and apply proven development models in line with the way and culture of Isaan, thus making the approach easy to understand and practical.

One way to overcome these limitations is to begin by strengthening a small number of early childhood development centers in Surin and Roi Et. Once the results show that children are developing well, are happier, and interact more effectively with others, parents and neighboring localities will gain confidence and be ready to expand the approach.

Key Lesson: "When Teachers Change, Children Change."

The key is to equip early childhood teachers with the skills and support they need to thrive at work. Teachers who understand how the brain develops can use local materials to create engaging learning environments. Even with limited budgets, long-term sustainability depends not only on funding but also on a strong sense of community ownership. This enables local authorities and communities to maintain and improve early childhood development centers after support from the Foundation or university ends.





Building Quality ECD Centers: The Leadership Role of SAOs

Developing Quality Model Early Childhood Development Centers in Surin Province

By Suthisak Thongnual
Director

Early Childhood Development (ECD) centers are the starting point for human development of the whole sub-districts. The quality of the centers, therefore, reflects the quality of the administration of Sub-district Administrative Organizations (SAO) directly. The role of SAO administrators is not merely to oversee operations but also to set the strategic direction to transform ordinary centers to high-quality model centers that are safe and trusted by the community.

Young children today are the future of our sub-districts. The SAOs as the owners of the ECD Centers must manage them better than just being the places to care for children. The centers should be the model centers where children are happy, teachers are encouraged, and parents are ensured that their children receive the best possible care. In making the ECD centers to become the quality model centers I think it should start with the leadership and management of Chief Executive Officers of the SAOs and administrative teams. If administrators are committed, plan effectively, provide strong support to teachers, and encourage community participation, our centers will be with quality that we are proud of. The Education Management Committee plays a vital leadership role in guiding the Early Childhood Development Center. Its members work together to plan, manage, and monitor the center so that it provides a safe, high-quality environment where every child can develop to their full potential.

Effective management requires careful attention, sound planning, strong support for teachers, and active participation from parents and the community.

As an administrator myself, I view the ECD centers as the foundation for human development. The SAOs as the governing authority of the centers have the role beyond opening the centers, but managing them with quality and safety in order to gain parents' trust. There are approximately five key areas of the SAOs' administrative role that contribute to the success of the ECD centers.

1 Policy and planning

SAO administrators must clearly define how the ECD centers will be managed to ensure quality. The plans must be implementable. The SAOs must set clear direction on how to improve the ECD centers and incorporate plans into the four-year education development plan and allocate a sufficient budget. Key standards for sub-districts must be identified with measurable targets, for instance, children must be 100% safe. Teachers should receive ongoing coaching and training across multiple areas—not just one-time instruction—to build well-rounded skills. Beyond teaching, they must be equipped to provide high-quality, safe, and up-to-date care for children.

2 Personnel

Teachers represent the quality of the ECD centers, therefore, there should be qualified and knowledgeable ones who can work with children continuously. The SAOs must manage their personnel effectively and recruit the right persons by selecting teachers with early childhood education background, who love working with children, are patient, and have the spirit and professional identity of teachers, not the ones who get to teaching positions through connections.

Administrators should strongly support teacher development. Teachers should receive training on topics such as child psychology, first aids, production of new learning materials on an annual basis. They should receive encouragement, professional development as well as appropriate welfare benefits. Teachers should receive monthly coaching from an early-childhood specialist who mentors educators and parents in improving childcare. The coach should observe classroom practice, offer constructive guidance without blame, and help teachers solve problems by using questions and new techniques rather than prescribing answers. The coach should also model the six core activities, positive childcare practices, and developmental assessment for other teachers.



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Teachers should be respected and should not be responsible for excessive SAOs administrative work that takes away their teaching time. If teachers are happy, they can provide good care to children. Administrators should be "supporters" not merely "commander"

3 Buildings and budget

Safety, transparency and account-ability are crucial. I think quality starts from safety. The centers should have safe buildings, classrooms with good ventilation, non-toxic toys and learning materials, secure fences, closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras, child-friendly restroom doors, adequate handwashing facilities, and regular emergency plan drill. The budget must be managed effectively. Lunch and supplementary milk must reach children. Expenses must comply with the rules and regulations and can be disclosed.

4 Academic development and child care

Administrators should always keep in mind that children should learn with happiness. They should not be pressured to learn to read and write prematurely. The quality ECD centers should allow children to achieve their four developmen-tal domains, including physical, emotional social and cognitive development. The SAOs must ensure that teachers implement the B.E. 2560 Early Childhood Education Curriculum accordingly. Learning and experience corners should be arranged and outdoor activities are organized daily.

A monitoring system for child development should be in place. If children are found to be developmental delayed they should be referred for proper treatment. Food, nutrition hygiene and health of children must be strictly managed and monitored. The SAO Chief Executive/ Chief Administrators/ Education Division Director must monitor, assess, and supervise teachers regularly. They should not leave teachers to carry out the implementation on their own.

5 Community participation

In my opinion, the ECD centers belong to everyone, not just owned by the SAOs. The centers can be sustained if the community and parents co-own them. The SAOs should encourage network partners to be the centers' committees together with parents, local wisdom experts, village health volunteers, and community leaders. The centers should be open to parents for observing activities at any time and connected with temples, sub-district health promotion hospitals, and primary schools in the area for transferring children. A satisfaction assessment should be conducted every semester. Suggestion boxes should be available to receive feedback for quality improvement of the centers.

I would like to summarize the key to success in five areas for ease of understanding.

We need to change the role of the SAOs from "controllers" to "supporters". If the SAOs can perform their role effectively in these five areas of planning well, managing personnel well, creating a safe environment, promoting sound academic knowledge, and opening for community participation, the ECD centers will not be merely the places for child care. Instead, they will be the places to nurture children into capable and happy individuals, who will be a strong foundation for the development of sub-districts and the nation.

