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INTERNATIONALISM OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN
THAILAND : A CASE OF INNOVATIVE DESTRUCTION

by

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Abstract

Internationalism of Higher Education in Thailand :

A Case of Innovative Destruction

Educational system in Thailand in the early 1970's was severely criticized for not being irrelevant to the livelihood to majority of people who live in the rural area. Imposing a more or less straight-jacket type of curriculum would work only to the advantage of urban population. There was a strong call for the reform of curriculum to be more flexible so that they could be redesigned to meet regional and local needs.

The rigid form of curriculum had its history dated back to the mid nineteen century as Thailand was forced by political necessities to embark on Westernization. Modernization of education along the Western model was part of Westernized package then.

Inconsistency within the system of centralized control of schooling examination in the 1960's due to various factors gave rise to an introduction of more flexible curriculum at secondary level. The call for reform of educational system in the early 1970's resulted in the reform of curriculum from primary education up to upper secondary levels. The whole plan was completed in 1981. Unfortunately, the internationalism of higher education which is reflected by the imposition of the academic subjects requirement for the centralized University entrance examinations has caused students at all education levels

to select the academic stream of the curriculum. Therefore, all innovative attempts made earlier at the reform of curriculum to be more flexible to meet regional and local needs from the primary level up to upper secondary level have been virtually destroyed.

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INTERNATIONALISM OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THAILAND :

A CASE OF INNOVATIVE DESTRUCTION

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Brief Historical Background

Western education in Thailand started in the mid nineteenth century out of political and economic necessities. Political threats from the west during the period, especially that of the British forced the Thai King. (Rama IV), to initiate a programme of Western education in his own palace, for the royal children, for the first time in Thai history. 1/

The imposition of the Bowring treaty by the British government in 1886 fostering free-trade on Thailand, was aimed at destabilizing the financial position of the Thai government whose main sources of income was from the trade monopoly. In order to survived such planned economic crises, the Thai government reacted by reforming the tax structure. This reform was reinforced by the reform of the Thai bureaucracy. In the process, the Western form of elite education was the prerequisite for such increasing bureaucratization; increasing centralized control by the government was a major administrative reform at that time. Such a reform was welcome by the Thai ruling elites, as an act to consolidate their power bases. It was argued by the

Thai ruling elites that such action in unifying their centralized control would enhance their bargaining power against the British aggressor. On the other hand, the British imperial interests also supported the action taken by the Thai elites. As British advisors took major roles in the Thai administration, especially in economic affairs and education, centralized control by the Thai elites would facilitate the domination of British imperial interests over the the Thai government.

This part of the historical development explains the dominant feature of the centralized form of the British system of elite education in Thailand starting from the mid-nineteenth century until the end of absolute monarchy. The elite coup d'etat in June 1932 marked the end of absolute monarchy in Thailand. A further reform of education was resulted from this major political change. Yet, the main feature of centralized control of curriculum, contents and education administration still remain in the contemporary Thai education system.

The elit coup d'etat in 1932 brought two significant changes to the Thai education system, notably the rapid expansion of primary and secondary education system and at the higher level. The traditional government expenditures on education of about 3 per cent of the government budget during the period of absolute monarchical regime with the peak of 6 per cent was raised to 12 per cent of the government budget. A French style University under the name

of University of Moral and Political Sciences, the name adopted from Academie des-Science Morales et Politiques of France.^{2/} This university patterned after the Parisian Ecole des Hautes Etudes Politiques.^{3/} The influence of French education system was brought to Thailand by Dr.Pridi Bhanomyong a civilian leader of the 1932 coup group who was a Doctor of Law from the University of Paris. It was different from the traditional British style of Chulalongkorn University in that the University of Moral and Political Sciences started with an unlimited admission policy. The rationale of such policy was to raise the level of politico-economic and legal understanding among the Thai people. The main aim was to support the new system of administration which was the constitutional monarchy. The system required, the broader base support of the middle class. The French higher education system (content and ideology) was introduced for that purpose.

Before the dawn of the World War II in Europe in the late 1930's, American ascendancy in Southeast Asia was evidenced. Its influence over Thailand was not an exception. In 1943, the first American style land granted university called Kasetsart University was established in Bangkok.^{4/} The University started with four Faculties, namely, Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Cooperatives with special emphasis on farm cooperatives. After the end of the World War II in Pacific in late 1945, American influence in Thailand increased further more. Such closer relationship resulted from American support of the

underground, organization of the "Free Thai Movement" during the Japanese occupation in Thailand and its intervention during a series of Anglo-Thai negotiation after the War for the benefit of the Thai government. Close cultural and educational ties between the American and Thai were developed. On the eve of the Chinese Revolution in 1949, most cultural and educational supports from the U.S. government to China were redirected to Thailand. During the "cold war" period of the 1950's, number of Fulbright scholars and various forms of exchange programmes between the American and Thai governments increased at rapid pace. This form of American educational and cultural domination over Thailand during the period paved the way for its eventual military and economic domination in the 1960's.

In 1960, when Thammasat University (University of Moral and Political Sciences) ceased to operate along the lines of a French style university and reorganized itself along the standard American university system. This change marked the end of the non-American style of higher education in Thailand. All higher education institutions in Thailand since 1960 have been modelled along the lines of the typical American University.

In late 1957, the military dictatorship of Sarit Thanarat was installed in Thailand with the support of the American government. Following the ditatorial installation was the inauguration of first Economic and Social Development Plan (1961-1966). The Plan was designed and

closely supervised by the World Bank and the U.S. government. The theory which this development plan is conventionally known as modernization theory. According to this theory developing countries should copy the development pattern experienced by most developed countries. With the increased intensity of the Indochina War, together with the increasing American involvement in that War until the mid 1970's Thailand was used as the military base for the American war effort in Vietnam. Therefore, throughout the 1960's and early 1970's, Thailand was completely under, American cultural, economic and military domination.

The Reform of Education System in Thailand

A series of protests by students and various activist groups against the military dictatorial regime in Thailand and American domination led to the 14 October, 1973 student uprising, that overthrew the military dictator and a series of social and economic reforms were called for. It was pointed out that increasing income discrepancy between the rich and the poor was brought about by uneven economic development plans. Social and cultural deterioration was brought about by the behavior and pattern of spending of the G.I's in Thailand. The American system of higher education only benefited the elite class and was quite irrelevant to the livelihood of the majority Thais. Primary and secondary education, which were essential to the majority of Thai people, received only minor attention.

Discontent was mounted by the slow response of the educational authorities to various immediate problems relating to the education system, students and teachers. A series of protest were made against the Minister of Education. Finally, protesters called for the resignation of the Minister of Education followed by the burning of his effigy in early 1974. The result led to the reshuffle of the Cabinet. The first education policy announced by the new Minister of Education was the Educational Reform Programme. On 25 June, 1974, the Cabinet announced the formation of the Committee to Study the Foundation for Education Reform. On 4 December, 1974, the Committee to Study the Foundation for Education Reform submitted its reports with the following 10 point programmes. 5/

1. To provide equal opportunities in education for all, in order to create social justice as the foundation to democracy.

2. To provide a more open and flexible system of education so that the formal and non formal system of education can be blended to the existing social environment which will serve national economic and social development.

3. To improve the education content and learning process to serve the goal of each form and level of education. This must be done in accordance to the desired direction of education.

4. To improve the role and status of teachers and education personnel in order to accommodate the education

reform program.

5. To reorganize the administrative structure of higher education in order to unify the overall education system and higher education. This attempt will increase efficiency and the productivity of higher education in order to fulfill its responsibility of serving social demands.

6. The State must be responsible to provide education up to certain minimum level as specified in the constitution. Private organizations with a good intention are invited to share education responsibilities. These private organizations must not seek for profit and must be under the State's supervision.

7. To unify education policy and administration centrally and locally, there must be a distribution of education administration to local authorities under the principle of peoples' participation in order to increase the efficiency of central administration and to meet the local educational requirements.

8. To mobilize selected resources from the public, private and donors, for educational purpose. An effective method of allocation must be found in order to improve education efficiency so that education services are just and widely spread.

9. To restructure all education legislations in order to unify the education system and to facilitate the proposed reform program.

10. To reform other systems and related structures in accordance to desirable social objectives.

Curriculum Developments Since 1954

Before discussing some impacts of the above reform proposals; the following back ground of curriculum development must be provided. It is appropriate to start with the 1954 curriculum. This curriculum marked the distinctive responsibility of education by the Ministry of Education and the Office of the Prime Minister. While the Ministry of Education was responsible for education lower than the higher level, all univesities in Thailand then operated under the responsibility of the Office of the Prime Minister. There are four levels of education organized by the Ministry of Education, the four-year primary education, three year lower secondary education, three year upper secondary education and two year pre-university education.

The curriculum at each level was designed as a straight jacket aimed at the continuation of education. The break, between each level provided the outlet for those who were not financially and intellectually able to continue education at higher levels. No selective subjects were allowed at all levels. There were two stream of education at the pre-university levels, letters and sciences. Since the curriculum at all levels were fixed, there was a tendency to maintain one single stardard of education throughout the country. School leaving examinations at all levels were administered by the representatives of central government authorities. Primary school leaving examination was commonly administered by a district authority, while the

Secondary school leaving examinations were administered by a provincial authority. The pre-university examination was organized by the Ministry of Education itself. Such a system of strict control of the education system reflect the logic of centralized administration practiced from the begining of the twentieth century.

More flexible curriculum were introduced in 1960.^{6/} Primary education was upgraded from four years to seven years by scrapping the 1954 curriculum of lower secondary education into the new primary education. The lower secondary education of the 1960 curriculum included the upper secondary curriculum of 1954. The pre-university curriculum of 1954 was changed to the two and three year curriculum of higher secondary eduction. Two stream of education were introduced at the lower secondary level, namely academic and vocational. The academic stream consisted of Thai, English, Social Science, Natural Science, Mathematics, Physical and Health Education and Arts and Crafts, with the total of 30 instruction hours per week. The vocational contained 35 instruction hours per week. Seventeen of those were allocated for vocational training. Ten vocational areas were available for selection: housing carpentry, furniture carpentry metal designing, ceramic, leather ware, tailoring, weaving, homecraft, agriculture and foreign language.

At the higher secondary level there were also two streams namely, academic and vocational. This time the academic stream was divided into three sub-streams, namely.

sciences, arts and general. The arts sub stream allowed two alternative selections, mathematics or a second foreign language. The general sub-stream was broadly designed for students to have a free choice of 12 instructions hour per week to select various subjects, including mathematics, second foreign language, commerce, secretarial studies and some of the 22 vocational subjects. The vocational stream offered 22 subjects for selection. They were mechanics, metal repair and construction, welding, electricity, radio, engine, metal designing, printing, photography, survey, construction, housing carpentry, furniture carpentry, ship building, commerce, secretarial studies, foreign language, tailoring, leather-ware, homecraft crafts, agriculture, and primary agricultural teacher training. The vocational stream required 3 year of course work to complete the curriculum.

The vocational streams at both lower and upper secondary levels were designed to produce semi-skilled workers to meet the requirement of import-substitution industries planned for National Economic and Social Development Planning in the 1960's. Again, the strong centralized control by the enforcement of common school leaving examination at all levels was still the main feature of the 1960 curriculum. This centralized control allowed only little flexibility for local authorities to design their own curriculum to meet local needs.

In the mid 1960's the number of graduates at the higher secondary level from the academic stream increased very

rapidly resulting in less than a half of graduates being enrolled in the universities. Many of them could not find employment because of the lack of professional skills, especially those graduating from provincial schools.

The heavy present of the G.I.'s in the Northeast prompted one principal of a high school in Nakornrajsima Province to experiment with a comprehensive secondary school on her own. Six year programme of secondary education was designed. It should be understood at this point that the academic schools were not allowed to offer the vocational stream of education. The vocational stream must be taught in vocational schools only. The attempt to modify academic schools into comprehensive schools by introducing some vocational training in the academic schools was a brave innovation at the time.

Because of the rigid centralized control, the attempt at acquiring tools and machinery for vocational training of students met with great difficulty. The whole programme was not so successful. However, this innovation had led the government to launch a experiment project of comprehensive school in 20 provinces. Since the comprehensive schools provided very flexible study plans for students, the centralized evaluation of the school leaving examination for these schools was not possible. The abolition of such centralized evaluation of the school leaving examination of the comprehensive schools led to the abolition of centralized school leaving examination in all schools at the

higher secondary level later on.

Another pressure on the abolition of the centralized control of school leaving examination was due to the rapid expansion of secondary schools at a sub-district level as well as in many big districts where the existing schools could not meet with the rapid increase in the demand for them. Numbers of students who were required to sit for the centralized school leaving examination swelled to an uncontrollable number of 70,000 to 80,000 annually. There were so many scandals results from the leak of the centralized examination before the actual date.

The combination of different practice in school leaving examination between comprehensive schools and other academic schools, together with the pressure from the rapid increase in members of those who must take the centralized school leaving examination, and the resolution from the Committee to Study the Foundation for Education Reform calling for more open and flexible system of education, on January 18, 1975, the Ministry of Education announced the new curriculum for upper secondary education.^{7/}

More Flexible Curriculum of Upper Secondary Education

Since this curriculum was designed after the student uprising of 14 October 1973, it contained some of the progressive sentiments in the statement of curricular objectives. Among the nine objectives, the first one stated that.^{8/}

'To be good citizen with high moral standing, understanding of their rights and responsibilities, knowing how to solve problems by peaceful means, with the attitude to promote social justice in the democratic society.'

The seventh objective also stated another progressive line that had never been mentioned in other curriculum objectives before.^{9/}

'To understand the contemporary politico-economic and social problems'.

After 6 October, 1976 when there was a revival of dictatorship in Thailand all these progressive phrases were deleted from the subsequent curricular objectives.

This new curriculum replaced the annual subjects by breaking them into two semesters. At the same time the credit system was adopted at the upper secondary level for the first time, the two year duration of course work was still retained. however, the degree of flexibility was greatly enhanced. Students were required to take four compulsory subjects, 34 credit hours. They are freed to choose other 66 credit hours on their own. The followings are compulsory and selective subjects.

Compulsory subjects:

Thai		12 credit hours
Social sciences		12 "
Natural sciences		6 "
Physical and health education		4 "

Selective subjects:

Thai	not more than	16	"
Social sciences	"	16	"
Natural sciences	"	44	"
Mathematic	"	24	"
Vocational subjects	"	72	"
Physical and health education	"	12	"
English	"	40	"
Second foreign language	"	16	"
Arts education	"	12	"
Others	"	8	"
Special activities	"	4	"

With this 1975 curriculum change, all upper secondary academic schools were transformed into comprehensive schools. There were no longer traditionally academic and vocational streams. Theoretically, most subjects taught in vocational schools were also available in ordinary upper secondary schools and the centralized school leaving examination was no longer operational. Theoretically all schools were free to design their vocational curriculum to suit local needs. However, in practice schools were not well equipped with teaching resources for vocational training. Neither were schools really free to choose to develop their own vocational training, to suit the local needs. They had to select from a list of about 30 vocational subjects designed by the Ministry of Education. Nevertheless, in comparison with the 1960 curriculum, the 1975 curriculum represented a significant change.

More Flexible Curriculum at Primary and Lower Secondary Levels

Ironically, while centralized examination of the upper secondary school leaving was no longer applicable, the centralized examinations of the lower secondary school and primary school leaving were still effective. This was because the 1960 curriculum was still effective for these two levels of education. Nevertheless, the reform plan for the two education levels was under way. The 1977 Education Plan resulted from the recommendations of the Committee to Study the Foundation for Education Reform. Following this

1977 Education Plan, the 1978 Primary Education Curriculum 10/ and that of the Lower Secondary Education 11/ were announced.

The reason for the delay of these two curriculum was because there was a change in the number of years of these two curriculum. Primary Education was reduced to 6 years instead of 7 years. The change to this curriculum took place after the return of the dictatorial regime in Thailand after 6 October 1976. Progressive lines of curriculum objectives were deleted and were replaced by more conservative ones. For example one of the objectives at the primary level is to be a good member of community and the nation. Under this heading, there were at least three out of seven sub-objectives, which were explicitly political in nature. Among them were:

'to have faith in democracy where the king is a symbolic leader, to unify intellectual, physical abilities and wealth for the progress and security of the nation, to value independence and to be proud of the Thai mother land'.12/

It should be understood at this point that communism was thought of as a foreign ideology disseminated by foreign enemies, and communism was the archetypal enemy then. Therefore one can envisage some ideological tone in the actual curriculum instruction. One of the objectives of the lower secondary curriculum among ten of them carried out was a similar line;

'to be proud of being a Thai, and to be faithful to the nation, religion, and the king, to have faith in democracy where the king is a symbolic leader, and to uphold national safety and security'.13/

Nevertheless, the curriculum of both primary and lower secondary education represented considerable changes for more flexibility. At the primary level, the curriculum was

divided into 4 groups:14/

- Group one : Learning skills, comprising Thai and Mathematics.
- Group two : Life experience development to study the process of problem solving of individual life and society, to study of human problems and her/his needs, in order to sustain a better life.
- Group three : Habitual development, to involve in activities relating to such development.
- Group four : Foundation for vocations to gain the fundamental attitude for working and general work experience.

This last group of subjects represents significant change from the previous curriculum at this level. The subjects include, household work, agriculture, arts and crafts and the combination of the three.

The lower secondary level starts from year seven to year nine, with the following curriculum structure.15/

Curriculum Structure

Group of subject	Credit hours per weeks per year					
	Year Seven		Year Eight		Year Nine	
	Compul- sory	Selective (not more than)	Compul- sory	Selective (not more than)	Compul- sory	Selective (not more than)
1. Language						
Thai	4	-	4	2	4	4
Foreign	-	6	-	6	-	8
2. Sciences-Mathematics						
Sciences	4	-	4	-	4	-
Mathematics	4	-	4	-	-	6
3. Social sciences	5	-	5	-	5	4
4. Habitual Development Physical and health educa- tion	3	2	3	2	3	4
Arts education	2	2	2	4	-	6
Other activities	1	-	1	-	1	-
5. Works experience and vocationatism						
Work experience	4	-	4	-	4	-
Vocationalism	-	6	-	6	-	12
	27	6	27	6	21	12
TOTAL	33		33		33	

In year seven and year eight, there are eight compulsory subjects. They are Thai, Sciences, Mathematics, Social sciences, Physical and Health education, Arts Education, Other activities and Vocational subjects. In year nine two compulsory subjects are dropped, namely, Mathematics and Arts Education. Twelve credit hours of vocational subjects are offered for the selection. Again, this curriculum has broadened the choice of students. With this 1978 curriculum, change the centralized school leaving examination was completely abolished.

Further Improvement at Upper Secondary Level

It was proposed in the reform plan to rearrange the twelve years of primary and secondary education from the 1960 curriculum of seven years of primary education, three years of lower secondary education and two years of upper secondary to six years of primary education, three years of lower secondary education and three years of upper secondary education. The 1975 curriculum for upper secondary was based on a two year level. After the 1978 curriculum, for lower secondary education, was operational for three years the lower secondary school leavers would be ready for the new curriculum of the upper secondary level. For this reason, the 1981 curriculum of upper secondary education was introduced to complete the reform plan. This curriculum was introduced at the time when the ultra conservative ideology in Thai was not popular at the same time socialism was in

serious doubt resulting from the Russian invasion of Afghanistan and the war between socialist countries in Indochina. Therefore, the objectives of this 1981 curriculum contains some of this rhetoric as it reflects a mixture of the two extreme ideologies. In number six of the objectives, it is stated that;16/

'to create a Thai consciousness and to be ready to sacrifice personal benefit for public interest, to be patriotic and to uphold democracy, to use intellectual ability for the security of the nation, religion and the king'.

Also in number seven of the objectives, it is stated that.17/

'to have a fundamental understanding of politico-economic and social problems nationally and globally, to be aware of being part of the human community and able to find resolutions from all conflicts through intellectual abilities and peaceful means'.

The curriculum is most flexible. Student are required to complete 150 credit hours, while the compulsory subjects consist of 72 credit hours. Fourty eight credit hours are Thai, Social Sciences, Physical and Health Education and Natural Sciences. The other twenty four credit hours are to be selected from the list of 6 professional subjects, Industry, Agriculture, Home Economics, Commerce, Arts and Crafts, and Practical Arts.18/ The aim of this set of compulsory subjects is to ensure that students must have some basic skills in some of these vocational areas upon graduation. With the rest of 78 credit hours, students are free to choose from the list of subjects consisting of Thai, Social Sciences. Physical and Health Education Natural

Sciences, Mathematics, Foreign Languages, Practical Arts, Industry, Agriculture, Home Economics, Commerce and Arts and Crafts.

It is explained that such complete flexibility and variety of subjects at the secondary levels are due to the one extra year gained in secondary education from that of the 1960's. The 1981 curriculum of upper secondary education marks the completion of the 1974 reform proposal as far as its recommendation on the of flexibility of the curriculum is concerned. Each school is now entitled to do their own evaluation for school leaving examination at all levels, and the centralized control of examinations is not possible because of the wide range of curriculum in schools. Theoretically each school can design their own curriculum to suit the local needs.

Unfortunately, in practice the curriculum designed for the vocational stream does not work well. There are two problems stemming within the system. The first problem is due to limited range of vocational training and other selective subjects to be offered by each school because of the school's limited resources. Therefore most schools finally choose to concentrate its programmes within academic subjects. Secondly, the vocational stream in each level, in practice, is a terminal program, namely those who choose to follow the vocational streams at lower secondary level cannot proceed to higher level of vocational training at the upper level. There is no stated regulation against the continuation of the vocational streams. However, those who

choose to pursue studies in the vocational streams at the lower secondary level will not be able to compete successfully in the academic subjects required at the upper secondary level, unless such students are prepared to take an extra load than is required. This disincentive hampers the development of the vocational stream further. However, the largest part of disincentive comes from outside the system of secondary education, the internationalism of higher education.

The Internationalism of Higher Education

As already discussed earlier, 1960 marked a complete transformation of the European system of higher education in Thailand, into the American system of higher education. This trend is not unique for Thailand but is true for most developing countries almost everywhere. The high degree of internationalism in higher education is the key factor explaining such trends. There has been a world-wide tendency that higher education must be internationally standardized in order to ensure the continuing flow of knowledge globally, without any national boundaries. Knowledge is considered to be of universal nature and should not be specific to any particular country. In reality the universalness of knowledge is only applicable in the pure theories of natural science. All applied sciences normally carry some cultural and national specificity. Such

specificity may be applicable to the conditions prevailing in many countries but will never fit the particular nature of all countries. This is the main reason for the outcry for appropriate technology in most developing countries. In the area of social sciences where social and cultural factors exert their fullest influence, such bias is almost inescapable. Therefore internationalism in higher education is not designed mainly to fit the needs of the countries where knowledge is transferred to, but those who transfer the knowledge. This type of single directional flow of knowledge is sometimes known as cultural imperialism.^{19/}

The question to be raised at this point is why such cultural imperialism is widely accepted among educationalists in most developing countries. The simple answer is that most of them have been trained to think along the line of the main stream of thoughts developed in the developed countries resulting, from their training experience. Also, it is quite natural to put greater emphasis on specialization in training at the higher education level. Most top administrators of higher learning institutions are not trained to think in terms of the overall impact of higher education on the whole system of education in their countries. Each of them is normally equipped with a bias from her/his own specialization. With this bias, they would be more inclined to keep up with the specialized knowledge developed in all areas elsewhere, than to worry about its impact on the system of national education. These people normally have considerable

influence in determining the national education policy.

Apart from what most administrators prefer to do in managing their own educational affairs, most staff members also prefer to see the development of knowledge along the more specialized frame of thinking. The development of knowledge in this direction will help maintain the global connection in their specialties. If higher education is organized to suit the local needs, the link could be disconnected. All personal interests resulting from international connection will be disrupted.

Because of all the factors mentioned above, most higher education institutions in Thailand especially the limited admission ones, and most private universities and colleges do not wish to change their system of instruction and recruitment. The standard entrance examination for all high school leavers is set up for the purpose, although attempts have already been made to abolish the system of standardized education at the lower levels. The standardized subjects which would be convenient to organize are all academic subjects, Thai, English Mathematics, Social Sciences and Natural Sciences. Such entrance examination requirements have caused most students to concentrate on their academic subjects from the primary level. Otherwise it would be equivalent to giving up their chance to enter higher education institutions later on in their lives. For this reason most education innovation attempted at lower levels are completely destroyed.

Some Evidence on the Destruction of Education Innovation

Currently, there are more than 35,000 primary schools in Thailand. There are about 2400 innovative projects conducted by about some of these schools : Most projects are those of remedial nature resulting from deficiencies in instructions, curriculum, problems of teachers and their incentives, and other problems relating to education administration. Among them are few innovative projects such as school lunch program, growing soil bean for more protein food, improvement of sanitary level of pupils and their parents, democracy in schools, ethical education in practice, agricultural promotion, occupational training and guidance, school's reforestation, cattle raising for beef, and etc. Unfortunately, there are only about 120 these nature or only about 5 per cent of primary school innovative projects.^{20/} Such small numbers useful innovation at the primary education can be explained in part by the strong emphasis on academic curriculum. It is reported in the Evaluation of Upper Secondary Education Curriculum in 1985 by the team of researchers from the Faculty of Education Chulalongkorn University that.^{21/}

'Most schools cannot organize the courses in accordance with the principle outlined by the 1981 Curriculum of Upper Secondary Education. They cannot open most selective programs resulting from deficiencies of schools in various aspects. Moreover most students intend to continue education at higher levels. Therefore, there is no strong incentive to organize selective programs in schools as stated in the 1981 Curriculum. In spite of the fact that the new curriculum puts greater emphasis on aptitude and ability to think of students, school examinations and

university entrance examination are based on class-room instruction and memorization.....
Moreover, parents and guardians are not inclined to put their childrens in the vocational stream and the school itself also lacks confidence to organize vocational programme to be comparable with those of the vocational schools'.

Because of the domination of the entrance examination into institutions of higher education with great emphasis on academic education through memorization, most urban primary schools do not teach the curriculum of foundation for vocationalism. Instead, they teach English.^{22/} At the secondary level about 87 per cent of school offer classes according to its own specialization with heavy emphasis on Mathematics and Natural Sciences.^{23/}

Because of the emphasis on memorization in the entrance examination centered around academic subjects, most secondary schools are turned into coaching schools for entrance examination for universities. Many high school teachers and members of university staff find the way to earn huge amounts to supplement their income by organizing coaching centres in English, Mathematics and Sciences. Most students at the upper secondary level will plan to take the equivalent examination for upper secondary school leaving examination organized by the Department of Non-formal Education. This programme is originally aimed to promote self-education of less educated adults.

This tendency has caused great concern to the Ministry of Education. In April 1986, the Department of Academic Education has submitted the memorandum to the Office of Under-Secretary, Ministry of Education expressing its

concern over such practice. The Department suggests the lower age limitation of 18 year old to those who wish to take the equivalent examination of the upper secondary school leaving examination.^{24/} There has been no definite resolution stemming from such proposals as yet.

Epilogue

The attempt to abolish centralized control of education resulting from the coincided interest of the British imperialist interests and the Thai government in the late nineteenth century began to take shape after the formation of the Committee to Study the Foundation for Education Reform in 1974. The successful formation of this Committee was at the time when short life democracy was prevailed briefly in Thailand after the student uprising of 14 October 1973. In spite of the return of the dictatorial regime after 6 October 1976, the reform plan especially the one on increasing flexibility of the curriculum to suit local needs was carried out and was completed by 1981.

Unfortunately, the arch enemy of this education innovation is no longer the dictatorial regime itself. As discussed earlier the increasing degree of democracy did contributed to the reform effort. The degree of democracy is currently improved in Thailand. Ironically, the internationalism of higher education or the so called 'cultural imperialism' is still the main obstacle to the

reform attempt.

The current severe problem of the current graduate unemployment in Thailand is due in part to this type of learning and examination practices. Those who cannot compete successfully in to the universities, are not equipped with basic skills for working. They will eventually find themselves being unemployed if they enter labour markets. To solve their immediate problem most of them continue their education in either of two unlimited admission universities namely, Sukhothai-Thammathirat and Ramkhamhaeng. The curriculum offered in these two universities are also internationalized and have little to do with the domestic socio-economic environment. Huge number of graduates of this type of training has been turned out into labour market each year. While the absorptive ability of the economy for graduates of this type of training is limited, the result has been the great lost in resources used in training as well as those who have been trained by this system of education. This is the cost of irrelevant higher education in Thailand.

Fortunately, current innovative wisdom among top administrators of higher education is about to emerge. This new tendency also results from the recent improvement in the degree of democracy. On 22 September 1986, in the Rector Meeting composing of Rectors and Deputy Rectors of all State Universities, one interesting issue was raised by the Rector of Kasetsart University. It is interesting to observe that this university is the first one in Thailand patterned after

an American university; with its strong emphasis on applied sciences. The Rector called for the redesign of education curriculum at the higher level to suit the country's immediate needs, namely, to train people in the way that they can create their own job. He complained that the current curriculum are very much of that Western prototype.^{25/} This remark make a good beginning for the seminal attempt to reform the curriculum of higher education in Thailand. Unfortunately, this idea will take number of years before the actual reform will take shape because the dominating factors resulting from cultural imperialism are still operating as strong opposing forces.

FOOTNOTES

1. This portion of the Thai history was made satire by Broadway musical comedy known as "The King and I".
2. Charnvit Kasetsiri, 'Pridi Bhanomyong and Thammasat University', in Charnvit Kasetsiri and Permpol Pohpermhem (eds), Pridi Bhanomyong: Life Works and Thammasat, Bangkok, 1986, p.65.
3. Virginia Thompson, Thailand : The New Siam, New York, 1941, p.785.
4. Office of the Prime Minister, Thailand, Official Year Book 1964, p.484.
5. Committee to Study the Foundation for Education Reform, Report on Education for Life and Society, December 4, 1974, pp.3-4.
6. Ministry of Education, Lower Secondary Ministry of Education, Higher Secondary Education Curriculum of 1960, p.3.
7. Ministry of Education, Upper Secondary Education Curriculum of 1975, Vols.1-6.
 - Vol.1 - Academic
 - Arts and Practical Arts
 - Vol.2 - Agriculture
 - Vol.3 - Home Economics
 - Vol.4 - Commerce
 - Vol.5 - Arts and Crafts
 - Vol.6 - Industry
8. Ibid., p.1.
9. loc.cit.
10. Ministry of Education, Primary Education Curriculum of 1978.
11. Ministry of Education, Lower Secondary Education Curriculum of 1978, Vols. 1-2.
 - Vol.1 - Academic
 - Language
12. op.cit., p.3.
13. op.cit., p.2.
14. Ministry of Education, Primary Education Curriculum of 1978, p.3.

15. Ministry of Education, Lower Secondary Education Curriculum of 1978 Vol.1, p.6.
 16. Ministry of Education, Upper Secondary Education Curriculum of 1981, p.7.
 17. loc.cit.
 18. Ibid., p.9.
 19. "the use of political and economic power to exalt and spread the values and habits of a foreign culture at the expense of a native culture" a quotation from The Harper Dictionary of Modern Thought in R.F. Aranove (ed.) Philanthropy and Cultural Ineperralism, Bloomington, 1982,p.2.
 20. Raw data made available to the author by the Division of Education Research, The National Education Commission.
 21. Ministry of Education, Evaluation of the Application of the Upper Secondary Curriculum of 1981, pp.58-59.
 22. Interview of Dr. Kramol Sudprasert, Inspetor General, Ministry of Education, August 29, 1985.
 23. op.cit., p.64.
 24. Office of Under-Secretary, Ministry of Education, Memorandum on 'the Organization of Informal Education for Non-Upper-Secondary Students, 25 July 1986.
 25. Matichon (Thai Newspaper), 24 September, 1986.
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