



EE 466 Political Economy of Development

Individual essay: Education and capitalism in Thailand

Education is the foundation of every system in the world. Everyone who grows up has to go through education. Capitalism is a key factor in transforming the education system which has both advantages and disadvantages including how the government can support the education system under capitalism.

Back in the day, education was not well-educated for every student. Capitalism or “Industrial revolution” needed only unskilled workers who are strong and ready to use as a labor. Therefore, there was no education for most children. Young children until grew up had to work with machinery in factories or the mines. This type of child labor was useful for capitalists who can pay a low wage.

However, the further development of the industrial society leads to a radical increase in the skill and knowledge needed by society. Capitalists began to see the benefits of skilled workers, educated and more skilled. Moreover, the highly efficient labor force that creates profits for the employer is a healthy and strong workforce. Therefore, every education system for children is implemented through government policies and expenses. But since capitalism is a racist society, education that the government provides for ordinary people is completely different from studying in a private school or university which is intended for the offspring and the rich people.

In addition, Thai education in general has the function of giving individuals the technical knowledge necessary for them to participate in social life in addition to providing workers with more skills. Because the highly efficient labor force that creates profits for the employer is a healthy, strong workforce. Therefore, every education system for children is implemented through government policies and expenses. But since capitalism is a racist society, education that the government provides for ordinary people is completely different

from studying in a private school or university which is intended for the offspring and the rich

In the past, the difference between high tuition fee school and government free school was very high. It was obvious enough to separate the ruling class students which will be a capitalist in the future from most of the students that were labor class. However, capitalism is developing in Thailand, the capitalists need more specialized labor. Admission examination is provided to many government schools to classify a middle-class labor. Those who pass this exam will have the privilege of entering a more quality public school. Some of them may also receive special scholarships to study in elite private schools.

Throughout the existence of capitalism, the capitalists' benefits to obtain the most profit and want to save on state expenses and reduce taxation on capital groups or the rich. Means that the education and examination system are designed for the majority of people who fail the examination to receive a basic education that is only suitable for their future duties.

On the other hand, some who pass the exams will be raised to those with an intermediate level of education to become skilled craftsmen, and others will receive a top-notch education suitable for future rulership. But failing or passing the exam does not measure intelligence at all, it measures how much of a child in a different class will receive support for passing an exam.

A class society is full of inequality in capitalism. It was invented by the ruling class. But were pictured by those ruling classes as 'Nature'. The ruling class will blow our ears into believing that the few are particularly intelligent. Others are moderately smart and most are foolish. Instead of looking at the educational system and the exam being designed like this in the first place.

In capitalism, most people are taught to be loyal and to obey the ruling class. Rebellion or revolution would overthrow the social class. Education is always a double-edged sword. It increases work efficiency and profits for capitalists. But in the other perspective, anyone who has a good education could read and naturally has the confidence to think for

themselves. They are able to find a source of rebellious ideas and able to communicate easily with people who want to change society.

Thai people increasingly accept that education is an investment. Many parents agree to spend a lot of money for children's education because they believe that education is a tool that helps improve their both economic and social status.

Nowadays, Thai education is obviously turning into a product. Education is no longer an expression of knowledge from knowledgeable people to students, but it turns to a product which is traded in the market. The relationship between teachers and students is not a lecturer and receiver anymore, but gradually changed into a relationship between the buyer and seller. The practice also changes to relationships based on the product instead of the traditional practice. Higher education will be shown as more obviously of capitalism. Although the image of this change has not been spread to the countryside, it is expected that this will happen shortly.

When the education system turns to product, consumers must need a product differentiation. Government schools cannot produce much different products as long as the strict regulation of school knowledge still exists. But when the control is relaxed, the school or university could respond to consumer needs more. As shown in higher education or universities that the regulation is more relaxed, thus it can produce more differentiate products or more courses in response to students' needs. Similarly, private institutions were created to organize training and discussion in order to meet the diverse needs. Private schools provide more efficient courses like English programs, Mini MBA, or more specific courses which do not exist in government schools. The more differentiation is the higher purchasing power and more inequality in Thai education.

Consumer needs are the main factor that determine the structure of Thai education. This is a basement change, because the government plays a role as they know what consumers need. Nowadays, a price mechanism is replacing government mechanisms, especially private sectors. The lack of purchasing power of consumers will be abandoned if the government does not increase the resources of education to them.

In the old days, tuition fees were not collected by teachers. At the very least, there is no tradition that teachers demand tuition fees from students. Tuition is possible on the

voluntary basis of the learners. Not in money but are giving things, fruits, food, rare items without giving before starting school. Students gave those things at the festival and continue to give even after graduating. It is a true relationship between knowledge giver and student. It is not the relationship of Thai education nowadays.

Tuition fees are a new spectacle after importing the traditional from western school. In the first time, the government did not collect direct tuition fees but collected indirectly from taxation to bring that income to purchase for education organizations. Later, the tuition fee is collected directly from the education service recipient. The more the government expanded its role in providing education and the more private education expanded, the phenomenon of collecting tuition fees grew even more. The significance of this phenomenon is that the acquisition of educational services has to be paid for. Therefore, educational services are transformed into more products. In other perspective, Thailand had a former tradition of 'Barter economy' which is trading things. After importing an education system from the western, the tradition was gradually changed to an 'Exchange economy' where money gets involved in the trading system.

Not only did money play a more active role in transferring subjects, but the behavior of the teachers also changed significantly. In the past, teachers never had to offer courses to students. But the growth of capitalist economic power and the neglect of the government did not provide adequate welfare to teachers, teachers therefore have to think about selling courses. Tutoring after school hours is also evident in this capitalist era.

After these events, some teachers have changed their teaching ethics. The virtue, beauty and justice are gradually diminished as the ethical foundation of teachers. The power of capitalism will increasingly play a role in setting teachers' ethical norms. This is evident in the fact that many teachers do not rate students morally, but rather they rate students based on benefits. In other words, any student who takes extra lessons will get a high score. But anyone who does not have a special education will be pressed on the score.

Teachers are now becoming academic entrepreneurs. Since the government has not been interested in improving the welfare of teachers from kindergarten to higher education, teachers cannot tolerate economic changes and consumerism has also accelerated the expansion. This increases demand for every occupation. For this reason, teachers have to

become academic entrepreneurs. The image of the teacher is seen as an academic entrepreneur, not a venerable person any longer.

Capitalist economic power, both domestic and global, will continue to expand its influence in the education sector in the future. As a result, not only education services are more likely as products. But the effect that is even greater is that the publicness of good will be decreased. Also, privateness of good will be increased.

Expanding the role of the private sector in the production of educational services will inevitably expand the private sector of education services. Private educational institutions often produce educational services that give them a private benefit due to their customers. Educational services which give a social benefit except a private benefit are in a lower number than the optimal level. The resources are produced in educational services for the most in private sectors and neglect produced for public benefits.

The role of Thai government and society toward this failure is that all occupations including teacher have to be viewed as an eminent occupation. In Thailand, only doctors or public servants are viewed as a noble career and give them a high compensation and acceptance. Many people who have an ability to do a specialized job are trying to get in a few jobs that are accepted. Teacher is not a goal for those people, so teacher is not a job that people compete to be. A low competitiveness of the career means a low improvement for the job. The quality of the teacher is not good enough. In addition, teachers do not receive high acceptance and welfare as well. Thailand has to change a political development structure by giving importance and welfare for all occupations the same to elevate all careers together including teacher career.

In addition, the quality of schools is not well diffused. The problem is parents have to pay a very high tuition fee for their kid to enter a quality school. Only students in middle class to upper class families are fully educated, but how about low-class income families? The effect of lack of educational kids from poor families causes slums, crime, drug addiction, gambling and premature pregnancy. Those kids will use their knowledge in a wrong method or live without a suitable consideration.

In conclusion, Thai education has changed over time, and each period has its own struggle in educational system. The government play a key role to clear and find the best solution for each period. Moreover, capitalism also be a key factor that changes educational pattern. Knowledge and money can now be traded in the capitalism era and there is an even greater chance of being compared as a commodity as the intensity of spreading capitalism. Education and knowledge are a basis of every system in the world, so emphasize on educational value and improve Thai education together.