

Access to Quality Education and Poverty Reduction in Thailand

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Introduction

The objective of this paper is to present how quality education can be a way out of poverty, a case of Thailand. As a majority of analysts concerned by poverty believes that low levels of incomes are due to low levels of education. Therefore, this majority stresses that education is the best way out of poverty.

This discourse is examined under the light of the literature dealing with the link between income and poverty. Then education becomes a tool for attacking poverty on different fronts: incomes, economic growth, empowerment and reducing risks and discriminations. However, our perspective is mainly on economic dimension of poverty and on theses that assert that education change the economic divide.

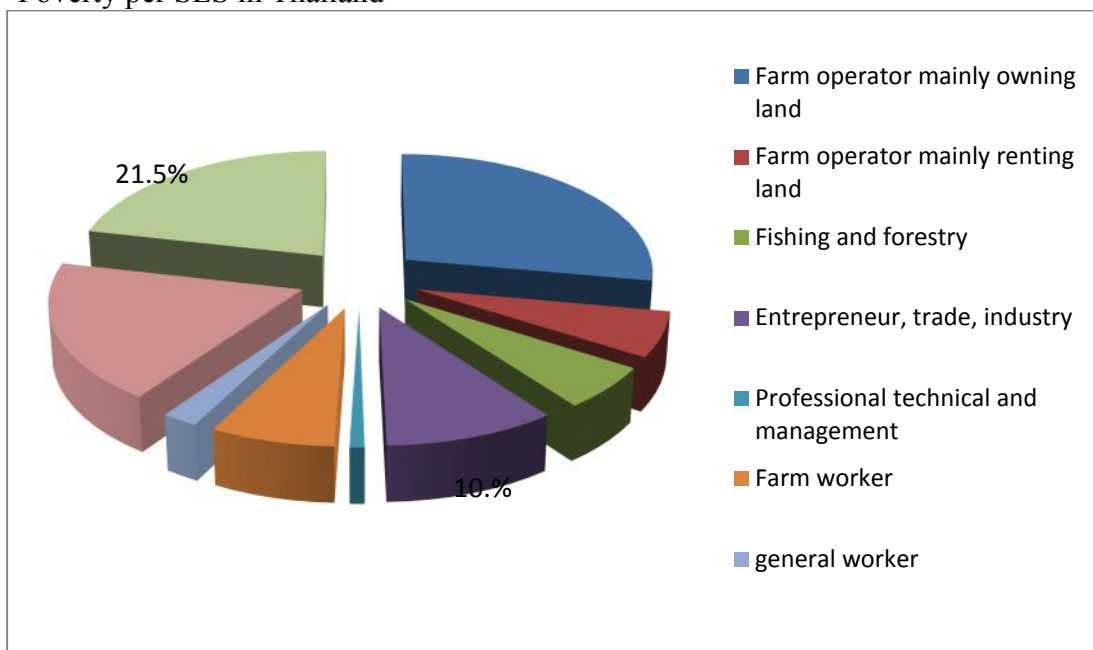
Part I screens and characterizes economic and sociological approaches of the relationships between education and income distribution. Part II focuses in particular on deeper approaches – most of them carried out by sociological studies of the effects of social segmentations on educational attainments, effects which tend to reproduce and perpetuate social inequalities. If this is the case, then education cannot be a way out of poverty. Compensatory educational programs can contribute to reduce inequalities regarding education but probably not to reduce social inequalities.

I. Poverty and education: the different approaches

2.2 Who are the poor in Thailand?

We can see in the graph the distribution of poverty per socio-economic status (SES).

Poverty per SES in Thailand



The poor in Thailand according to the poverty-line approach are mainly farmers (the ownership of the land does not appear as an advantage) and farm workers who altogether amount for about 47% of the poor. As Lipton put it: the reason why poor people stay poor is because in the process of industrialization and urbanisation there is a systematic bias against farmers and rural areas in terms of declining farm prices and inequality in public utilities and equipment (see the debate with Byres). The same analysis applies for traditional self employed who are in the category “entrepreneur, trade and industry” for about 10%.

Other employees amount for about 19% of the poor probably in domestic services and in restaurants, hotels and tourism where wages are very low against very long working hours. Poverty among inactive people is quite high (elder, young, handicapped, non working parents). It reaches 21% of the total of the poor while they are only 31% of the total population.

Demographic characteristics		
Total population ('000)	54,548.50	60,617.20
Population in Municipal Area (%)	29.4	31.1
Sex ratio (Males per 100 females)	98.5	97
Median age	24.6	29.7
Population by age group		
0-14 years (%)	29.2	24.1
15-59 years (%)	63.4	66.5
60 years and over (%)	7.4	9.4
Age dependency ratio (Per 100 adults 15-59 years)		
Total	57.7	50.5
0-14 years	46.1	36.3
60 years and over	11.6	14.2

Source; Census, NSO

This however requires the knowledge of the patterns of families that prevail in the poor population. Young people, elders living alone as well as single mothers are certainly characteristics of some of the poor. However, according to our observation, most of young and elders live in more or less large households where solidarity still exist and prevent from absolute poverty. The main problem arise perhaps from urban poverty (Suganya and Pornchai, 1990).

1.1 The economic approach

Education is a fundamental human right and essential for the exercise of all other human rights. (<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/right-to-education/>)

To understand the link between poverty and education is theoretically established between income and education by the theory of human capital. The main foundation of this theory is to consider that incomes are linked to the quality of the labor force and that this quality is underpinned on the education of the labor force. The theory of human capital asserts that education is an investment, not consumption (Schultz, 1961; Schultz, 1962), because it can be accumulated in human beings and has “returns” in the form of higher incomes when s/he gets a job. This major assertion of the theory of human capital according to which *individual investment in oneself education brings higher individual income.*

Sharp et al (1992) recalls the underlying reasoning which is the syllogism: 1) wages are related to the productivity of workers and 2) labor productivity depends on education, therefore 3) wages depend on education. Although very simplistic and inconclusively verified, this syllogism has been very influential and endlessly repeated particularly in the economic literature.

The first assertion is simplistic because if the level of individual wage is influenced by productivity, it is very indirectly; individual productivity cannot be measured properly; in fact corporate productivity is the result of collective work through the division of labor within the workplace, and not the result of the sum of individual productivities. Even if employers try sometimes to link individual wage with individual productivity, payment are more often linked to working hours. When the wage depends on the worker position, it reflects not so much individual productivity but the position and responsibility of the individual within the chain of command. Moreover, the distribution of productivity gains between labor incomes and profits is the product of collective and conflicting bargaining between employers and employees; it is not a simple equation of productivity- wage relationship. For the self-employed the same applies: labor income depends on the one hand on the technology which determines both individual labor productivity and cost of inputs, and on the other hand on the market price of output.

The second assertion is deceitful because the relationship between productivity and education is not established at all at a micro- economic level. It is said that productivity increases with skills and skills with education. The problem is that education is able to deliver cognitive skills but not technical and behavioral skills that are delivered by the workplace through the process of learning by doing. There are not serious studies that establish conclusively this relation between education and productivity.

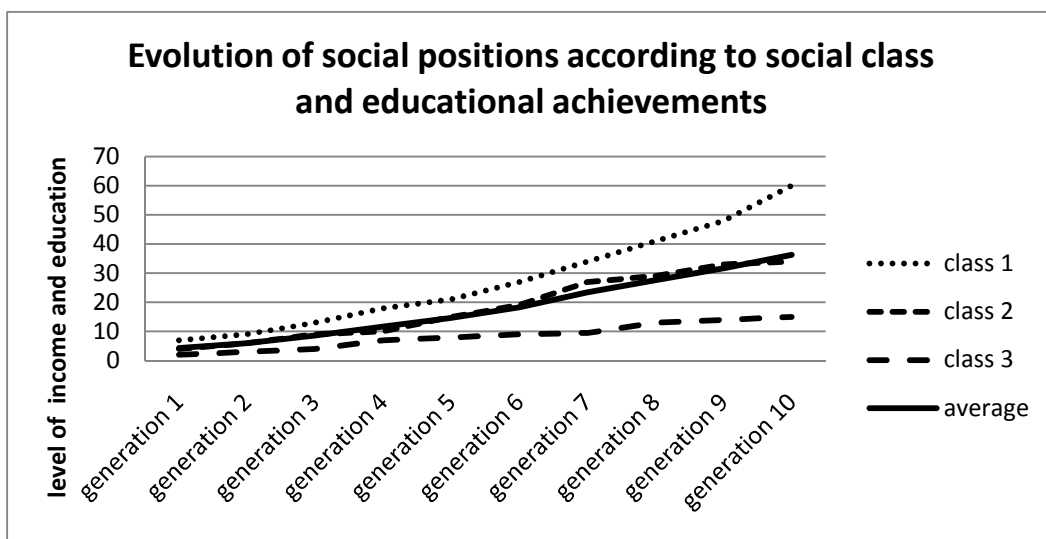
Using the same rate of internal return for different levels of education is the method used generally to compare discounted incomes of different lengths of studies, so that the graduate degree or the number of years of study are used as proxy for measuring individual investment in education. The second big problem with this calculation is that the future values of earnings cannot be known far in the future; that is why the calculation uses in fact actual earnings according to levels of educational degree of their holders and assumes that this relation will be the same in the future. This is certainly too bold and deceitful an approximation, which most of the time remains hidden and unquestioned. Nevertheless returns of education are always used as validation of the theory of human capital.

Beyond the unacceptable approximations of the calculation, this analysis is flawed on two theoretical grounds:

- 1) Education can be understood as consumption as well as an investment. As consumption it may have the same effect as an investment: it is to change the course of the life of the individual under certain conditions. Education can be considered as an initiation to human cultures and works as it is the case in the German concept of Bildung. To consider education just as a tool to improve economic condition is misleading and has nurtured credentialism as the product of inter-individual competition for social position (CELS, 2008; Collins, 1979; Collins, 2002; Steven, 2008).

- 2) This assessment of education supposes that education is entirely privatized so that only individual expenses and individual benefits can be sensibly counted. As far as we know there is no place in the world where education is entirely privatized. Education is a public good and not a commodity so that economic costs and benefits are social before being individual.
- 3) If we start from the fact that education is just a lever for attributing social position according to individual merit rather than to privilege and inherited positions as in the past, it is easy to understand that when the average level of education increases it does not mean that everybody can improve his/her relative social position. Gewitz(2001) underlines the fact that education is a “positional good” . In fact education may improve individual earnings only if it improves the rank of the individual within the classification of positions which is operated by education (CELS, 2008). People who cannot follow the trend of average education may lag behind so that their economic position will deteriorate. Consequently in order to improve social positions in comparison of that of parents, children have to perform at school better than the average of their fellow creatures. If they perform as the average their social position will not change; if they perform under the average their social position will deteriorate.

This can be summarized in the following graph.



From the graph, it appears that the middle class (class 2) could hope catch up with the higher class (class 1) until generation 7 and had to give up this hope with the increase of social inequalities after generation 7. On the contrary the lower social class (class 3) cannot catch up with the average neither in educational attainments nor standards of living. The low class is better off in absolute terms but worse off in relative terms. By no means, the small increment of income is due to education since educational attainments of the lower class remain lower or even worsen in comparison with the rest of the population. This small increase is due to a “trickle down effect” of economic growth while at the same time income distribution becomes more unequal during the period under analysis. This is exactly what happened in Thailand during the last 4 decades.

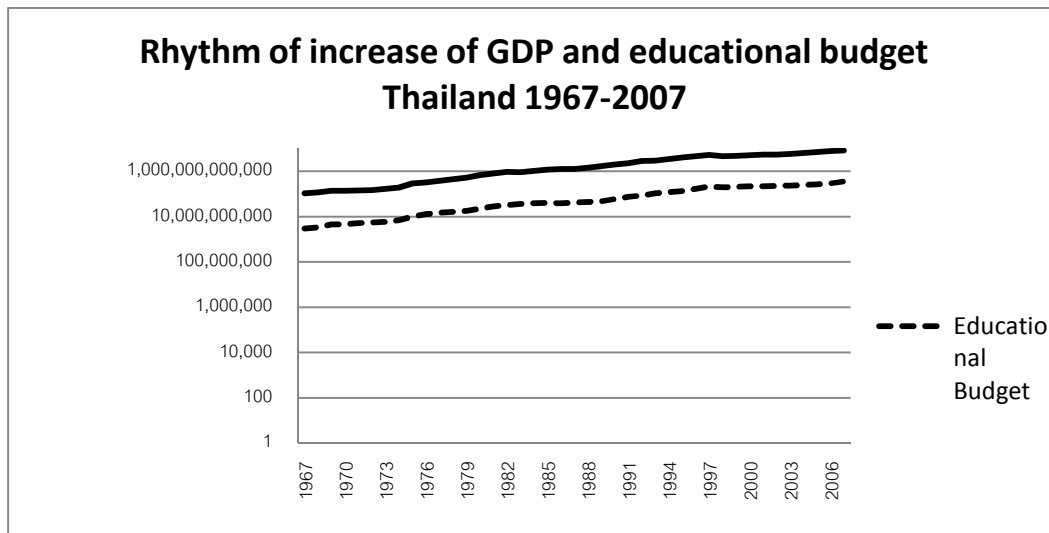
In other words; the relationships between education and income is an optical illusion. There is surely a correlation between level of education and income, but this stems from the fact that educational attainments are the way of selecting people for occupying social positions(Dillaka, 2553). In other terms, it is not because education produces skills and increases productivity, because productivity is the effect of the entire organization and management of an enterprise (Mounier and Phasina, 2008). The truth is that educational attainment has become the major criteria of selection of individuals for social positions. Consequently, education could be a way out of poverty, and in particular relative poverty, only if the children could perform at school above average and get a better social positions than their parents. Economics studies show that this not really happening (Lee and Solon, 2006). Sociology of education has firmly established that this is almost impossible to happen especially those starving families(Phasina, 2009b).

Indeed, from a logical viewpoint the correlation between level of income and level of education is used as a proof of causality: education determines income, while a correlation can never show this. However, the fact that education takes place before work induces the belief that this is the real direction of causality - because a cause has to pre-exist to its effect. The direction of causality can be contrary but through a third variable: parents. On the one hand, the incomes of parents determine educational attainments and therefore the educational level of their children(Bray, 2009). On the other hand the social position of parents influences the social position that their children will reach. This has been proof. Consequently education and jobs and their attached incomes having the same cause, there is an obvious correlation between level of education and income(Phasina, 2009b; Dillaka, 2553).

Consequently, because educational attainments of children are largely determined by their family backgrounds, the hierarchy of educational attainments mirrors the pre-existing social hierarchy. The existing social order and social hierarchy cannot be threatened and overturned by education because education reproduces them and reproduces social inequalities (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, 1979; Phasina, 2009a). This sociological firmly established theory of educational attainment contradicts and invalidates the theory of human capital. Therefore education cannot be a way out of poverty unless the fatality of the link between poverty and low quality educational attainment is broken.

An indirect link between poverty and education can also be established through economic growth. The theory of endogenous growth inherited from pioneers such as Denison, Romer or Lucas suggests that there is a link between education and economic growth (Sharp et al, 1992; Aghion, 1998; Tan, 1999; Hanusek and Wosmann, 2007). As economic growth reduces poverty, education may contribute to reduce poverty through its positive effect on growth. Of course education can have positive effects on long term economic growth by underpinning a good system of research and development and by easing the acquisition of skills on the job. But given the fact that technologies can be bought on the international market or transferred with foreign direct investment, technological change is loosely related with R&D and therefore with education; the same reasoning can apply with international brain drain. In fact this theory suffers exactly the same flaws as of the theory of human capital on which it is underpinned (Fine, 2000; Mounier, 2002). The quality education might be a factor of economic

growth. However, Hanusek and Wößmann(2007) notes that “Some argue that even though they might be a correlation between growth and school attainment, there may not be a casual relationship – growing countries may simply use a portion of their wealth to buy more schooling”, as well as private tutoring(Bray, 2009). In general public budget of education as a share of GDP increases or at least remains constant, so that total public expenditures of education tend to increase with GDP.



Source: CELS educational database. Data from Ministry of Education, Bank of Thailand

The graph relates the educational budget increases at about the same rhythm of GDP which tends to indicate that educational expenses remain stable in relation to GDP during the forty years. Regardless the free education policy for compulsory education has been partly launched in 1999 and absolute free from 2009, it does not mean that every child gets equality education. The political choice of increasing educational expenses in relation with the total budget comes from the Educational Reform rather than from other phenomena. However the important effort made for implementing the reform does not last very long and weakens between 2001 and 2007, although the educational budget remains above 20% of the national budget.

1.2 The sociological approach

There are three kinds of studies adopting a micro-economic perspective that links education attainment with the social position of the individual. The first one regards individual identity as a factor of educational attainment. The second one finds that individual intelligence is a major factor.

In modern society, social evolution has somehow freed the individual from previous extended family, community or religious bonds through a process of individualization (Giddens, 1968). The differentiation of social classes has declined and individualized social inequality has developed (Beck, 1992). This entails that individual

identity, forged through experience and network, is crucial in educational motivation, choice and outcomes.

The other side of the same coin is that the development of individualism is also the end of solidarity; perhaps it is not yet the case for Thailand where there is a strong component of Thai behavior where the extended family contributes to the expenses for the studies of the children. Choices are made according to an auto assessment of outcomes and potentialities.

Jensen, Herstein and Murray (cited in Raffo, 2007) argue that there is an inherited general intelligence of individuals that can be measured by tests. Poverty and intelligence being linked, children from the poor inherit also poor intelligence (Rutter, 2003). However, this thesis might be wrong for the reason that measurement of intelligence is always biased by knowledge and by the tests meant to measure it themselves. There are different kinds of intelligence; intelligence is multiple and not unique and largely dependent on cultures (Gardner, 1996; Garner, 2006).

Risk for the child comes mainly from families and secondarily from peers and the neighborhood; resilience to risks comes also from the same institutions. This also stresses that risks tend to be inherited through lower educational outcomes and patterns of behaviors. Individual behavior and motivation regarding studying and work are analyzed by psycho-sociology. Actually, the fact that more people are motivated to pursue longer studies is a product both of the demand of the economy for diplomas and of the push of parents to win the competition for social positions. The increasing motivation for studying is therefore not founded in the individual but in the society itself, and this evolution has been coined “credentialism” (Collins, 1979; Collins, 2002). These studies generally stress that success in education appeals success and failure appeals failure. Cognitive psychology have stressed that individual behavior and motivation are rooted in the characteristics of families and neighborhood of children for whom individual identity are forged by parents or/and peer groups and gangs. The analysis of the relationships between biological traits and environment is extending with neurosciences, as it has been the case for studies on the early childhood showing how the family behavior impact on the child future capacity to think, to learn and to act. (Shonkoff and Philipps, 2000). If cognitivists, associated with neurosciences try to discover the secret of the brain where thinking and learning would be somehow biological processes, some of them stress that culture is a major factor of thinking and learning, linking individual traits with factors related to the context (CELS, 2008).

The conviction that educational attainments have sociological determinants represents the bulk of research results of sociology of education. Two perspectives of thinking have developed this knowledge: the functionalist approach and the critical approach (Raffo et al, 2007).

The functionalist approach is the most sociological approach of education. It states that education has a comprehensive social role such as socializing the individual, preparing the child for adulthood, building citizenship and readiness for work. In that perspective, any child should be treated equally as far as education is concerned and any factor of an unequal treatment should be removed. With that purpose the analysis has to search for factors impeding equal access to education and equal opportunity to study. Most of the time in the functionalist approach neighborhood, families and schools are held responsible for educational inequalities.

Sociological composition and behavior of neighborhoods and communities have a strong influence on children's behavior and motivation regarding education. The phenomena of gangs and of mimicry among young people are well known. They have a strong influence on individual behavior and values, among them on educational values, particularly in urban areas where the concentration of population fuels the constitution of groups and gangs who take ascendancy over the youngsters and lessen the influence of families. These phenomena are quite common all over the world in poor communities where the gangs are in rebellion against the society and in particular against its more proximate institutions which is the school. Violence against and within schools are the results of such sociology. This has been analyzed intensively in the United States and in Europe where these situations are common place. In Thailand some recent events may announce the beginning of the same syndrome produced by increasing social inequalities.

Desforges and Abouchaar(2003) surveyed about 200 publications on relation between parent and child preparation. They stress that parents' include good parenting at home before schooling, visits to schools and discussion with teachers' involvement. This has been stamped "family style". The analysis of the parents' involvement in their children education has nurtured a huge wave of research of sociology of education in order to reform the relationships between schools and parents(PTA) as a means to improve the quality of education, particularly in Anglo-Saxon countries. More comprehensively, many forms of parents' involvement provides a secure environment at home, intellectual stimulation, parent-child discussion, model of life and social values, educational values, high aspirations and good citizenship, contacts with school, sharing information, participation in school events, and participation in home work. Parents' involvement in their child education goes beyond those simple actions as they have a decisive impact also by choosing educational orientations and schools for their children. This comprehensive approach of parents' involvement has been stamped "family educational style".

Desforges and Abouchaar(2003) underline that more involved the parents in their children education better their educational achievements. Is this a partial and misleading analysis? In fact, children educational achievements are tightly correlated with their parents' socioeconomic status (Sirin, 2005). Involvement of parents is also correlated with socioeconomic status. Usually well off parents are more involved in their children education than poor parents, in particular because they know how to deal with it, what on the opposite is not the case of poor families. Low social class, deprivation, family traits are less propitious to parents' involvement. Actually social inequality regarding education takes the path of socioeconomic inequalities so that institutionalizing parents'

involvement in education as advocated by Anglo-Saxon educational reforms strengthens educational inequalities instead of smoothing them. Introducing the parents back in the functioning of educational systems 'recontextualizes' education and allows social inequalities to exert more influence on children achievements.

School operating in challenging circumstances

Some studies focus on the impact of school organization and leadership on school attainments and outcomes: this is the idea of a school effect, as well as a classroom effect which influences educational achievements regardless of social backgrounds of students. There was an assumption that all the schools were the same and can perform according to the quality of the practice of their teachers, head teachers and governing local authorities.

This assumption was progressively suppressed by the recognition that the quality of schools diverge also according to their location and their own social environment (Muijs et al, 2004). Schools in socio-economically disadvantaged areas suffer particular handicaps that are rarely addressed correctly even when they are acknowledged (Crowder and South, 2003) by contrast but with the same approach, other authors (Hallinger and Murphy, 1986) stress that the social context of schools is the primary factor of the quality of schools. This is an interesting explanation which relies on the fact that the school sociology reflects the sociology of its neighborhood. Lupton (2005) elaborates further more this analysis by finding that poverty manifests itself in the premises of the school through poor health and diet, lack of uniforms, scarcity of equipment and of poor parents' contribution for enrichment activities.

In addition teachers' recruitment, retention and behavior vary according to the contexts of the schools. There is a sort of adverse selection of teachers; those with high expectations move to better environment in urban areas and those with low expectations are those who stay in disadvantages, low quality schools in rural remote areas(Phasina, et al, 2010).

The concept of markets into education in Thailand has been introduced regarding to the impact from the 1997 crisis and following the Education Reform Act of 1988 in the United Kingdom under the Thatcher government. The main reform was to bring about autonomous and to develop competition between schools to attract their "customers". Innovations such as quality assurance(QA), standardized tests(NT, O-NET, A-NET, GAT, PAT) whereby the results, published in the public domain, could be used by parents as consumers of education to make choices of the best school where to send their children(Phasina, et al, 2010; Tooley et al, 2003). This reform, however, could not but increase inequalities regarding education. It has been strongly criticized for their negative influence on education policies and reforms both in Thailand and all over the world(Burbules and Torres, 1999; Hasley et al,1997; Phasook, 2011; Kisanapong, 2011).

The critical approach adopts theses very closed to that of the functionalist approach but they are more radical stances. They underline three main aspects of the distribution of education; it is determined by the segmentation of the society into social classes; education reinforces social inequalities; competition in the arena of education takes place because education is a 'positional good':

According to the analytical perspective, poverty is linked to the structure of the society and in particular to social classes and has strong effect on educational achievements. Work and unemployment, income and wealth, health are linked to social class. Social classes have a strong impact on educational outcomes. (Biddle, 2001; Chitty, 2002; Lareau, 1987; Jackson and Marsden, 1966). This analysis converges with the functionalist approach of the strong relationship between socioeconomic status and educational achievements.

Maguire (2006) examines the studies in education and poverty from the 1960s and beyond: education is seen as a phenomenon of social class: curriculum is structured to offer advantages to the middle classes at the expense of the working class and the poor. Education reflects the inequalities in society. Moreover education is about normalization and exclusion and about success for some and failure for others. This thesis has been developed by Bourdieu and Passeron (1977, 1979).

Several authors think that education is used to attribute social position by stipulating the rule according to which social position will be attributed according to educational attainment. As educational attainments themselves are dependent of the social position of parents, education reproduces the existing social order and its inequalities. Gewitz (2001) argues that education is a positional good and therefore that there is no sufficient room for everyone to be a winner. Rizvi and Langard (2000) extrapolate this reasoning at an international level and state that today educational policies are designed so as being able to attract capital to specific places. As education is believed to deliver skills and skills to attract capital, curricula are more and more vocationalist by essence through a variety of school-to-work programs. Human capital development discourses define education as workforce preparation.

II. The effects of social inequalities on educational attainment and achievements

As we have mentioned in the preceding section, major sociological and economic studies have stressed that there is a tight relationship between socioeconomic status of the families of students and their educational attainments and achievements. Most of the time, these relationships have been loosely explained. Let us analyse which highlight different dimensions of these relationships.

2.1 Definition and measurement of educational attainments and achievements

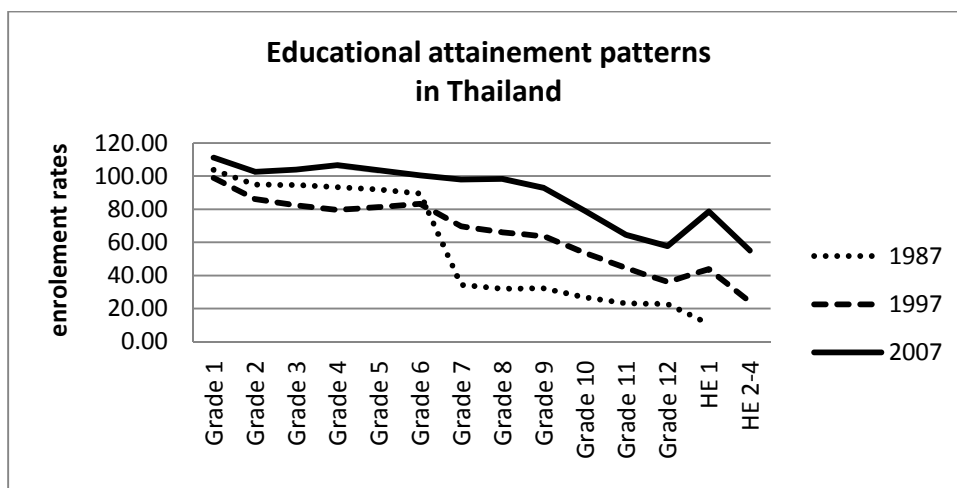
Educational attainment

The first indicator for attainment is enrolment and rate of enrolment. Educational attainment measures the number of years of studies for the entire population, for subgroups such as age groups or generation (Ulubasoglu et al, 2006). Everywhere the average attainment tends to increase so that there are important differences by generation. On average in Thailand years of schooling are rising at roughly 0.15 year each year so that in 40 years it has been augmented by 6 years (Pootrakul et al, 2006).

However they are inequality of education attainments within each generation as witnessed by low transition into secondary and higher education and with uneven quality of schools(Phasina et al, 2010).

In Thailand, educational attainments have steadily increased over the past 40 years, as clearly witnessed by the following graph.

The figures of enrolment count only formal education. Rates of enrolment have increased and mirrored in particular the increase of the length of compulsory education; drop outs remain high after compulsory education even if the percentage of a class of age completing secondary education has increased in the last 20 years from about 20% to 60%, which is an outstanding performance of the national educational system. It is also noticeable that higher education attracts more people since the last decade. The fact that the rate of enrolment in the first year of higher education is above the rate of enrolment of the last year of secondary schools may come from 3 factors: firstly is people having prepared upper secondary in non-formal education and apply to universities, in particular to open universities, secondly is foreign students who entered Thai education system at the university level and thirdly is that colleges and universities have developed evening and weekend programs that are accessible for working people.



Source: CELS education database

However, there are still strong inequalities regarding educational attainment. Those who drop out early are children from low income, low education families, parents who are engaged in farming and construction, and living in rural areas have fewer probabilities than others to pursue long studies (Connell, 1994; Filmer et al, 1999) and in Thailand as well (Pootrakul, 2006; Phasina, 2009b).

Educational achievements

A major indicator of educational achievement is provided by scores at international tests. The PISA organized by OECD is one the most famous international test. It has been applied in Thailand in 2003. The PISA 2003 survey cycle collected

information on the performance of 15-year-olds in mathematics, science, reading and problem solving through paper-and-pencil tests. A background questionnaire was also completed by students asking them about their approaches to learning and their family. Information on the way schools are managed was collected through a questionnaire completed by school directors. Thailand has applied nationally its own tests in 2006, known as the O-NET, A-NET, NT tests.

The PISA 2003 gives some interesting results regarding educational policies. It shows in particular that 1) late or not streaming and selection of students lead to better educational achievements than strong selection and early streaming, 2) repeating classes is inefficient and has to be replaced by personalized tutoring of weak students, 3) efficiency of educational systems are not opposed to equity; on the contrary the best results are obtained by educational systems where inequalities are the smallest. This last conclusion is very important. On this basis, it can be assumed from now on that strong educational inequalities contribute to a low quality of education across the board, while equal opportunity of study for all have a positive impact on the quality of education.

In Thailand the analysis of educational achievements has been carried out in 2006 for over 250,000 students from about 2,600 schools all over the country through the O-NET test. Articulated to PISA results for Thailand, it shows that educational achievements varies according to student and family characteristics, to school characteristics, and to students attitudes and motivation. We have here confirmation that scores to the tests are positively correlated with home resources and level of education of the head of the family, with the size of schools and are negatively correlated with the size of the classroom or the student per teacher ratio (Pootrakul, 2006).

An important remark is that factors which seem to explain educational attainments and educational achievements are the same and in particular the location and the socioeconomic status of parents. This is a logical relation to the extent attainments and achievements are tightly related. Hence students tend to continue their studies as long as they can; therefore they drop out when their achievements are low, and on the opposite they are inclined to continue their studies when their achievements are high. Therefore it is enough to find explanations of the variation of educational achievements since they will also uncover the major factors of educational attainments.

2.2 Factors of educational achievements

Both national and international literature focus on one or several factors of educational achievements. They are 1) the administrative and academic organisation and quality of the educational system as a whole, 2) the socioeconomic and cultural characteristics of the family, 3) the community or neighbourhood of the families and schools, 4) school characteristics, 5) interactions between teachers and students within the classroom.

The system effect

The quality of education across the board and average achievements of students depends on the quality of the entire organisation of the educational system and on the quality of its different institutional and academic components.

The educational system exerts its effects on the distribution of educational achievements among social groups and individuals through a limited number of variables such as 1) funding administrations, schools and families, 2) teachers training, evaluation and management, 3) conception and production of national curricula and textbooks, 4) regulations concerning tests, exams, and diplomas, 5) regulation regarding streaming and selection of students.

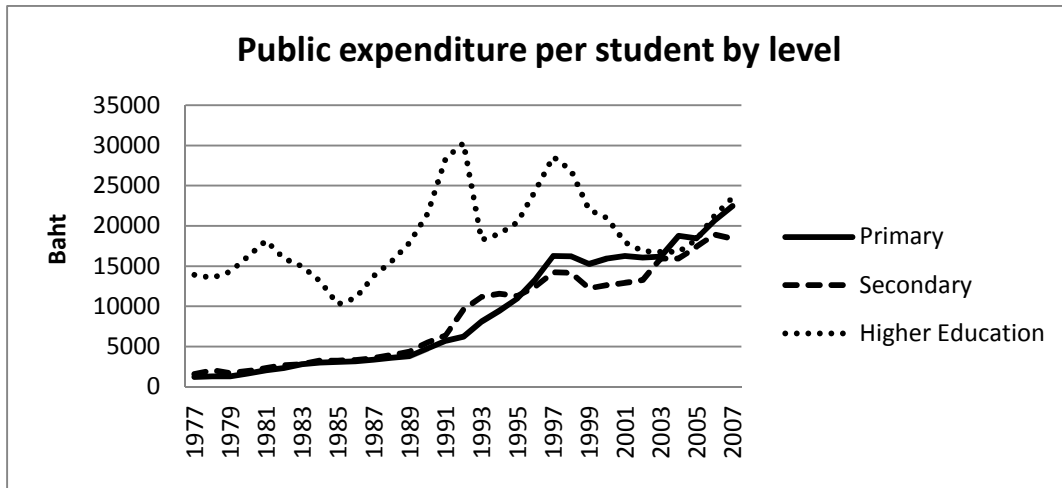
Funding

There is a rhetoric saying that public spending on education does not influence educational achievements, and this come from the fact that it is indeed difficult to isolate the financial factor from other correlated factors. This rhetoric has been used to advocate a private educational system and increasing competition between schools. However most of educational actors agree that resources matter and in particular on the fact that schools in poor areas, neighbourhoods and poor urban districts tend to get comparatively less resources than others. In our investigation, we found that, generally, schools are better off in municipal areas than outside this jurisdiction. The size of the budget of the school acts on education achievements through various channels: better facilities such as laboratories, workshops and tool equipment, computers, pedagogical material, library resources and books, indoor and outdoor activities. It is difficult to distinguish the pure budget-effect from other associated characteristics of the schools and in particular as from the quality of teachers which is often paralleled to the wealth of the school.

However, even equal allocation of public budget to the school can result in inequalities. It has been calculated from the socioeconomic survey of households (NSO, NESDB) that in 2006 the monthly private cost for a family to send a child to a public primary school is roughly 400 baht, to lower secondary is roughly 1500 baht and to upper secondary is roughly 2500 baht (Pootrakul, 2006).

These amounts can represent a quite high percentage of total expenses for poor and large families, even if they can be considered small in comparison with public expenditures. For poor families they represent a budget strain which is not always compensated by specific budget measures. However, scholarships for poor children tend to equalise access to education so that this kind of policy should be analysed and scrutinised deeply and probably comprehensively reformed.

By the same token endowment of schools whatever the source of public and private funding should be analysed with the purpose of equalising the conditions of studies in each location of the country.



Source: CELS database on Education

The redefinition of the public cost of public and free education by level of education should be undertaken. The figure above -despite the important statistical problems on education - shows that public expenses per student tend to converge and this is rather a good news because they contribute to distribute more equally resources between those who drop out early and those who continue their studies. By this way public expenses contribute also to improve the quality of education since primary schools from which depends the quality of education in secondary and then in tertiary education.

Another very important impact of finance is careers settings and the pay of teachers and professors. Teachers' status determine both the selection of students who choose the professorship and their motivation during their career. Teachers and professors for the secondary schools follow *an adverse selection*: the best students whether aim at becoming professors of universities or, and more and more, at going to private sectors where they are generally better paid for the same level of diplomas. Bridging the gap between the private and the educational sectors would select in general teachers and professors among better students than it is the case today.

Teachers

There is a large consensus on the fact that educational achievements are largely dependent on the quality of teachers (Smith et al, 2006). In USA, Winerip, Michael(2004) states in a newspaper that "the secret to quality public education has never been a big mystery. You need good teachers and you need small enough classes so those teachers can do their work". The problem is that defining good teachers is a difficult task. Firstly, this quality has two dimensions. A first one is about the skills of teachers and a second one is about the way they are mobilised onto their job. Secondly, these two components of their quality have system-based and school-based determinants. Here we examine only the first range of determinants.

As far as the skills are concerns, they have three dimensions as any other skills. The first one is their cognitive skills delivered by their initial formation and retraining.

Cognitive skills are themselves twofold; they are related on the one hand to their disciplinary knowledge, and on the other hand to their didactical knowledge that is on their capacity to translate the scholar knowledge into a teachable knowledge, and on their knowledge of pedagogical methods. Those skills are produced within the educational system itself. They are regulated by diplomas they have to acquire and by professional rules they have to apply in order to become teachers or professors. If diplomas do not measure correctly the disciplinary knowledge of teachers and professors and if the pedagogical preparation of teachers is weak, the low quality of teachers leads to a low quality of the education delivered to children.

Skills are also formed on the job through learning by doing. They are technical and behavioural skills meaning that they are practical skills or know how. These skills are of paramount importance and are in general elaborated on the basis of cognitive skills related to didactic and pedagogy. One of the problems in Thailand is that teachers and professors are not enough trained in didactic and pedagogical issues. Then they have to invent pedagogy of their own letting the quality of education too much in the hands of personal character of teachers. In fact, There are two factors acting on the developing of skills on the job; one are personal traits. The other one are school management patterns which are very important as we will see below.

Social inequality regarding education very often starts with the distribution of high skilled, averaged skilled and weakly skilled teachers. As good teachers try to move to good schools, poorly endowed schools and poor communities tend therefore to retain only regular and bad teachers adding to other sources of inequality. This adverse selection of teaching personal is complicated to solve and should be addressed comprehensively.

The second very important dimension of the quality of the service delivered by teachers and professors is the time they dedicate to their teaching and tutoring of students. Their own motivation determines in part the time they dedicate to their job and their own ability to set and follow a work plan, but they are also very dependent on the national regulation and policy, on local administration, on school management and community influence. In general each level of the educational administrative organization and vested interests ask teachers and professors to be involved in extra-job activities. In general teachers and professors are overloaded with activities that are not directly related to teaching and coaching their students. Therefore they tend to overlook their main function which is teaching and tutoring their students, and some of them consider their function as a part-time job. Thailand is not short of teachers and professors provided educational regulation considers that teachers have to do their job full time by not being disturbed by too many administrative tasks and too many extra school activities. Moreover better pay with the prohibition of other part time jobs would motivate teachers to pay greater attention to their job and work full time; by the same token, as Michael Winerip puts it abruptly, smaller classroom would allow teachers to dedicate more time to each student. The small consecutive increase of the national education budget articulated with strong regulation enforcing full time dedication to the students would have paramount positive effects on educational achievements and on the quality of education across the board.

Curricula and textbooks

Content and quality of curricula and textbooks are also of paramount importance for the improvement of the quality of education across the board and of equal quality of education for all. The curriculum selects the nature and the scope of knowledge that is intended to transmit at each level of education. For a great deal of the literature dealing with curriculum the objective of the construction of curriculum is twofold. On the one hand it relies on a conception of knowledge and how it can be transmitted to new generations (Tyler, 1950; Goodson, 2000; Wexler, 2000; Young, 2000; Carr, 2003; Inwent, 2003). On the other hand, a great deal of the literature associates the content of curriculum with social structure and history (Mulder, 1997; Anyon, 2000; Wexler, 2000; Vickers, 2005).

The construction of curriculum relies in general on Tyler principles based on four basic questions: 1) which objectives of education have to be reached, 2) what is the path of 'educational experiences' to reach these objectives, 3) How to emulate these experiences, 4) How to evaluate that the objectives have been reached? Historically this construction relies on a conception of useful knowledge within the society and of a given understanding of the learning process in particular the theories of Dewey, Vygotsky and Piaget.

However the inherited knowledge from the family, the selection of disciplines and of their progression, the texts and examples used for instructional purposes, the test to check the knowledge transmitted to children are socially and ideologically loaded whether intentionally or unintentionally. In that last case researchers have shown that there is a hidden or implicit curriculum (Anyon, 2000) aiming mainly at the reproduction of the social order and at protection the social existing class structure.

Other authors have highlighted the cultural content of curriculum so that the curriculum can be a major source of inequality of educational achievements in the population of students. In general curricula mirror the culture of the elite and the middle class– which aim at their own reproduction– so that children with the same cultural capital perform better at school than children from poor social backgrounds. The sociological work of Bourdieu is associated with this theory. Jerome Bruner as well as Gardner develops a convergent idea according to which the learning process is a change of culture, namely a change of individual system of symbols and representations. There is no doubt in that case that if what is taught is closer to the system of representations of the elite and the middle class, the children from these social backgrounds would have a shorter and easier distance to cover for achieving the objectives of the curriculum than children from other social origin. Sociolinguists have shown in particular the impact of educational achievements of the language used at home and the language used at school and in the classroom (Mehan, 2000).

Tests, exams and diplomas

Reforming examination and evaluation of students

As far as evaluation of students is concerned, the Thai education system is deeply flawed on two grounds. The first is that the progress of study cannot be achieved

without an adequate system of evaluation of the knowledge mastered by students at each step and level of education. While in a horizontal didactic this evaluation tries to assess scholarship, it has, in a vertical didactic, to assess mainly the improvement of understanding, reasoning and the ability to make sense of knowledge, that is the enhancement of cognitive skills. These are two very contradictory ways of assessing students' achievements which have serious repercussions on students' learning strategies and on their educational achievements.

The current system of evaluation, stemming from the prevailing horizontal didactic, is conducive to passive and superficial learning, as we have seen. Students use a great range of devices in order to climb the educational ladder that can avoid enlarging their knowledge and cognitive skills. These devices range from mere repetition or even plagiarism - the extent of which is a good measurement of the motivations and objectives of study, i.e. not knowledge acquisition - to a resort to the possibilities offered by less demanding informal education and open universities. From this perspective, the actual system of evaluation overuses tests based on multiple choice questions. In fact, those tests do not test anything related to cognitive skills, and therefore are unable to contribute to an improvement in the quality of education. The problem is that as each level of education and each school involved in formal education does not trust the previous levels for accurately testing and certifying students' achievements, they undertake what they consider to be a correct examination. However, they do it on the same inadequate grounds of testing scholarship rather than cognitive skills. Thus, students are driven to prepare for exams in an endless process and are diverted from studying in depth. This adds to their feeling that they are receiving a boring, uninteresting and stressing education. It also implies unbearable pressures from families on their children to study more - as more is mistakenly equated with better - and that often leads to extensive hours of study and private lessons. This system of exams stems from the flaws in the education system, but it also bears a heavy responsibility for the corruption of the whole orientation of education. It has to be changed from beginning to end.

The other system of evaluation stemming from the vertical didactic advocated here is conducive to active learning by way of learning how to learn by understanding and forging meanings and by gaining autonomy at each step of the study process, as stressed by Vigotsky's theory of "proximate development" and Bruner's theory of cultural embedded learning processes. Evaluation here is based on the assessment of the capacity of students to understand and give meanings in their fields of study without the help of the teacher; tests measure their ability to use adequate and enlarged systems of symbols and representations. Instead of useless multiple choice methods, this system uses "narrative methods of evaluation", such as written essays, dissertation, oral checks, and presentations. For this purpose, continuing evaluation has to be privileged over final exams. Although more demanding for teachers, continuing evaluation is much more useful than single exams. On the one hand, it does not disturb the study process itself. Study hours can be dedicated more to studying than to swatting for exams. On the other hand, it is the only method which allows immediate adjustments to classroom teaching to accord with student achievements. The impact of evaluation on the quality of didactic is greatly enhanced. The general argument often put by teachers against such a method of evaluation is that methods of evaluation are different so that results cannot be compared and do not objectively certify educational achievements. Of course, this

method relies on a trust that teachers and professors will carry out an objective assessment. Moreover, there are systems of controls and checks that can partly overcome this obstacle - among them use of supervisors and the reputation of a teacher - . If some inevitable inequalities remain though, these inequalities represent a minor inconvenience as far as the quality of education is concerned when compared to the current system. Moreover, continuing evaluation allows a better dialogue between teachers, students and parents, has more value for on-the-spot testing of the real knowledge assimilated by students and is by far less costly than the “one exam” system which mobilizes a huge and ad hoc apparatus and therefore is an enormous waste of staff time and money.

We have also seen that a tendency of the national education system is to enable the climbing of the educational ladder without proper testing of accumulated knowledge at each step of the way. This is driven by a logic prioritizing the enhancement of quantitatively measured performances such as the use of enrolment criteria without much consideration of the knowledge accumulated at each step. This flaw is exacerbated by the “one exam” strategy discussed above. Gates between levels of education are left wide open. Repeating a year is very rare as it is regarded as shameful by students, parents and teachers, so that teachers are as reluctant to make this kind of decision as parents are to accept it. Thus, students without any cognitive skills can rise to higher education. The problem is that without proper evaluation of cognitive skills at each level of education, handicaps to the acquisition of the required level of knowledge at a given level of education are cumulative and hinder the overall qualitative performance of the education system. Diplomas do not any longer mirror educational achievements and have become very poor, or even misleading, indicators of cognitive skills. Their heterogeneity means that employers have no guarantee of knowledge content, that is of the cognitive skills of their potential employees. The opening of educational gates must be premised on greater selectivity by raising the stated requisites of cognitive skills needed to pass from one level to another. These requisites have to be redefined very rigorously and applied faithfully in order to overcome this seriously flawed educational trend and to reverse the devaluation of diplomas.

Consideration should also be given to the two different selection methods for students entering each level of education. The first method relies on exit certification: the issue of diplomas which supposedly testify to the level of knowledge of their holders. The second method involves entrance exams or entrance certification of the level of knowledge of candidates. In Thailand both systems are used and overlap making one redundant. While making diplomas a condition of application, entrance examination is still employed. This is because experience shows that exit certification provided by diplomas do not assure the same quality of candidates. When diplomas reflect really the cognitive skills of their holders, entrance exams can be abandoned, saving time and money for the whole system of education. The condition would necessitate the development of a serious and rigorous exit certification system and a better standardization of diplomas.

Family's educational style effect

Family styles reflect the different strategies and practices of parents regarding the education of their children. Kisanapong(2011) revealed that only 2.7% students of the cohort from head of household Education with elementary education background while 8.2% are from head of household education with higher education can enter high competitive, limited seat universities.

These strategies concern the choice of educational orientations and educational attainments. It is generally the choice of parents particularly for the first levels of education primary and secondary education. For higher levels of education a kind of bargaining between parents and their children reach an agreement and a common strategy is set. Sometimes these decisions are taken after discussion with teachers who exert more or less influence on them. In this decision, the socioeconomic situation of parents is crucial. Well off and well educated parents have the information and no financial constraints to find the best strategy according to their aims. On the opposite, poor and poorly informed parents set less ambitious educational attainment for their children, let implicitly the decisions of orientation in the hands of teachers who decide in particular through the scores they give to children, and generally adjust their educational ambitions to their limited means. Confronted with very limited choices, children from these family backgrounds can be obliged to study what they do not like really and therefore be far less motivated to study; this weak motivation being accentuated by the low scores they get. It has been shown all over the world that a very important source of success in the study is the motivation of students and a relevant orientation of their studies. From this standpoint, there is a strong inequality of students which determines large differentials of educational achievements.

The same applies for the choice of schools. The well-off parents send their children to the best schools even when they are far away from their home. They bet that their children can get better educational achievements in good schools. Poor parents have neither the information nor the means to do so (Dillaka, 2553). They are condemned to send their children to the nearby schools or to spend an important part of their income when they are obliged to send their children to school far away from home. This financial constraint is often the reason for early drop out after compulsory schools.

Among the characteristics of family styles, there is the degree to which parents are involved in their children studies by helping them at home, by using any opportunity to teach their children, by giving them all the means of study such as books, computers, or even instructive games. When they have not enough time to help their children at home, they pay private lessons and private tutors for their children. As these factors influence educational achievements, working parents or even more poorly educated parents are less prompt to supervise and overlook the studies of their children and to give them the taste and the means of studying by themselves.

However if this relationship between social inequalities and educational inequalities stands in any analysis, it has been noted that the importance of families decline with the development of schools and democratization of education. This can be true but families are still a prevalent context that explains a great deal of the differences

of educational achievements. And this is also true because the family effect acts in parallel with other factors such as the school effect. A better distribution of the supply of good educational services and of the quality of schools would certainly weaken the influence of family origin of students on educational achievements. A good educational policy should consider this aim as a priority.

The school effect

Sociology of education has become more and more a sociology of schools (Mehan, 2000). Educational achievements of students seem to depend heavily on the quality of schools. There is a strong correlation between education achievements and schools; in other words schools seem to obtain homogeneous results. This strong correlation has served to sort the school according to the results of test of their students (Levine and Painter, 2000). The school factor seems linked to educational achievements to such a point that the latter is taken as a measurement of the quality of the school. Neoliberal policies in particular in England and the United States during the Thatcher and Reagan eras have stimulated the organization of comparative tests between schools in order to establish league tables of schools with the purpose of informing parents for their choice of schools and of enhancing competition between schools for attracting “customers” which, it is believed, is the cheapest way to improve the quality of schools.

However, very few analyses go into the black box of the school. In our view there are a series of at least four factors which explain the homogeneity of educational achievement by school. 1) School environment 2) School resources and endowment 3) school management

School environment: Families and communities

Levine and Painter(2000) claim that “youth sharing a school and neighborhoods often have similar academic achievement”. This comes in part from the fact that surroundings of schools and families of pupils belong to homogeneous social groups, so that the correlation between socioeconomic status and educational achievements is mirrored by the school sociology and the corresponding educational results. But there is also another reason which is the involvement of parents into the school organization and life, their more or less important role in gathering resources for the school, of dialoguing with the staff of the school, of their demand and exigency towards teachers, even their capacity of lobbying local and national authorities for the benefit of the school. From this perspective poor neighborhood tend to have poorly endowed schools both in financial and staff terms.

However, even after controlling the effects of neighborhood and families, school effects on student achievement remains large and is statistically significant. This means that other factors of homogeneity of educational achievements are at work.

School resources and endowment

It has been established that educational achievements are depending on school resources. Despite the alleged equality of schools as far as endowment of resources is concerned, the reality shows that there are still strong inequalities coming in particular from the complexities of administrative organization. This is particularly the case for public education where schools of compulsory education get more or less resources according to the administrative authorities to which they belong. By the same token the adverse selection of teachers – good teachers go to good schools and bad teachers to low quality schools- tend to perpetuate or even sharpen inequalities of the quality of education between schools(Phasina, 2009a). This problem has been rarely addressed, although experiments of compensatory programs allocating more resources and better teachers to deprived schools have very positive effects (Connell, 1994; Raffo,et al, 2007).

School management

This is probably a strong factor of overall educational achievements of a school. The school director has a crucial role in at least three areas: finance management, personal management and academic management, not to mention his/her abilities to mobilize external resources and competencies for the sake of the school. Anglo-Saxon scholars insist on leadership skills of school administrators(Megowan and Miller, 2001; Mohammad, 2005). In Thailand, school directors receive a special training before taking their functions. However from our general observation, most of them do not involve in academic matters and therefore tend to subordinate their whole management to other objectives than educational achievements. This of course should be reversed.

The classroom effect

From our direct observation in the classrooms across the board, most of teachers are trying to provide environment to motivate learning by decorating the rooms, however we found that the efficiency of the learning process depends on interactions between knowledge, teachers and students. These interactions have been analyzed by direct observation in the classroom with a focus whether on the students, the teachers or the knowledge.

2.3 Policies designed to break the link between poverty and poor educational attainment

A majority of these specific policies develop comprehensive programs of scholarships, assuming that income inequalities are the main cause of inequalities of educational achievements and attainments.

Most of compensatory programs undertaken in Anglo-Saxon countries goes beyond the simple effect of economic inequalities and have been based on strengthening schools with good teachers, pedagogical tools and equipment, new didactic and closed

coaching of students attending schools of poor neighborhood. Connell(1994); Krueger(2002); Sirin(2005) and Raffo, et al (2007) in particular have assessed these compensatory programs. All of them conclude that these programs have a significant positive impact on educational achievement of the poor. They all agree also that these programs are very expensive and cannot be generalized. As these experiments are done in very specific conditions, there are few lessons that can be drawn for applying some of their findings to a majority of schools.

Actually, the lessons that can be drawn from these experiments, is that educational policies that want to tackle the issue of poverty have to deal with all the causes of unequal attainments and unequal achievements. In Thailand unequal attainment has been improved significantly with a rapid increase of enrolment rates(Mounier and Phasina, 2008). The focus has to be on educational achievements and on the systems: family, school and classroom effect. Scholarships tackle only the family effect. How policies can tackle the other effects: this is the major question.

- 1) The system effect teaches that educational institutional arrangements have a strong effect on income inequalities and that public and free education offers better equal opportunity to study. It also teaches that conceiving curriculum is a fundamental operation for the whole educational system. The curriculum has to be more diversified, what has been decided by the Educational Act 1999, but more than that curricula provided by national authorities have to make sense for teachers and professors. For that purpose curricula have to be more detailed that they are and must help teachers to teach instead of letting the practical instructions given by textbooks.
- 2) Compensatory programmes could be used for allocating teachers and funds to schools, so that equality of total endowment could be promoted. Another important measure is that director of schools should have academic prerogative and training in order to put the management of schools at the service of its academic purpose and not the way around as it is very frequently today.
- 3) The classroom effect measures the effect of the teaching/learning practices that is of didactic implemented in the classroom. Didactic is the relationship between the knowledge, the teacher and the students. Improving this relationship is the way to improve knowledge acquisition of students that is to say improving didactic. As there is no one best practice but practices adapted to the context of teaching, the best way to improve the classroom effect is to give by law to teachers, free time, material and financial support and scientific coaching to adopt a research and reflexive approach on their own practice. In Thailand Rajabhat Universities can be the best skilled to provide scientific coaching to schools and teachers in order to improve didactical practices.

III. Conclusion

It is interesting to know that Thai labour force gain more education, however labour force who come from low income, low education families are still inequality in socio-economic labourer. They earn lower wage than those who graduate from

reputation educational institutions. These significant phenomena insist that there are still inequality of education among education stitutes and confirm that not any kinds of education, but only quality education can somehow help solve poverty.

Though Thailand has applied 'education for all' and 'equal opportunity' concepts throughout the country, but in the reality, poorer children would be forced to attend only low quality schools while the rich families would send their children to high, reputation schools and most of them go to shadow schools to attend extra tutorial classes after classes(Dillaka, 2553; Bray, 2009).

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