

Role of Education for Development Life skills

- Stakeholder Perceptions toward the role of education for development of life skills-

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1. Introduction

1-1 Background

Youth play a major role in creating new society and world. Youth have great potential to develop their personality, to change living conditions and to create a better life. The World Bank report “World Development Report 2007” mentioned that young people are requested to make decisions during the five youth transitions; continuing to study; starting to work; developing a healthful lifestyle; beginning a family; and exercising citizenship.¹ These stages are very important for a person to face adulthood.

The education sector is one of the main sectors that can provide chances for youth to gain development within these five transitions. Vocational education in particular helps youth to start work and to get jobs, and to obtain technical skills or special skills to work through school curriculum. Youth can earn money to live their own lives through working. In Joshua D. Hawley’s research said that “*vocational schooling offers consistently higher returns for men and women at the secondary and post-secondary levels. However, the returns to vocational and academic credentials vary substantially, both by gender and year*”.² In addition to succeeding in today’s competitive global economy, young people must be equipped with advanced skills beyond literacy skills.

The Ministry of Education (MoE) of Thailand is promoting vocational education to match the needs of the labor market. MoE has the aim to achieve 20% increase in number of vocational student enrolment.³ Thai Society needs to advance their labor quality to be able to compete in the globally competitive economic field especially after the Asian Economic Crisis in 1997. This crisis has forced the MoE of Thailand to make guidelines for educational reform in several provinces, and strengthening vocational education is one of them.⁴

In this context, we can consider that vocational education is playing a crucial role for youth development, and benefiting the achievement of the Ministry of Education’s and Thai society’s goals. We, Working Group 2 of OFW 2008, conducted research on the Role of Education & Employment to analyze the perception of the role of education in Chang Mai City.

1-2 Research Objectives

We found out that education plays an important role for everyone, especially youth, to develop skills and knowledge, forming family and building and protecting society. Moreover, since we are interested in perception issues in education. Therefore, we would like to do our research on the perception of different stakeholders and employment fields which result in our research objectives as follows;

- To identify the similarities and differences about the role of education between each stakeholder
- To view the impact of education for employment
- To see the relationship between the local resources and culture utilization in education

1-3 Research Questions

In order to answer the research objectives that we have set up above, we formulated the research questions as a framework for this research.

Thus, our main research question is:

“How do different stakeholders perceive the role of education for youth to develop life skills?”

The sub-research questions are:

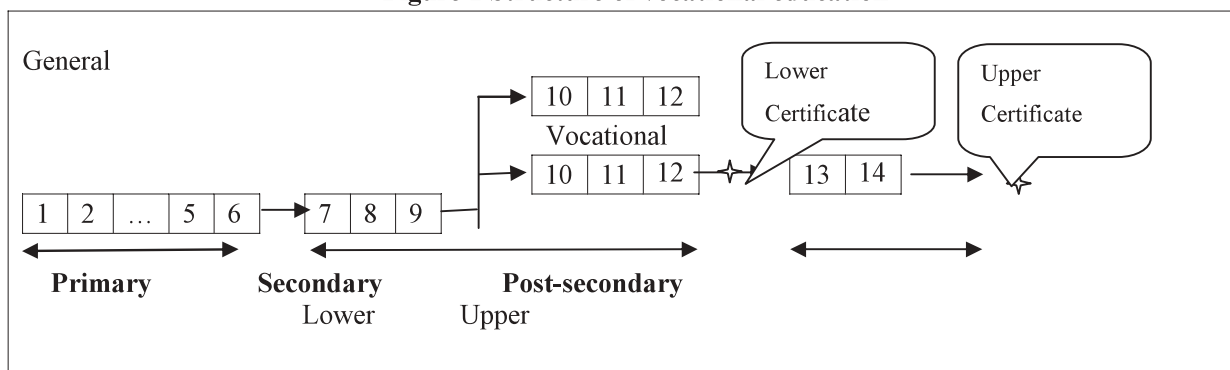
- (1) What is the meaning of vocational education in the context of employment?
- (2) What is the relationship between local culture, local resources and education?

2. Literature Review

2-1 Vocational Education in Thailand

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Thailand follows the 2002 Curriculum for Vocational Education. This curriculum focuses on competency and specifies the standards of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and personal attributes required by students in their future careers. And Formal technical and vocational education and training is conducted at three levels: upper secondary, leading to the lower certificate of vocational education; post-secondary, leading to a diploma or the associate’s degree in vocational education; and at university level, leading to degree.⁵

Figure 1 Structure of vocational education



Source: The World Bank. Thailand: Secondary Education for Employment. (2000)

Table 1 shows that Curriculum for Vocational Education in 2007 covers nine fields. Students have an opportunity to take part in hands-on training within the cooperating factories or companies for at least one semester.

Table 1: The fields of Thai vocational education

1.	Comprising trade and industry	2.	Commerce
3.	Arts and crafts	4.	Home economics
5.	Agriculture	6.	Fisheries
7.	Business and tourism	8.	Textiles
9.	ICT		

Note: modified by authors

Source: OEC, Education in Thailand 2007, (2008)

Regarding administrative function for vocational education, Office of the Vocational Education Commission is the main institution which exists under the Ministry of Education Thailand. This office administers schools and colleges, certifications, planning, and personnel matters. This Office is also the leading actor for promoting vocational education. Table 2 shows the data about vocational education. We can note about more than one million students studying in the vocational schools.

Table 2: Thailand vocational education

		Total	Bangkok	Other Provinces
Number of Institution (Vocational Education)	OVEC	408	20	388
	Private	401	91	310
	Total	809	111	698
Number of Student (Vocational Education)	OVEC	615,548	31,586	583,962
	Private	389,933	114,729	275,204
	Total	1,005,481	146,315	859,166
Number of Teacher (Vocational Education)	OVEC	16,731	1,270	15,461
	Private	17,587	3,962	13,625
	Total	34,318	5,232	29,086

Note: OVEC (Office of the Vocational Education Commission); data in year 2005

Source: Ministry of Education, Thailand.⁶

2-2 Definition of Key terms

2-2-1 Local Curriculum

The National Education Act of 1999 has enacted to serve as a fundamental law for the Administration and provision of education reform, which has been considered as a core of the education reform movement. The reason is that it will serve as direction points toward the philosophy of education provision for lifelong learning, societal participation and continuous development of the bodies of knowledge and learning process. Moreover, organizing the system, structure and process of education requires certain principles such as unity in policy, decentralization policy as well as authority, setting standardization the quality of education, qualifying teaching staffs, mobilizing resources, and making partnership with individuals, parents, and community and so on. Yet, the implementation of National Education Act of 1999 was completed by 2002 (Kanjorski et al. 2004).

MoE in Thailand allocates 20% of the curriculum for Local Curriculum. MoE provides the framework of “Core Curriculum” that includes objectives, standards, and assessment and evaluation methods of teaching and

learning (Rie Atagi, 2002). And then each school can decide the contents of Local Curriculum, for example Local Knowledge, Local Culture, Local Environment, Local History, and so on which depends on the local needs. School can conserve and transmit the local knowledge and culture to students through the classes of local curriculum, if teachers conduct it effectively. Children are the next generation who can conserve and develop local resources, but sometimes transmitting of traditional knowledge and culture is very difficult. Therefore education in school also can be the transmitter of local resources currently.

According to the National Education Act of 1999, the function of school is to prepare learners for their lives in the community. Therefore, developing their own curriculum which is adequate for their environment and community will be the school obligation. As a result, not only local resources have been utilized, but also community members should participate in developing local curriculum as well as the teaching learning process.

2-2-2 Life Skills

2-2-2-1 General concept of life skills

“Life skills” has emerged as a new concept, yet there is no concrete definition of life skills which could be recognized the same all over the world. However, between 1990 and 2004, the term “life skills” has been popularized, which provides more references and more elaboration. For instance, in 1990, the term life skills was narrowly defined. As an example, the Republic of Korea defined life skills as communication skills, home management skills, public conduct skills, citizenship-related skills, problem solving and so on. Nevertheless, China refers to practical skills, technical skills and labor skills. As the times change, the conceptualization of life skills has become broader. The Republic of Korea, in 2004, tried to include contents, materials and contexts that could help students acquire basic skills and develop creativity, self-directed learning abilities and leadership in the school curriculum.⁷

Moreover, as time passes so does the concept of life skills evolve; different stakeholders also view life skills differently. For instance, United Nations defines and draws the objectives of life skills education consensually as a way to facilitate the practices and reinforcement of psychosocial skills, which contributes to the promotion of personal and social development, the prevention of health and social problems, and the protection of human rights.⁸ Yet, based on the overall concept of life skills shared among the United Nations, UNESCO mentions life skills are skills needed for the individual for living in society.⁹ Nevertheless, the workplace views life skills quite differently. According to ILO (2006), many categorizations of life skills are very similar to categorizations of core work skills, which mean the same skills that are called work skills as they relate to the work environment may be called life skills. (pp: 32).¹⁰

Nonetheless, life skills are viewed diversely because according to the context that each individual, organization or country is considering them, they appear differently. However, commonly, life skills aim to equip a person to manage her or his own personal life development and to have a healthy life and future.

2-2-2-2 Life skills in the context of Thailand

Since the increase in the epidemic of HIV/AIDS, the major objective of the Mental Health Plan under the seventh National Economic and Social Development Plan (1992–1996) was to get a better understanding of the psychological profile of the general public and to promote public participation in creating self-reliance among and support for the mentally ill. One of the key activities is the development of ‘life skills’, which was introduced into the education of students at various levels. The overall aim was to foster a healthy mental state and to raise the quality of life of the population as a whole.¹¹ Thus, the introduction of life skills, in fact, is for the prevention of HIV/ AIDS.

Furthermore, in the context of the Thai workplace the importance of life skills is emphasized, and life skills are defined as knowledge and skills in both personal life and work such as self-defense, labor law, HIV/ AIDS and drug prevention, etc. In this context, clearly work skills are important, yet life skills are also necessary for workers to behave properly in the workplace, and to have a self-defense strategy in both life risk-taking behavior and job loss prevention.¹²

Therefore, again in the context of Thailand also defines life skills as a mean to have a better planed life, although the technique and means to achieve them are different.

2-2-2-3 The scope of life skills in this research

Since this research framework is trying to look at the youth transition between study and work, life skills in the research refer to how work skills and literacy skills which students acquire from school and from local curriculum can help them plan a better life. Thus, specifically, life skills are referring to vocational skills, literacy skills, and skills students gain from local curriculum.

3. Research Design and Methodology

3-1 Research Site

We selected 8 sites from the list provided by OFW committees and requested to visit 2 sites (Site No. 9 and 10). Each site can be categorized into two groups; Education (Schools) and Employment (Working places). Schools are divided into six levels; primary, lower secondary, upper secondary (general), upper secondary (vocational) and higher, and working places are SMEs and FDI. Table 3 shows the brief information of each site. We tried to avoid bias of site characteristics when we chose research sites. (Please see Table 3)

3-2 Interviewees

Interviewees of this research can be categorized into four groups; A) Teacher (including Directors and Principals), B) Student, C) Employer, and D) Employee. Mainly we could conduct interviews with teachers and students in the schools and employers and employees in the SMEs or some commercial places. Some informants can be categorized as insider and outsider, but we will discuss this point in another part. Finally we could conduct interview with; 4 directors, 1 principal, 13 teachers, 28 students (in several levels), 9 employers, and 20 employees. (Please see Table 3)

Table 3: The research sites information

No.	Site	Information	Education																											
			Primary						Lower Secondary						Upper Secondary						Employment									
			D	P	T	S	O	Other	D	P	T	S	O	Other	D	P	T	S	O	Other	SMOs	101	EE	ER	EE					
1	Wat Hong Lam Primary School	This school is located in rural area. They have creative local curriculum.	1																											
2	Wat Jom Chan School (General Vocational)	This is a welfare school managed by a buddhist temple and provides free education and accommodation for them. There are many SMEs and shops meaning own business. We also visited a public school in the community.	1												1															
3	Baan Teew Handcraft Center & School	This is one of the most famous tourist spots in Chiang Mai. They are producing and selling traditional Umbrella.																												
4	Borasing Umbrella Production	This school is located in a village of Himong and provide local curriculum based on Himong culture.	1														2													
5	Hmong His Tree Village & School	This company produces and exports artificial flowers made by paper.																												
6	My Hand Artifical Flowers	This school is managed under the collaboration of temple and community.	1																											
7	Wat Sri Suehon	This company is invested by Japanese company and more than 1100 employees are working there.																												
8	Lumphon Shindangan Co. Ltd	Chiangmai University is a national university and one of the best universities in Thailand.																												
9	Chiangmai University	As most secondary education, many graduates of this school continue to study in university.																												
10	Newmanreethad Pinyas School																													
Total			3	1	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	5

Note: D= Directors; P= principal; T=teachers; S=Students; ER=employee; EE=employer. The numbers in the table is the number of respondents divided by each category and shaded means shows the level or bias of respective research site.

3-3 Research methods

We employed Semi structured interview as a main research method, but we got some information from informal interviews depending on the interview situation.

Before departure from Japan, we listed up some questions and interests about vocational education and background of interviewees. We prepared 4 types of interview sheets for each category of interviewees and questions were regarding these 4 parts below; 1) Basic information about interviewees (including educational background), 2) Working experience and education, 3) The reason why you choose your school, and 4) Perception about vocational education.

3-4 Limitations of the research

In this research, the source of information was limited. First of all, we did not have opportunities to interview unemployed persons. Secondly, there was not any chance to acquire information from parents. Thirdly, Wat Don Chan School is partly a sort of welfare school which takes in ethnic minorities and it has never had graduates in vocational education course which was established recently. Therefore, it was impossible to generalize the situation of vocational education.

Some of the visited schools were not in the list prepared in Japan; they were newly discovered or just decided when the team reached Chiang Mai, such as Baan Tawai School, Wat Sri Suphan Elementary School, and Nawaminrachutid School.

The main target of our group is addressing the youth age range needs (18 to 24), but most of our respondents were either still children (before 12 years old) or in their adulthood (their late 20s or 40s). In this context the report tried to make an artificial environment that could represent the educational process and progress of the younger generation in their schooling years and their employment years.

The questionnaire sheet was changed around three times to adjust to the field's needs. The changes were either reshaping the questions to help the interviewer understand more easily or to eliminate no longer relevant parts due to the respondent's availability. It also affected the total and types of questions asked to all respondents, even though the questionnaire undergoes some changes, still the main questions were asked to all stakeholders.

Our research also really depends on the interpreter's ability to translate our question and the feedback given. This is also a reason why the questionnaire adjustment took place.

3-4 Data analysis method

3-4-1 The Significance of Perception Gap analysis

According to a dictionary¹³ perception is the representation of what is perceived or a way of conceiving something. While gap is defined as a conspicuous disparity or difference, as between two figures.

In the law enforcement context, perception gap analysis has also been conducted. An example could be from the works of Transparency International (TI) who has been publishing an annual Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) since 1995.¹⁴ Their latest work could be seen in the Corruption Perceptions Index Indonesia 2006.¹⁵ According to them, The CPI (Corruption Perception Index) is an index used to evaluate corruption eradication efforts in a region. Using the CPI, a comparison among regions could be made, on the relative corruption level as perceived by the business circle. Also with this CPI, they can see to what extent the effort to eliminate corruption has been made in the regions. Furthermore, the survey indirectly will evaluate the efforts of the local and central government for the specified purpose.

It has also been conducted in the health sector. The example could be the works of Women's Health and Action Research Centre (WHARC) in Nigeria.¹⁶ They conducted a survey of the knowledge and perception of AIDS and sexual behaviors among 723 randomly selected secondary school adolescent girls, aged 13 to 18 years, in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. Their findings show more than 77% of the girls were sexually active, and of this, 35% had multiple sexual partners and only 26.9% practiced the use of condoms during sexual intercourse. Even though most of them are active and do not use protective measures, still over 94% of the study population was aware of AIDS, while 64% rightly knew that AIDS can be transmitted through sexual intercourse. Also among them, 9.1% wrongly ascribed AIDS transmission to casual kissing and 3.9% sharing of utensils with AIDS patients. So in their work we can see there is a perception gap exists. In this context, health workers and policy makers could provide more sound health policy that could reduce the gaps.

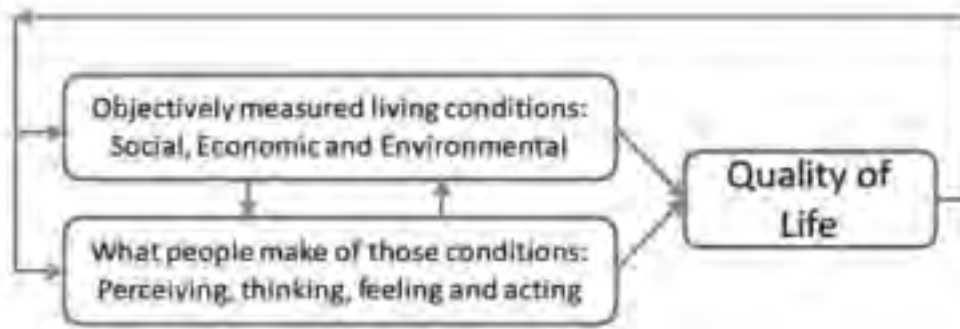
In the context of this OFW report, we will focus on the transition between the education sector and employment sector that youth are constantly facing in Chiang Mai. In the education sector a perception analysis was conducted to see how students' perceptions about their teachers and parents have an effect on the quality of their I.Q. and their educational and life achievement.¹⁷ The report has two main results: (1) a strong positive relation between achievement and the student's perception of a positive teacher attitude toward himself, and (2) a somewhat smaller, but nonetheless significant, positive effect of the student's perception of the parents' attitude toward the student's ability to succeed in life.

To reiterate the general significance of perception gap analysis, we would like to quote the works of OECD that said measuring perception and knowledge of the people is a way to measure progress, whether the societies' perceptions are based on some facts or based on some misinformation.¹⁸ Thus by conducting a perception gap analysis in Chiang Mai, we the education group are hoping that we could understand the perception differences toward life skills between the stakeholders in the transition of a student from the education sector to the employment sector. At the end of the analysis, we could see a clearer view on the gaps or misconceptions of each stakeholder. A clearer understanding of the perception gap that is present in Chiang Mai will help all stakeholders to reassess and reevaluate their reactions to the significance of life skills for youth.

3-4-2 What is the process?

According to the works of Alex C. Michalos, FRSC, a good life for an individual or community is a function of the actual conditions of that life and what an individual or community makes of those conditions. In other words, he said that what a person or community makes of those conditions is in turn a function of how the conditions are perceived, what is thought and felt about those conditions, what is done and, finally, what consequences follow from all these things. People's perceptions, thoughts, feelings and actions, then, have an impact on their own and others' living conditions, thus he made an illustration as follows.¹⁹

Figure 2 General Quality of Life Model



For the educational development group research, we employ the following analysis framework: we first categorize the stakeholders in order to identify who perceives what. Then, we collect that perception according to context, and respondents' backgrounds, where we could classify different stakeholders' perceptions. The following analysis will try to answer the sub-research questions and also main research questions.

Therefore, from the three perception discussion results, we analyze based on the linkage between each result and stakeholders' perceptions of the role of education in developing life skills.

4. Project Cycle Management (PCM)

4-1 Stakeholder Analysis and Perception analysis

In the process of arranging responses we got through interviews, we recognized that each of informants had his/her own perception concerning education. In order to categorize these diverse perceptions, we utilized the stakeholder analysis of PCM to identify the characteristics of informants.

Then, we developed it by adding their perceptions and created the matrix as follows (matrix1). In the middle of matrix, we lined up different levels and types of education and some key issues related to our research questions vertically. We listed the perceptions of students and teachers including directors and principals on the left side and those of employers and employees on the right side by using different colors. The numbers show how many informants mentioned it. (See the Matrix 1 in the Appendix)

5. Results

We analyze the findings of our survey by setting three frameworks as follows: (1) Perception of vocational education; (2) Linkage between vocational education and employment; (3) Linkage between local resources and culture and education sector, then, we try to figure out how different stakeholders perceive the role of education for youth to develop life skills through overall analysis.

5-1 Results (1) Perception of vocational education

In this chapter, we would like to identify the similarities and differences over the roles of education among the respondents of our survey by focusing mainly on vocational education as one of typical means to obtain life skills. First, we will look at the advantages and disadvantages of vocational education perceived by the respondents in order to capture the global value they put on it. Secondly, we discuss the comparison of perceptions between vocational education and general education. How do people perceive these two types of education? What makes differences among respondents' perceptions, and why is it? The key terms we came up with through our analysis were "insiders" and "outsiders" that is to say respondents who are involved in vocational education (*insiders*) and who are not (*outsiders*) to explain differences of perceptions. Thirdly, our focus shifts to the *insiders* especially the understandings of vocational education students and graduates on their actual situation in terms of educational course selection. Finally, we discuss the expectation for vocational education through the future plans of vocational education students and experiences of vocational education graduates. Consequently, we try to grasp the opportunities that vocational education may increase in the life of youth in Chiang Mai.

5-1-1 Advantage and disadvantage of vocational education

In order to know how the diverse respondents perceive advantage and disadvantage of vocational education, we posed the question "what is the advantage of vocational education?" and "what is the disadvantage of vocational education?" to all categories of respondents namely directors, principal, teachers, students, employers and employees. Concerning the advantage, Table 4 shows the answers and number of respondents who mentioned the respective points.

Table 4: The advantage of vocational education perceived by each category of respondents and number of respondents mentioned the respective points

	D	P	T	S	ER	EE	Total
Easy to get job			7	2	1	8	18
Get education with low cost	1		5	6	1		13
Obtain good technical skill	1		1	2	1	5	10
Access to higher education	1			6			7
Be self-employed				4	1		5
Get good connection			1	1			2
Ensure stable life				2			2
Obtain hire social status						2	2
Obtain good academic knowledge				1			1
Get a good salary			1				1

Note: D: directors, P: principal, T: teachers, S: students, ER: employers, EE: employees, multiple answers are allowed

The advantage pointed out the most by respondents was “easy to get job (18 respondents)”, second one was “get education with low cost (13)” and then third one was “obtain good technical skill (10). A limited number of respondents answered “obtain good academic knowledge (1)” and “get a good salary (1)”. Here, with respect to the answer “get education with low cost”, it should be noted that 9 out of 12 respondents are involved in the Wat Don Chan School which is a welfare school offering vocational education in upper secondary level as well as general education in primary and lower-secondary level for students of ethnic minorities. It is very interesting that 7 respondents (1 director and 6 students) consider “access to higher education” to be the advantage of vocational education. We will touch upon this point in the latter half of this chapter.

The disadvantage of vocational education mentioned by the respondents can be partly contradicting the advantage discussed above. For instance, a director explained the situation of vocational education graduates saying, “It is difficult for them to get a job. Even if they get a job, they often get limited salary.” What he meant by “a job” was “being a public employee” and his idea of “limited salary” was led by difficulty in reaching such a job. Also, there was a teacher who told that the life of vocational education graduates tended to be unstable due to private company’s employment policy. It is said that companies may fire their employees with vocational education background when their years of service become longer in order to avoid increase of personnel cost and to hire new employees with lower salary.

However, we found some respondents who hesitated to answer or gave a prelude such as “Although I don’t know much about vocational education...” or “In the public mind it is said that...” It seemed that there had been some differences in depth of understanding of vocational education per se among respondents. These are the perceptions of vocational education possessed by the respondents.

5-1-2 Comparison of perceptions between vocational education and general education

Here we will try to see how vocational education and general education are perceived by different respondents. Through the semi-structured interview we conducted, we received many kinds of perceptions about vocational education in the context of comparison with general education. These perceptions can be grouped roughly into three categories namely *general*, *positive* and *negative*. *General* perception describes the characteristic of vocational education and general education free not involved in value judgment and does not mention right or wrong. We define *positive* perception as the perception which points out good point of vocational education comparing to general education and *negative* perception as the perception which points out bad point of vocational education comparing to general education. On the basis of these definitions, we organized the perceptions we got from diverse respondents as below (Table 5).

Table 5: List of perceptions and respondents

	Perceptions	Respondents	
General	General upper secondary provide academic knowledge and vocational school provide skill than theory.	3 Students	Nawamin School
	Students who have economic problem tend to choose vocational education because they need employment faster.	Principal	Nawamin School
	Students who have lower academic score tend to go to vocational school with students who have higher academic score tend to go to general school.	Principal	Nawamin School
Positive	Vocational education helps employee to get higher social status.	Employee	Lamphun Shindengen
	Vocational schools have more capacity in accepting students than general education schools.	Teacher	Wat Don Chan School
	Vocational education makes it easy to get jobs.	Employee	Borsang Umbrella
Negative	In upper secondary level, it is more difficult for vocational education graduates than general education graduates to get a job.	Director	Wat Nong Lom School
	Vocational school is inferior to university.	Student	Chiang Mai University
	Vocational education students have less discipline than general education students.	Student	Chiang Mai University
	Vocational education is the last choice.	Student	Chiang Mai University
	Social status of the vocational education graduate is low.	Student	Chiang Mai University
	Vocational education accepts students with lower academic score.	Teacher	Chiang Mai University
	Vocational students do not have enough academic knowledge.	Employee	Wat Don Chan School
	Vocational education students have less opportunity to study in the university.	Student	Lamphun Shindengen
Since vocational schools do not have strict regulation, students do not study hard and like to fight.	Student	Nawamin School	

Then, we are going to examine what causes these perception gaps, who places different value on vocational education and general education, and why it is. We clarify those who said which perceptions and we analyze the commonality between perception and respondents' attributes. As a result we found that presence of relationship between respondents and vocational education influences these perceptions gaps.

First, we divided these respondents into two categories, *insiders* and *outsiders*, based on their academic and occupational background. More specifically, those who are related to vocational education such as vocational school students, graduates as well as teachers are considered to be "insiders" and the others are considered to be "outsiders". Table 6 shows the number of *insiders* and *outsiders* among each group.

Table 6: Number of respondents classified by insiders / outsiders

	Directors	Principal	Teachers	Students	Employers	Employees	Total
Insiders	0	0	2*	10*	3	10	25
Outsiders	4	1	11	18	6	10	50

Note: * These two teachers and ten students are belonging to Wat Don Chan School

Secondly, we organized the perceptions which we mentioned in Table 5 and counted general, positive and negative perceptions of *insiders* as well as *outsiders* (Table7). Five respondents who mentioned general perceptions were all *outsiders*. Three respondents who mentioned positive perceptions were all *insiders*. Then, seven out of eight respondents who mentioned negative perceptions were *outsiders* and the other respondent was *insider*. That is to say that in the context of comparing vocational education to general education there is a tendency that *insiders* offer positive recognition on and *outsiders* offer negative recognition.

Table 7: Perceptions of insiders / outsiders

	General perceptions	Positive perceptions	Negative perceptions
Insiders	0	3	1
Outsiders	5	0	7
Total	5	3	8

Source: Authors

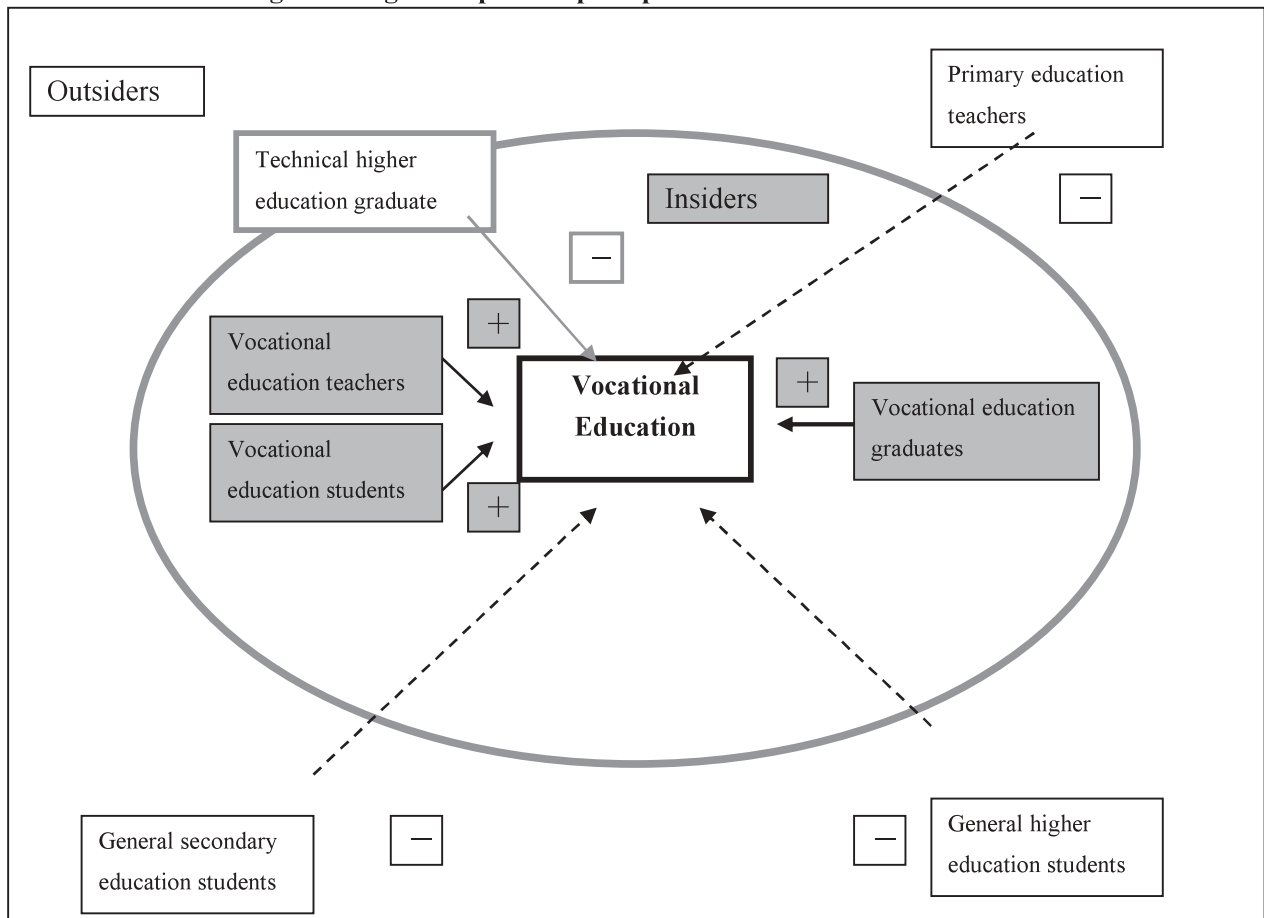
As we analyzed it further, we found that the *insider* who mentioned the following negative perception that, “Vocational students do not have enough academic knowledge” is an employee of Shindengen who had studied engineering at diploma level. Therefore, we found that respondents who have different backgrounds and status have different recognition towards vocational education. Figure 3 describes this tendency of the perceptions of *insiders* and *outsiders* towards vocational education.

Picture 1 Icebreaking with Japanese class students



Location: Nawaminrachutid Payap School

Figure 3 Negative / positive perceptions of vocational education



However, as we remarked in the previous discussion, it seemed that *outsiders* might not know much about the actual situation of vocational education and the benefits which students can gain from it. Therefore, there is a possibility that *outsiders* tend to have more negative perceptions by preoccupation or imagination.

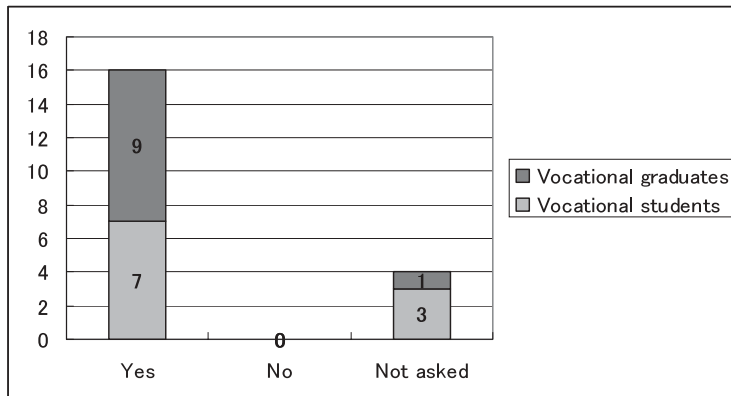
At the same time, *insiders* tend to mention the positive perceptions in the context of comparing vocational education to general education. From here we would like to focus on *insiders*' recognition of vocational education and actual situation so that we can highlight the role of vocational education in Chiang Mai more clearly.

5-1-3 Satisfaction towards vocational education and reasons of course selection

Now we are going to focus on the *insiders*, especially vocational education students and employees who had studied at vocational school (vocational education graduates), ten students of Wat Don Chan School and ten employees to be exact. We found that all of vocational education students and graduates are quite satisfied with their educational choice. When asked “Are you satisfied with your educational choice?” seven vocational education students and nine vocational education graduates responded “yes” (Figure 4).

Figure 4 Satisfaction of vocational education students and graduates:

The answers of the question “Are you satisfied with your educational choice?”



Source: Authors

However, three vocational education students answered that their actual school had not been the first choice. The other choices they raised were “other private school (1)”, “general school (1)” and “special vocational school²⁰ (1)”. When asked “What kind of difficulties were you facing when you decided the school?” nine of twenty vocational education students and graduates answered. They answered as follows; “economic problem (3)”, “distance (3)”, “academic score (2)” and “other problem (1)”.

As for economic difficulties of ten students studying at Wat Don Chan School, the reasons why they came to this school were “because it is free (4)” and “there was no choice (2)”. In Wat Don Chan School, 90 percent of students are ethnic minorities such as Karen, Burmese, Akha, Yao, Lisu, Thai Yai, Muser, Chinese and Hmon. Also, when we analyzed their background, 8 out of 10 students had parents or a parent who is a farmer (2 students did not respond). Rural areas in Chiang Mai province have had many problems due to the lack of potential cultivated land which has accelerated since the 1980s, concentration of land because of fully developed commercial management ways of agriculture and the exacerbating social and economic disparity. Through the interviews, we could see the picture that families of students in Wat Don Chan School, who engaged in agriculture in mountainous areas, are facing the same problems (2 students of Wat Don Chan School). Additionally, the number of siblings is 5.8 persons in average although that of other respondents in the same generation is 2.6 in average. From this information, it is assumable that the families of the students in Wat Don Chan School are facing financial difficulties.

This does not apply only to Wat Don Chan School, the directors and teachers of other schools who gave us their views that “students with economic difficulty tend to choose vocational education in upper secondary level” were often seen. According to their explanation, when students think about the time and money that they need to go higher education, students with economic difficulties tend to choose studying at vocational education and find jobs after graduation rather than studying at general education and going to university after graduation.

5-1-4 Expectations for vocational education

When asked the advantages of vocational education, the points that students of Wat Don Chan School raised the most was “get education with low cost(6)” as well as “access to higher education(6)” (Table 4). Concerning the question about their path to the future, we received answers such as “continue to study in technical higher education/diploma (5)”, “continue to study in university/degree (2)” and “go to work (2)” (Table 8). From this, we found that 7 out of 10 students are thinking of going to study further at higher level of educational institute (both technical and general) from vocational education in upper secondary level.

Table 8: Future plan of Wat Don Chan School’s students

	Number of respondents
Continue to study in technical higher education (diploma)	5
Continue to study in university (degree)	2
Go to work	2
No answer	1
Total	10

Regarding ten vocational education graduates, their answers to the question about advantage of vocational education were “easy to get job (6)”, “obtain good technical skill (3)” and “get a good salary (1)”. As we asked them “Could you get what you had expected from the previous education?”, 6 out of 6 respondents responded “yes”.

Through the interviews with vocational education students and graduate, we found that they had positive views of vocational education as the institution that gives them more opportunities to proceed to higher education and obtaining employment. Particularly, those students who are marginalized economically, socially and culturally tend to have large expectations of vocational education.

5-1-5 Perceptions and reality of vocational education

Although perceptions of vocational education tend to differ from respondent to respondent, we found that whether he/she has experienced vocational education made significant difference in characteristics of the perceptions. We addressed the perception gap appeared between *insiders* and *outsiders* and positive perceptions of *insiders*, those who have involved in vocational education, were analyzed further. By closely looking at vocational education students and graduates in terms of their satisfaction, reasons for choosing the educational course, socio-economic background, and expectation for vocational education, we could see how they positively perceive vocational education no matter what their situation at the moment of educational course selection and try to take advantage of it as steppingstone for better future.

Now, we are going to see how far the vocational education can meet demands of companies in the real labor market. Despite high satisfaction, when asked “How much is your previous vocational education helpful for your actual work?”, eight vocational education graduates answered “Almost totally (5)” “Moderately (1)” and “Not at all (2)”. There seems to be a matching issue when it comes to the linkage between vocational education and employment. Therefore, in the next chapter, we will examine how the vocational education graduates apply this knowledge and skills gained through vocational education to their actual work.

5-2 Result (2) Linkage between vocational education and Employment

5-2-1 Context of each perception

After several semi-structured interviews were conducted, we found several perceptions which relate to the topic at hand, the connection between vocational education and employment. The interviews that generated such relevant perceptions comes from all four stakeholders in two sectors, the education sector and employment sector. Those stakeholders are the students who are learning in a vocational school, teachers from various school levels—elementary and lower secondary schools, three employers from different companies and several employees who have vocational education background.

Even though we conducted interviews with all stakeholders, not all data generated from them was relevant to this section but highly connected with other sections of this report. The report will try to explain each perception along with their context that reflects the diversity of each stakeholder.

5-2-2 Vocational Education graduates find employment opportunities more easily

This perception is the most stated one among the four stakeholders. The first part will do an elaboration on this perception from the education sector and then followed by the elaboration from the employment sector. From the education sector, the recorded perceptions were from three different schools; Wat Don Chan School, Baan Tawai School, and Wat Sri Suphan School.

Wat Don Chan School provides educational opportunities from kindergarten, and primary school level up until secondary school level. As for the secondary education level, a part of general school level, they also provide lower and upper secondary vocational school. The vocational college teaches computing and accounting only and just started to accept students these past two years, As a result there are no graduates yet. Students who choose to take vocational college in the higher secondary level will receive a certificate of accomplishment after three years of studying. If a student wishes to further study vocational training at the same school they can get a higher certificate after two years of studying.

In the past, students who finished lower secondary school tend to go to work directly, mostly become staff in gas station or become a guard. But after the establishment of the vocational collage, 80% of the lower secondary school graduates continue to vocational education. The collage has made a business relationship with the local business sector, such as companies and vehicle maintenance stations, which could in turn benefit the students upon their graduation. The school does not require any tuition fee, thus the school also manages to supply the daily needs of each students from the collected donation, which could tackle the daily meals, uniforms, studying equipment, books, even for addressing the health problems of a student.

Apart of the vocational school, the general school also provides skill training on bakery and jewelry cutting. Even so, the group did not manage to interview any students who are taking those classes due to their monthly excursion schedule.

The guidance teacher of the school often gives advice to the students about their employment and studying choices. To those whom are regarded as poor, the teacher often recommended students to study in vocational school, rather than continuing to general upper secondary level. It is because general school is for continuing to higher education while vocational school is to get employment easier. The teacher also advises that if they get money from the work, they should also spend it on their next level of education.

Another school is Baan Tawai School. The school was originally not listed in the schedule, but after the team discovered it, they then decided to pay a visit, even on Sunday. They provide education services starting from

kindergarten until general lower secondary school. Among their 29 students who graduated last year, 4 students went to high school, 2 students took the non formal education, and 23 students pursued their studies to the vocational level. The school also provides subjects on basic skills to find employment opportunities, such as wood crafting and computing as a part of their local curriculum. The school director pointed out that the advantage of vocational school is that it is easier to get jobs because it take only 3 years of schooling and after that they can search for some employment opportunities in private companies.

The last school we visited was Wat Sri Suphan. Again, the school was not enlisted, but the team managed to arrange a visit. The school is an elementary school with around 384 students. Most of them are coming from poor families which live nearby the school. In the school, they can join some activities such as silver crafting and Thai dancing. For many of them who are poor, the teachers there often advise them to go to vocational school in Wat Meta. When it comes to finding employment opportunities, from the teacher perspective, vocational education tends to be easier to complete than a bachelor degree. They can study about mechanics, cooking, and electronics in the vocational school.

We also managed to interview 10 computing class students from Wat Don Chang Vocational School. Many of them were introduced to the school by family or community members. This school is their first choice because it's free of tuition, and all of their families have no money to fund their studies. Only a few of them have work experience and none of them are working at the same time while they are studying there. For all of them, studying there is satisfying and they believe they could get a job more easily after they complete studies here.

The group also managed to get one employer and ten employee perspectives from different working environments; Borsang Umbrella Making Center, Handmade Candle shop in Baan Tawai, By Hand Artificial Flower Making Center, and a Japanese Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) company Shindengen in Lumpun Province.

Shindengen has 148 types of courses as a way to develop the competence and skills of the workers which is free of charge. The worker competencies are categorized into 4, they are core and behavior competency (5 items), function competency (49 items), specific competency (73 items), and management competency (4 items). The company also has a technical training center and conducts special skill test. They also accept the workers with an educational background starting from elementary graduates to university graduates, which includes graduates from vocational schools majoring in mechanics, electrician, and accounting. The Director of Shindengen has said that the advantage of vocational education is that it is easy to get job, and in his company 18% of the total employees have diploma and certificate from vocational schools.

In the Umbrella making center we conducted two interviews with an employee working in selling and promotion and as a painter. The 28 year old painter has a degree in accounting from a university. Before she entered the university, she studied accounting in a higher secondary vocational school for 5 years. After becoming an accountant she got a headache and has no free time, so she gave up her job in accounting and became a painter, a skill she learned from her uncle who is also working at the same place. Studying in a vocational school was her own choice, and she thought that studying there helped her to get a job more easily.

The other one is a 28 year old female who has an educational background in marketing, and studied in a vocational school. In this company she can apply most of her accounting knowledge and she also thinks that vocational school graduates are easier to find jobs compared to those who graduated from high schools.

At By Hands artificial flower making center, an interview was conducted to a 25 years old general employee. She has been working there for 3 years with daily payment as much as 145 Bath. She is married to a taxi driver and they have one child. She just completed her schooling years up until elementary school. Even though she did

not take any form of schooling after that, she wanted to improve her skills but does not go to school again. She said, should she take the vocational education, she would have gotten a job more easily.

At Shindengen, we found 4 employees who think that vocational education gave them a better chance to get a job. The first respondent is a 23 years old trainee. He is a regular employee and in his first four month trainee period as an operator, which will last until the end of 2008. Before working in the Shindengen, he studied upper secondary vocational education and he got a diploma as an electronic technician for that. He also has a brother who is studying at the same subject, but did not yet graduate. Even though he wants to improve his skills, he does not want to continue his studies due to financial concerns. The biggest factor for him for choosing the vocational education is because it will help him to get a job more easily.

The second one is a 32 years old woman. She has been working there for 11 years in the purchasing section. She has an educational background in accounting from a vocational school. She wants to improve her skill and knowledge, and to do so she chooses to have it in the company. She also thinks that vocational education helped her to get a job.

The third one is a 32 years old man who works as a supervisor for 4 years. He has a diploma in vocational education in technical engineering. To date he is very satisfied with the working environment and his work. He also thinks that his vocational educational background could help him easier to get job.

The last person is a 27 years old man who works as a screw operator. Even though he has some difficulties in studying he manages to get his vocational education in machinery at the end. For skills development, he relies on the company's training because what he studied at the school was not applicable at all due to differences in mechanism of the machines used in the company. Even though he is facing this kind of situation, he still thinks that vocational education offers an easier chance to get a job.

We interviewed a 23 years old man who works as a temporary employee in the quality assurance section. He has a diploma in vocational education on technical engineering. He is satisfied with his choice and he wants to continue his studies too. The reason why he chooses vocational school is because he is not good in some academic subjects at school, so he decided to get a specific skill instead. He believes vocational school offers better jobs for students too.

From the above mentioned description, even though all respondents have diverse backgrounds and employment goals, we could summarize that all respondents believed that vocational education provides better opportunities to start desired employment, both in the informal sector and formal sector. To further elaborate the perceptions, the following two sections will describe the perception of higher education graduates and vocational education graduates toward employment advantages coming from vocational education.

5-2-3 Perceptions on vocational education graduate's employment opportunities

5-2-3-1 Higher education graduates' perception

We managed to interview four higher education graduates from the education and employment sector. From them we noticed that vocational education has the following features; (1) It provides skill and experience; and (2) Vocational education helps its graduates to be promoted; but (3) in some circumstances, its graduates tend to have unstable jobs. To further understand the context of each perception, we elaborate it in these following paragraphs.

The employer is from a Candle Shop in Baan Tawai. She is the manager of the shop with 6 employees, some of them are from the mountain, and they can not speak Thai fluently, but still all of them are regular employees. Under her management, men are expected to be able work on composing woods and the females painting. Before she opened the shop, she got her bachelor degree in accounting and was working in an accounting company for 6 years as an accountant. By the year 2008 she has been running the candle shop for 3 years, and she found that her

income now is bigger than that she got from the accounting company. Since she has experienced a job shift, she decided that all her employees should be recruited based on their technical skill and experience and this is where vocational school graduates have the advantage.

We interviewed a 23 years old man who works as a temporary employee in the quality assurance section. He has a diploma in vocational education on technical engineering. He is satisfied with his choice and he wants to continue his studies too. The reason why he chooses vocational school is because he is not good at some academic subjects at school, so he decided to get a specific skill instead. He believes vocational school give better jobs from students too.

Vocational education helps to be promoted

Still from the same respondent at Shindengen, he is satisfied with his educational background because he could get what he expected from it. Apart from that he also thinks that from the vocational education he will get good social status and good opportunity for promotion in his job. He is just beginning his work as a regular employee there.

Vocational education tends to have unstable job

The Director of Baan Tawai School also thinks that vocational education will lead to an easier process to get jobs, but has the tendency to result in unstable jobs, because some employers or private company owners tend to fire long time workers and replace them with a new one, so they can get workers with cheaper salary.

5-2-3-2 Vocational education graduates

We also managed to interview three respondents who had vocational training or studied in upper secondary vocational school. From their perceptions, we know that vocational education provided them with two benefits; (1) Vocational school provides complete equipment to study; and (2) it also provides many employment chances; but it does not always guarantee that its graduates will get the necessary skills they need when employment is shifting. Following are the contexts of each perception.

We interviewed a 49 years old painter in Borsang Umbrella factory. Because he loves to paint, he then decided to have a three month vocational training in painting. Even though he is satisfied with his current job, he does not want to improve his skill and knowledge. The advantage of entering a vocational school is that he could have complete equipment to practice.

Still from the same respondent in Borsang Umbrella making center, she stated that learning in a vocational school gives her many choices of employment and provides her with good knowledge to improve her skills. In her case she could adjust herself to become a painter even though she studied accounting during her vocational school years. But to be able to paint, she needs to learn from her uncle because there are less people who can do it. This is why she did not attend vocational school anymore.

One employee from a candle shop in Baan Tawai, he is 27 years old and has the responsibility to scrub wood. He is a regular employee there; he is also the younger brother of the owner of the shop. He has some experiences working in other places before he joined his sister there. He studied and graduated from an upper secondary vocational school and manages to find work in a furniture company for three years. When he decided to move in to a new company, the working place where he is now, he decided not to go to a vocational school again because the vocational education does not necessarily mean that he will get what he wanted. That is why he decided to stay and sharpened his skills in the company instead, while he is working.

5-2-4 Perceptions on higher education graduates' employment opportunities

5-2-4-1 Higher education graduates

The three respondents we interviewed are all from the education sector. They said that higher education graduates tend to have better and more stable employment compared to vocational education graduates. Even so, higher education graduates have a harder time finding employment opportunities compared to those who have vocational education background. We did not find vocational education graduates' perception toward the above matter, because most of our respondents choose vocational school either because they want to be employed soon or they do not have enough money to pursue higher education. Following are the context of the related perceptions.

This perception was stated in two occasions, one is from a school director from Wat Nom Long Elementary School and the other one is from a school director in Baan Tawai. From the Baan Tawai school director perspective, higher education tends to do so because whoever is studying there could have stable employment from the government, while the director of Wat Nom Long School said higher education graduates tend to have larger salaries than vocational ones.

As have been stated above, that vocational school gives the learners an opportunity to get jobs more easily. One teacher from Wat Sri Suphan School stated that pursuing an education in higher education will give the learners some difficulties in finding jobs, when compared to the vocational school. She has been working as a teacher for 31 years and now she is teaching the 5th and 6th grade class. Still from the director of Baan Tawai School, he thinks that higher education will give the learner more stable jobs because they can find employment as a government officer someday, even though it would be difficult to get it.

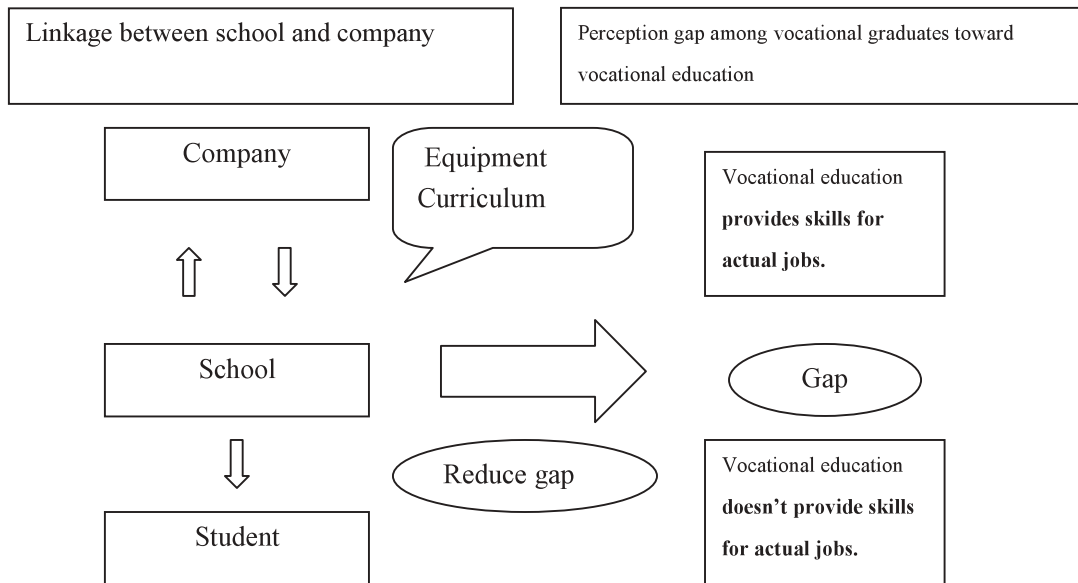
5-2-5 Analysis

5-2-5-1 Perception gap toward skills

Through our findings of perceptions of different stakeholders toward vocational education, we have found that there is a perception gap among vocational graduate workers about the skills they get in vocational school. Even though there is one common piece of evidence which vocational education makes them find jobs easily, perception toward skills which vocational education provides can be divided into two.

One is that vocational education provides skills for actual jobs. There is a tendency that this evidence is likely to be stated by people who have studied in commerce, marketing, and accounting. Another is that vocational education does not provide skills for actual jobs. This statement tends to be collected from people who have studied that machinery. Even though people who have studied commerce, marketing and accounting change their work places, they can easily adapt their skills to actual jobs. In contrast, in the case of those who studied machinery, they have a hard time adapting their skills in new places because of different equipment and technology. Thus they need to rely on job training to help them.

Figure 5 Perception gap among stakeholders



Source: author

5-2-5-2 Linkage between school and company

One of the ideal ways to reduce this perception gap is to have a connection between vocational school and company. In the case of Wat Don Chan, the school has a connection with two local companies such as Mobile Phone Company and the department store. Mobile Phone Company would like to recruit students who have knowledge of fixing mobile phones. On the other hand, department stores would like to recruit students who have studied commerce and accounting. Teachers have a chance to discuss the curriculum with those two companies and companies can suggest what kinds of skills and knowledge they want schools to provide for students. Because of this collaboration between school and companies, students can be confident with what they learn and make sure what they learn is useful in actual jobs.

This linkage is especially important for the schools where they teach technological subjects such as machinery. Because if schools do not provide similar or identical equipment and technology with those in actual work, it is very hard to adapt students to jobs they get. And technology and equipment are very changeable and influenced by the actual market. Hence, to maintain tight connections between company and these kinds of vocational school is very important to keep pace with the actual trend of the market. Moreover, what they learn may possibly end up having nothing to do with their actual jobs. This linkage profits not only students but schools and companies. Since students have obtained skills that companies want, companies can hire the right person and possibly reduce the cost for on-job-training (OJT). By grace of this employment connection, this works as good advertisement for collecting students.

We have found significant positive aspects of vocational education in the previous chapter. And meaning of vocational education in the context of employment is that vocational education makes students get jobs easily, which is proved by many stakeholders. Even though there are negative images of vocational education, such as the fact that students who perform poorly in academic achievement tend to go on to vocational education,

vocational school is inferior to general one, and students who cannot afford general education go to vocational school, vocational education provides them possibilities such as specific skills and knowledge to be hired, promoted and obtain high social status. Thus it is necessary that skills and knowledge students have obtained in vocational education can suit their actual jobs. In order to make this feasible, again linkages between school and company are the key to enhance the meaning of vocational education not only in the context of employment but actual jobs.

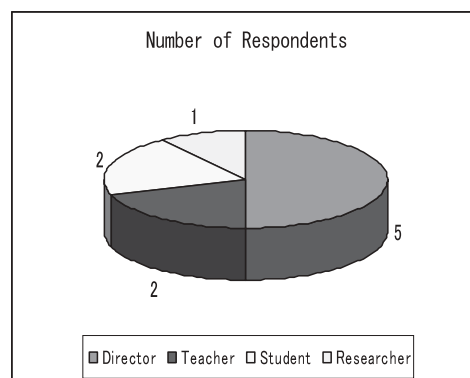
5-3 Result (3) Linkage between local resources and culture and education sector

Based on the interview data, we categorize the perception of the informants into positive and negative perceptions of the local curriculum. Then, we analyze activities in local curriculum to check the actual role of local curriculum. Finally, through the above findings, we would like to find the linkage between local resources and culture and education sector.

5-3-1 Informants information

Although we have conducted semi-structured interviews with different stakeholders, and mainly four types of different occupations; employer, employee, student and teacher, yet we have asked a limited number of informants related to local curriculum. Thus, among 75 informants, we asked 5 school directors, 2 teachers, 2 students and 1 researcher about the issue of local curriculum. Also, the average educational background of the respondents is university graduate, except for the upper secondary level students.

Figure 6 Numbers of Informants



Source: Authors

5-3-2 Positive Perception of local curriculum

In this sector, we categorized the positive perception of local curriculum from our respondents. Thus, from the positive perception, we actually got seven perceptions, yet, some of them seem to overlap, so we combine those and have five different positive perceptions. Through their perceptions we could find the tendency of what they perceive about the role of local curriculum.

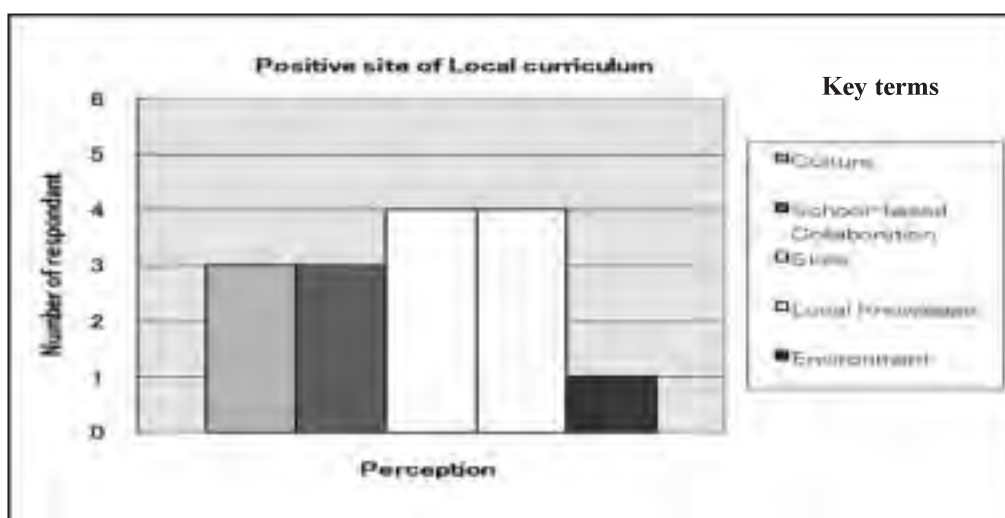
Based on the information collected, we have found out that though different schools located in diversity of locations, the first most important purpose is generally increasing the local knowledge of mainly students and providing the skills which can generate income. Moreover, the income-generation skills provided from the local curriculum are also diverse such as at Wat Nong Lom which provides the skill to grow vegetables while Hmong Hill Tribe School focuses on making detergent shampoo.

The second important aim of the local curriculum is promoting the preservation of local culture. Even though the purpose of preserving the local culture is the same from school to school, the focus of the culture differs. For example, schools located among the Hmong Hill Tribe regions focuses on the Hmong culture and community's cultural identity, while schools located at low land region concentrate on the Lanna culture and northern culture. Also, school based collaboration is considered important for some schools, too. In addition, local curriculum is a way to preserve the environment is not a concern of the school.

Table 9: The list of positive perception the respondents have answered

Positive perception	Informants	Research sites
Local curriculum preserves the community's cultural identity.	Researcher	Chiang mai University
Local curriculum enhances school-community collaboration.	Director Director Teacher	Wat Nong Lom school Baan Tawai school Baan Tawai school
Local curriculum can provide practical skills for students to help the activities in the village and they can get money from it.	Director Teacher	Hmong Hill Tribe school Wat Don Chan School
Local curriculum helps students to learn survival skills.	Director Director	Baan Tawai school Wat Sri Suphan
Local curriculum transfers local knowledge.	Director Director Director Teacher	Wat Nong Lom school Baan Tawai school Hmong Hill Tribe school Baan Tawai school
Local curriculum preserves local environment.	Director	Wat Nong Lom school
Local curriculum provides us with chances to learn Lanna culture, ancient times and northern Thai culture.	2 Students	Nawaminrachutid School Payap School

Figure 7 Positive Perception of Local curriculum from Informants



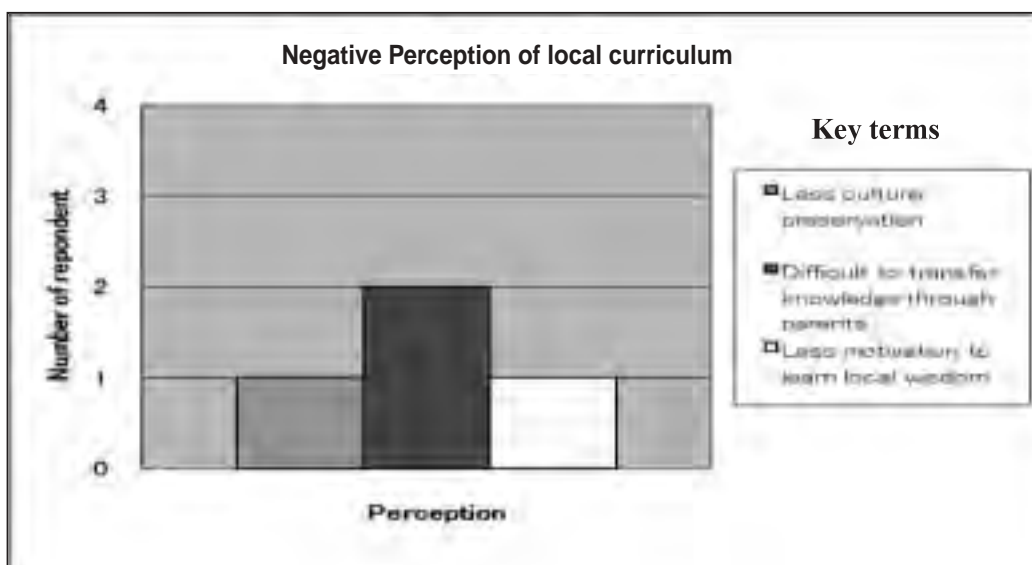
5-3-3 Negative Perception of Local curriculum

In this sector, we categorize the negative perception of local curriculum the same as positive perception from our respondents. Thus, from the negative perception, we got three perceptions. Through their perception we could find out the tendency of what they perceive about the role of local curriculum. Contrary to the positive view of local curriculum, we also found out a sort of negative perception and concerns about implementation of the local curriculum. One of the most negative perceptions is following the activities of the local curriculum, which required students to spend longer hours at school.

Table 10: The list of negative perception the respondents answered

Negative perception	Informants	Research sites
The more educated a person becomes, the less cultural preservation this person will do.	Researcher Director	Chiang Mai University Hmong Hill tribe school
Children spend more time at school rather than at home, so the local knowledge is difficult to be transferred directly from parents to children.	Researcher	Chiang Mai University
Most teachers are originated from the low land, so they don't have enough intention to learn local wisdom and knowledge.	Researcher	Chiang Mai University

Figure 8 Negative Perception of Local curriculum from Informants



Thus students' time spent with parents has decreased dramatically, which provides fewer chances and shorter time for parents to transfer local knowledge to the next generation. Another concern is less cultural preservation from the more educated people, especially those who are from the ethnic group. The reason is that when those educated people come to low land for work, for example, they have a tendency to ignore their own culture and try to adapt to the low land one instead. The last concern is the unwillingness of teachers coming from outside the local area to learn about the region and local culture. As a result, students are also unable to learn their own local culture.

Picture 2 Forest Community



School director and pupils together were in the forest and departed to see and monitor the plants (Wat Nong Lom School).

5-3-4 Analysis of perception of local curriculum and life skills

5-3-4-1 Analysis of positive perception of local curriculum and life skills

Based on interview collected data, we found out that local curriculum has been providing invaluable benefits for not only local regions but also for the Thai nation as a whole. Moreover, necessary skills are taught to students, especially for those who are living in rural areas, either how to generate income or how to live in society and community as a whole. In some schools, teachers teach pupils not merely some useful leaf and tree for medicine for survival skills, but also some income-earning skills such as growing mushrooms (Wat Nong Lom), engraving (Wat Sri Suphan), and making detergent shampoo (Hmong Hill Tribe School). Thus, from an economic point of view, local curriculum can also be considered as one of the tools of making a living in pupils and students' future life, especially for students who do not go on to the next stage of education after completion of the present education and need to start engaging in economic activities for their livelihood. Some of them may work in their local area.

Furthermore, local curriculum aims to protect local culture and wisdom. Thereafter, schools have included local culture, local knowledge, and local wisdom into local curriculum. Therefore, pupils have opportunities to learn and to notice the importance of indigenous culture and wisdom which have been developed in the local area for a long time and handed down from generation to generation. In Nawaminrachutid Payap School, students learn about Lanna culture, Northern Thai culture and King's activities. By learning these, students can know what has happened in the past and what the king has been doing.

Local curriculum can be one of the means to protect the environment. For instance, Wat Nong Lom School effectively utilizes nature, allowing students to experience authentic nature and understand the value of forest and environment.

In addition, the most important concern of "Good local curriculum" is to reflect the local community's needs and is also to require collaboration between school and community. In this regard, local curriculum is also considered necessary and fruitful for pupils' learning. In short, local curriculum has provided huge benefits to everyone; teachers, students, community and Thai nation.

5-3-4-2 Analysis of negative perception of local curriculum and culture

Obviously as shown above, local curriculum is important, yet involving local resources and culture as well as local people to develop and strengthen local curriculum is worthwhile. Therefore, implementation of the local curriculum needs to be done carefully and collaboratively.

First of all, parents and schools need to compromise on the number of hours students spend at school and at home. Not only schools, but households also have a function of transferring local culture, knowledge and wisdom. The collaboration between schools and households needs to be reconsidered because parents in households know more local knowledge, culture and wisdom than teachers coming from low land areas.

Secondly, teachers coming from outside should increase their willingness to learn insider local culture in order to implement local curriculum. According to a researcher whom we interviewed, implementing local curriculum is difficult because the policy did not fully reflect the situation in several local areas, such as hill tribe areas, minority areas and so on. He stated that the reason is because lowland teachers are not willing to learn local culture and wisdom and their lowland spoken language is not suitable for hill tribe students. As a result, achieving the aims of local curriculum is difficult.

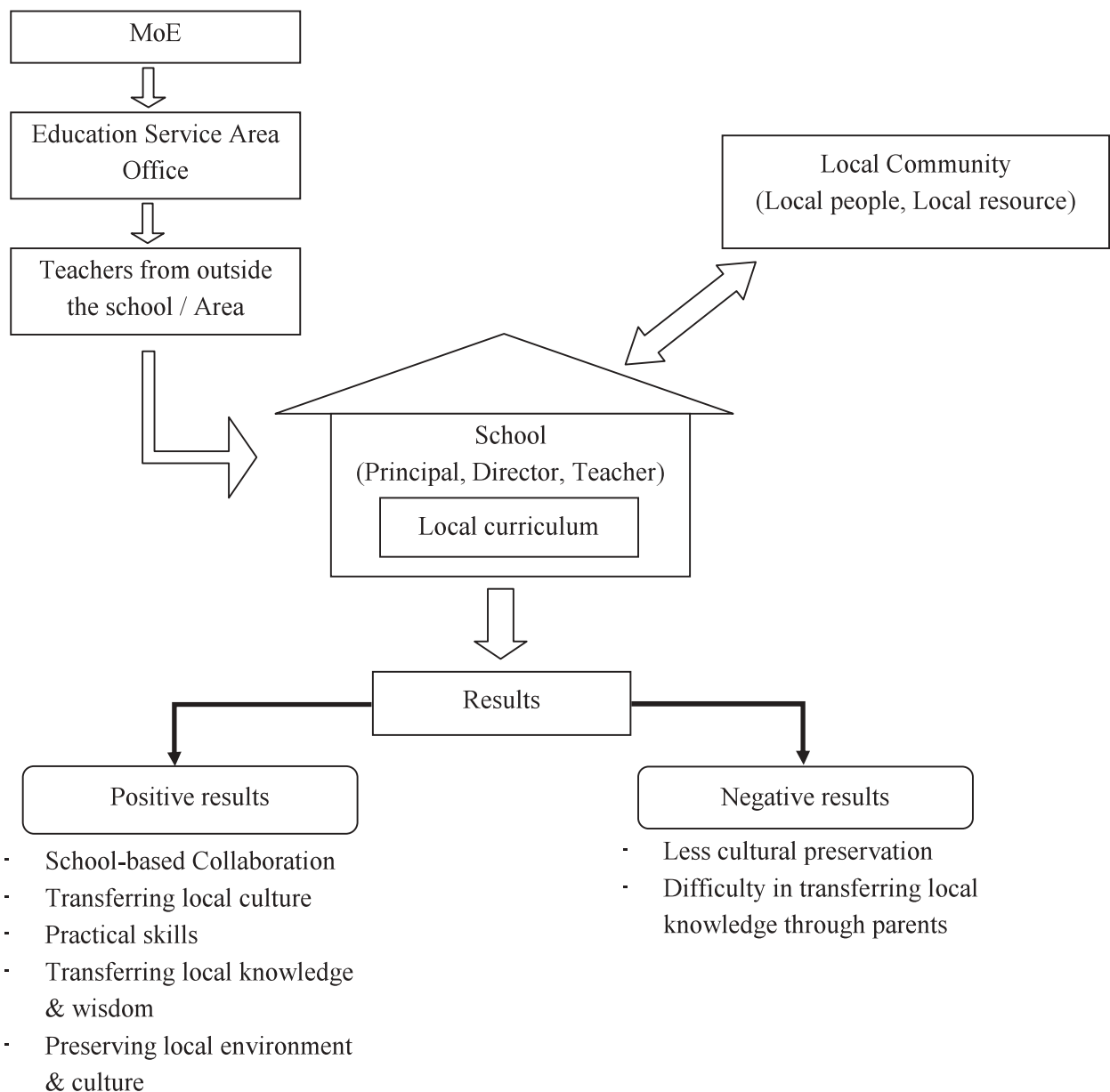
Also, educated people should be aware of the importance of preserving their own culture. The researcher we interviewed mentioned that educated people are inclined to forget their own original culture because they migrated

to low land areas or work there. Instead, educated people should be the cultural preservers and have better attitudes and greater awareness toward local culture protection.

Finally, school is the place for implementation of local curriculum whose aim is to protect environment, local culture and so on. Nevertheless, implementation processes need collaboration with all related stakeholders.

5-3-5 linkage between local resources and culture and education

Figure 9 Linkage between stakeholders and local curriculum (Based on our interview)



Source: Authors

Notwithstanding, local curriculum shows many benefits, yet developing and implementing local curriculum requires many resources. Thus, schools, especially rural schools, would face many limitations in developing and implementing local curriculum.

First of all, the collaboration between the central and local level of education institutions should be strengthened. Despite the fact that 20-30% of all portions of Thai education curriculum have been devoted to the local curriculum, which is considered as relatively high, implementation of local curriculum should be highlighted for the sake of further improvement.

Secondly, to develop and implement the local curriculum is difficult to achieve. The main reason is that schools need qualified resources, both physical and qualitative ones. For instance, Wat Nong Lom School has spent almost 10 years just creating its own local curriculum. Another point is how local curriculum can be implemented. Again with the same reasons as the initial stage, schools are facing even more difficult times achieving their set objectives. The reason is, basically, physical capacity such as the number of teachers who can teach children along local curriculum, is thought to be the first issue. The less teachers who teach local curriculum, the less opportunities to learn local culture, knowledge and wisdom the pupils and students have. Accordingly, increasing the number of teachers who are familiar with local curriculum, including local culture, knowledge and wisdom, is necessary.

Lastly and importantly, collaboration with the local community and school needs to be strengthened in order to implement local curriculum. Clearly seen, the less cooperation between school and community, the greater the negative perception of local curriculum would produce.

This research finds parallel positive impact of implementation of local curriculum just as the previous research of Boonreang.²¹ However, although the existing research found the lack of knowledge and self-confidence of teachers, the research articulates new findings, from researcher, teachers and students, who are from the education side, that local curriculum faces the difficulties of developing and implementing like limitation of resources and lack of cooperation between central government and local community with the school. Therefore, although local curriculum is a means to provide skills to students, preserving culture and local wisdom and so on, still achieving the goals of local curriculum is not easy.

6. Overall Analysis

6-1 Life Skills

As previously mention in the chapter 2 literature review part, life skills in this research looks at how skills mainly vocational skills and literacy skills which students acquire from school and skills which students gain from local curriculum can help them plan a better life, especially clearly observe the transition between how youth continue their study and youth starting to work.

Observing the three results from chapter 5, we could see that life skills are actually in play. From the vocational education and employment linkage section, examples could be seen from the owner of a candle holder shop in Baan Tawai. She has a degree in accounting, has worked as an accountant, but she turned her career into the craft business. She was adapting to the new realities. In Shindengen, we also managed to meet a mechanical engineer who said that his mechanical skills learnt from the vocational school were not useful at all. Or even in

the By Hands Company, where the husband, who is a doctor, decided to jump into his wife's business. Wat Don Chan vocational school students can also be a good example. They come to the school to solve their economic problems and still at the same time they could study. Even though in practice, they are asking the abbot to help them, but still, their decision to keep studying, migrated from their village and live far from family from such an early age shows the degree of life skills ability in them. And this has nothing to do with general study subject at school. Knowing there is a gap that vocational school graduates can find employment more easily, but at the same time they tend to have unstable jobs, having life skills will surely benefit them. They can manage themselves and balance the work, and still at the same time be alert about the risk of unemployment.

So in the end, life skills for the younger generation, has the function to prepare them to adapt to an ever changing situation. Because, even though they study vocational skills at school, it does not 100% guarantee that all of the skills will be useful or event lead to a job. Having life skills, will definitely help them in dealing with those sudden changes.

6-2 Role of education for youth to develop life skills

In the ever-changing society, one cannot always depend on a single means of employment or skill. The perception gaps identified in chapter five have shown that these situations are true. In this context, how does the education system contribute? It has been noticed that not all of the taught subjects are applicable in coping with life. A good example of how education could play a role is seen through the guiding teacher and provision of local curriculum at school. The case of Wat Sri Suphan could provide an example of how a teacher could be the beacon for life skills education to the students. Even though Wat Sri Suphan students are still at their elementary school years, due to the economic pressures to their family, it revealed that they are also often taking advices from the teacher, especially in managing the economic problems and still studying. The case of Wat Don Chan School is also the same. The assigned two main guiding teachers have been consulting students to keep studying and at the same time coop with the daily challenges that come in their welfare school life. The teacher often advises them that even if they eventually are employed earlier than the general school graduates, still they have to pursue education as high as possible.

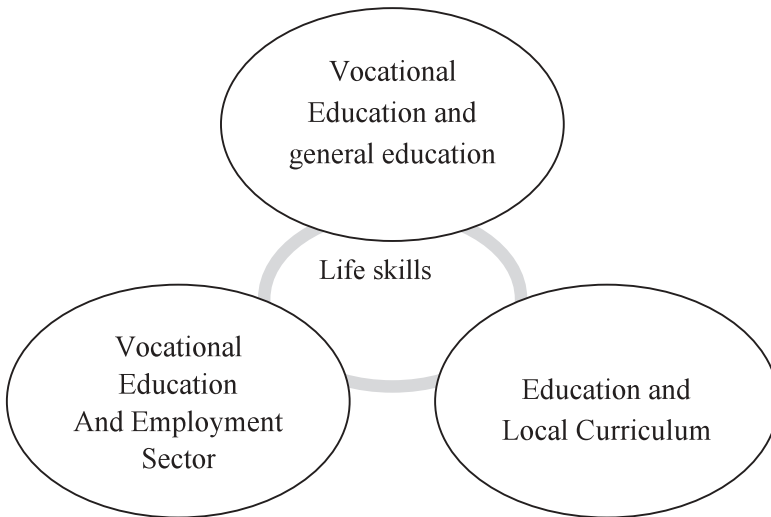
Life skills are also taught in the local curriculum. Wat Nam Long Elementary School is a good example of this. The students from the 5th and 6th grade are taught how to manage themselves and the environment. Even though their knowledge obtained from the school has less economic value, because they are not allowed to legally be involved in commercial activity, still it has given them the foundation to further deal with life changes. They could learn how to medicate themselves using the natural herbs, without having the need to buy medicine, at least as an early aid.

6-3 Stakeholders perceive the role of education for youth to develop life skills

From the two above elaborations we could see that having knowledge and skills alone is not enough, and education, it turns out, has a role to foster this through provision of able guiding teachers and local curriculum. The next figure is trying to describe life skills positions or roles in bridging the general education sub-sector, vocational education subsector, and employment sector. Firstly, life skills are a set of different skills from the other education sub sector, thus in this context, life skills somehow played a significant role in complementing the

other. Whether a student is studying in vocational school or general school life skills are there to support the youth development.

Figure 10 life skills relationship among the three analyses



Source: authors

6-3-1 Education sector stakeholder’s perception

The evidence overwhelmingly shows that education plays an important role in contributing social and economic benefits to individual, family and society as a whole. However, different types of education would probably produce different outcomes. Therefore, in this sector, understanding how different stakeholders from the education side perceive the role of education for youth to develop life skills is necessary to be raised up. We purposely intended not to ask directly how each stakeholder perceives the role of education in the development of life skills, yet our interview questions cover certain types of questions related to certain skills which are in the focus of the life skills in this report which we already analyzed above. Thus, in this section, we will combine those analyses which cover only education perspectives and finalize the overall educational stakeholders’ perceptions toward life skills.

Based on the findings from the previous chapter, there are two points to elaborate on regarding educational stakeholders’ need to reflect and adapt to the situation they are facing. Firstly, although students go through vocational education or general education, their decisions were made because of the availability they have, for example based on their background and status. Another choice was the expectation they expect from the certain type of education they attend. For instance, students from Wat Don Chan School who took accounting course, they expect to be accountant in the company.

Secondly, the content to the local curriculum differs from school to school, because of the different availability of resources they have, and different objectives they would like to achieve, too. In the case of Wat Nong Lom, the content of local curriculum is about the forest community because it is the only available resource they have. Thus, to maximize the forest community, school concentrates on provide skills to students such as how to plant trees and how diversify the value of those trees.

Therefore, we can point out that educational stakeholders perceive the role of education for development of life skills differently because of how they utilize, adopt and reflect different resource availability, thoughts, and expectation to their education.

6-3-2 Employment sector stakeholders' perception

To distinctly see how the perception is, we could observe it from the recruitment criteria applied by the employer to the employee. It is interesting that to some degree, although educational background of a candidate worker may not be relevant to the job description available, the employer will hire them, as long as that person has the ability to learn fast and to produce effectively. We also noticed that, regardless of what their skills are, those who have some educational background will have more value during the recruitment session. This is true in the recruitment case of Candle holder shop in Ban Tawai, By hands, Borsang Umbrella Center. There the owners ask them to show previous work products, and if the quality is pleasing enough, they will have a good chance to be employed there.

This is not restricted to the works in the handicraft sector, but seen also to the formal sector. A company such as Shindengen, also values the ability of the workers to be able to have good inter-personal skills, self management skills, and decision making skills which they foster through their training systems. An example from Shindengen is that they also accepted mechanical workers who have no background at all in operating their machine, and soon after they were hired, they train them. If only Shindengen are strictly searching for employees who have the ability to operate a certain machine, maybe that person would have not been employed at all. It is clear from this example that life skills have an important role in the eyes of the employer.

6-3-3 Main findings from the stakeholders' perceptions toward the role of education for development of life skills

In all the above analyses, we found that education provides people life skills which have a function to bridge the transition from one opportunity to the other. We have found evidence of how people could adapt in times of employment changes and while educational selection is taking place.

We also found that the more educated a person, the higher the adaptability they acquire. For instance, in Shindengen Company, the mechanical worker who never has educational background or working experience to his current work is able to adopt to operate the machine.

7. Conclusion

Through the analysis, we have discussed how different types of education, namely vocational education, literacy and local curriculum, develop youth capacity to adopt themselves into their actual life condition by focusing on the perceptions of various respondents.

Although the perceptions for vocational education differs, vocational education is considered by *insiders* to provide technical skills and better opportunities for those students who have economic, socio-cultural, academic constraints in the context of education as well as employment. In chapter 5-1, we have discussed that students from ethnic minorities, rural areas, or families of peasants are willing to utilize vocational education as a means for further education or employment, and have made a conscious decision to solve their problem by moving to the school to study and choose a different employment path from their parents.

However, when it comes to the demand from the company side, matching issues of vocational education comes out as we discussed in chapter 5-2. Since our respondents and research sites are not necessarily representing the majority of the youth and their workplaces in Chiang Mai, we cannot generalize about our findings. Nevertheless, we can see the importance of locality for this issue. We argued that linkage between

school and company should be enhanced by raising the cases which imply potential mismatching of skills learnt in vocational education and those required in workplace. In order to minimize this gap and develop employees' ability in a suitable way for the company, in-service training was executed in an organized way in a large company such as Shindengen.

Centrally, many employers of Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the handicraft sector, which is one of the local specific sectors in Chiang Mai, required work experiences rather than educational background as recruitment condition. What they mentioned about education was the necessity of minimum literacy and numeracy for understanding of order sheets and production process. Here, we could figure out that literacy acquired through education is one of determinants for employment in this sector. Moreover, since the Chiang Mai handicraft sector is closely connected to the locality that is to say local, natural and cultural resources, there are also the spaces where local curriculum offered by schools from primary to upper secondary levels provides practical life skills to facilitate youth to find a job in the sector. The role of local curriculum is not limited in the context of employment. It supports youth to live in the community without being employed but to earn his/her livelihood by utilizing knowledge and skills acquired through the specific local curriculum.

Based on the findings from the overall analyses which means this report could answer the research questions, including the main and sub-research questions. Therefore, the research could achieve its aims to identify the similarities and differences over the role of education between each stakeholder, to view the impact of education for employment and to see the linkage between the local resources and culture utilization in education.

8. Acknowledgement

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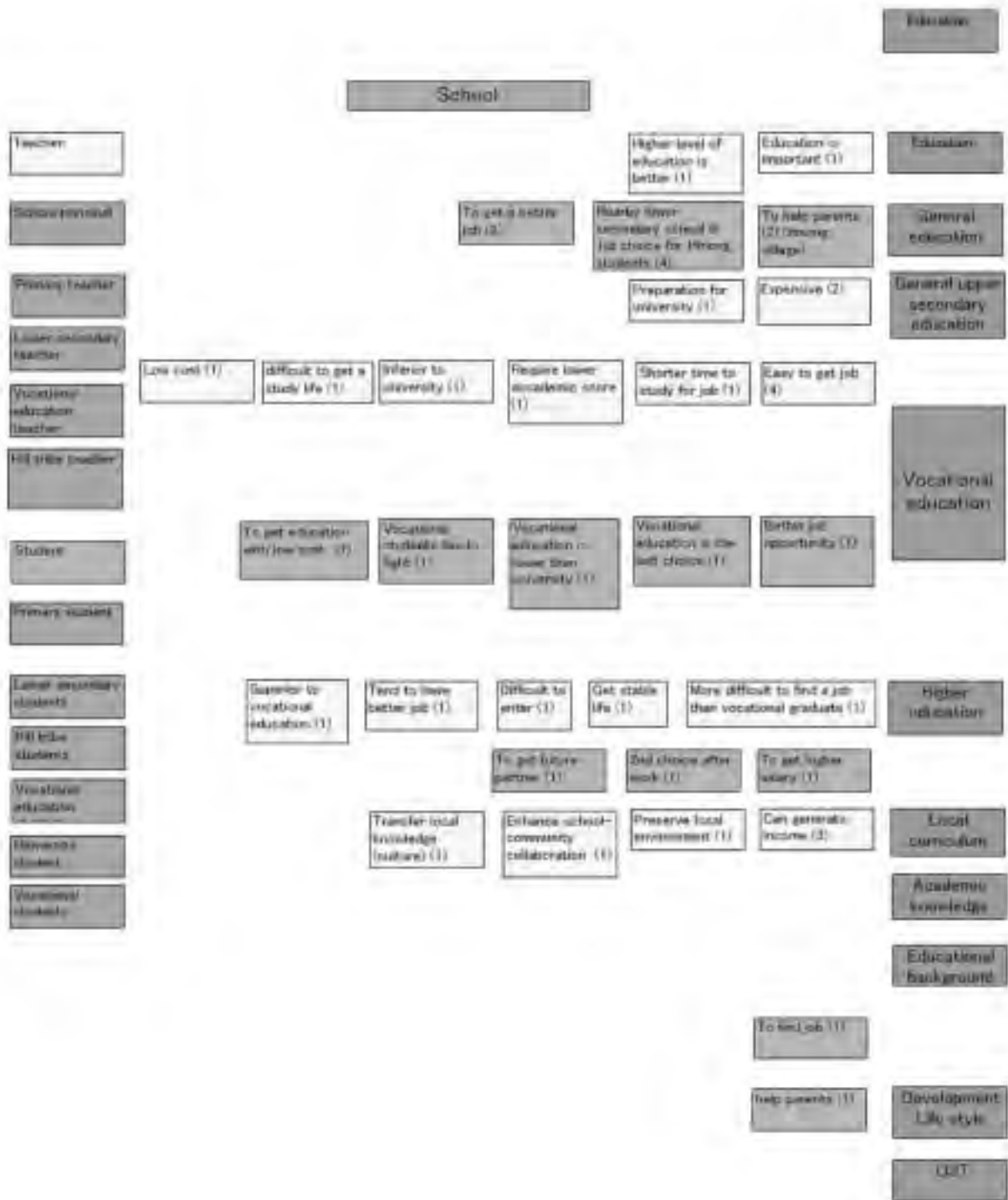
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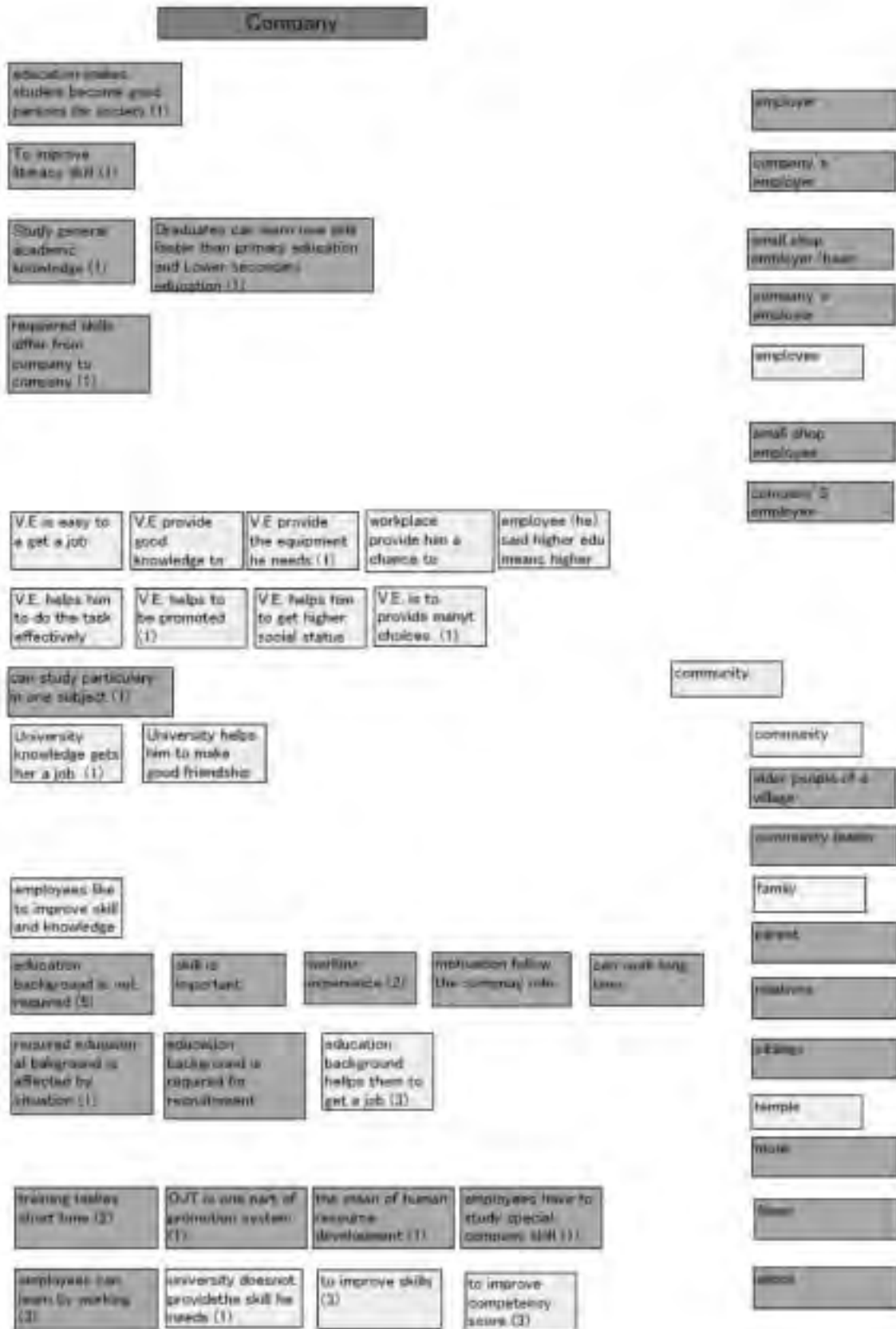
Appendix

Matrix 1: Stakeholder Analysis and Perception analysis (PCM)

Matrix 1: Stakeholder Analysis and Perception analysis (PCM)



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End Notes

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- ¹¹ See (http://pdfserve.informaworld.com/248486_713622214.pdf) and (https://www.who.int/mental_health/media/en/30.pdf). (Dec 10, 2008)
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- ¹⁸ Statistics, Knowledge And Policy 2007, *Measuring And Fostering The Progress Of Societies*, Oecd, Paris, 2008, p. 148
- ¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 136-145
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