บทบาทของอุดมศึกษากับการเปลี่ยนสถานภาพของชาวนาในสังคมไทย

นายศิโรจน์ โสรัจจกุล

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
Chulalongkorn University

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The Role of Higher Education in Relation to Peasants' Social Mobility in Thai Society

Mr. Siroj Sorajjakool

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy Program in Higher Education
Department of Educational Policy Management and Leadership
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ศิโรจน์ โสรัจจกุล : บทบาทของอุดมศึกษากับการเปลี่ยนสถานภาพของชาวนาในสังคมไทย (The Role of Higher Education in Relation to Peasants' Social Mobility in Thai Society) อ.ที่ปรึกษาวิทยานิพนธ์หลัก: ผศ. ดร. อภิภา ปรัชญพฤทธิ์, อ.ที่ปรึกษาวิทยานิพนธ์ร่วม: ศ. ดร. สุภางค์ จันทวานิช, 243 หน้า.

งานวิจัยนี้เป็นการศึกษาผลกระทบของอุดมศึกษาที่มีต่อการเปลี่ยนสถานะของชาวนาในสังคมไทยโดยใช้วิธีการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ (Grounded Theory) เพื่อทำความเข้าใจประสบการณ์ในชีวิตจริงของชาวนาในด้านที่เกี่ยวโยงกับอุดมศึกษา วัตถุประสงค์ของการวิจัยมี 3 ข้อ 1) ศึกษาสภาพปัจจุบันทางสังคมและเศรษฐกิจของชาวนา 2) ศึกษาบทบาทอุดมศึกษาในการสนับสนุนการเลื่อนสถานะทางสังคม 3) วิเคราะห์ประเด็นเกี่ยวกับบทบาทของอุดมศึกษาและการเลื่อนสถานะทางสังคมจากมุมมองทฤษฎีทุนทางวัฒนธรรมของบูร์ดิเยอร์และแนวคิดวงศาวิทยาของฟูโกต์

การดำเนินการวิจัยเริ่มต้นจากการศึกษาบริบทและบทบาทของอุดมศึกษาภายใต้แผนพัฒนาเศรษฐกิจและสังคมแห่งชาติฉบับที่หนึ่งที่มุ่งขยายโอกาสการศึกษาให้คนไทยในชนบท จากนั้นจึงศึกษาข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพโดยการสัมภาษณ์กลุ่มผู้ให้ข้อมูลสำคัญ 4 กลุ่มซึ่งประกอบด้วยชาวนา 76 คนจาก 19 จังหวัดในภาคเหนือและภาคอีสาน ลูกชาวนาที่กำลังศึกษาในระบบอุดมศึกษา 6 คน ลูกชาวนาที่สำเร็จการศึกษา 6 คน และนักวิชาการ/ผู้เชี่ยวชาญ 8 ท่าน

ผลการวิจัยที่เป็นข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพเกี่ยวกับสถานะปัจจุบันของชาวนามี 5 ประเด็นที่สำคัญคือ 1) ชีวิตชาวนาได้เปลี่ยนแปลงไปมากเนื่องจากการพัฒนาตามแนวคิดสมัยใหม่นิยม 2) การเข้าถึงแหล่งทรัพยากรธรรมชาติที่มีจำกัด 3) ค่าใช้จ่ายในการทำนาสูงขึ้น 4) ผลตอบแทนด้านการลงทุนต่ำ และ 5) ค่าใช้จ่ายในชีวิตประจำวันเพิ่มมากขึ้น

ผลการวิจัยที่เป็นข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพเกี่ยวกับบทบาทของอุดมศึกษาที่มีต่อการเปลี่ยนสถานะของชาวนามี 2 ประเด็นที่สำคัญ 1) อุดมศึกษาช่วยทำให้เกิดการเลื่อนสถานะทางสังคมจากการประกอบอาชีพอื่นนอกเหนือจากการเป็นชาวนา 2) การเข้าสู่ระบบอุดมศึกษายากขึ้นเนื่องจากลูกชาวนามีข้อจำกัดหลายด้าน เช่น สถานะทางการเงิน กระบวนการสอบเข้า คุณภาพของการศึกษาท้องถิ่น และระยะทาง แต่มีข้อสังเกตว่าวัฒนธรรมชุมชนยังคงปรากฏในกลุ่มชาวนาโดยเฉพาะในกลุ่มผู้สูงอายุ ถึงแม้อุดมศึกษามีบทบาทในการช่วยชาวนาเลื่อนสถานะทางสังคมแต่ก็ต้องแลกกับการต้องเปลี่ยนอาชีพจากการเป็นชาวนามาเป็นผู้ขายแรงงานในภาคอุตสาหกรรม นอกจากนี้ความรู้จากระบบอุดมศึกษายังใช้ประโยชน์ได้น้อยในวิถีชีวิตของชาวนา จากการศึกษาพบว่ามีลูกชาวนาเพียงคนเดียวที่มีสถานะทางการเงินดีขึ้นซึ่งเป็นผู้ได้รับที่ดินเป็นมรดกมากกว่าผู้อื่น กล่าวคือแม้การศึกษาระดับอุดมศึกษาจะช่วยเปลี่ยนสถานะทางสังคมให้กับลูกชาวนาแต่ก็ขึ้นกับปัจจัยด้านสถานะทางการเงินด้วย นอกจากนี้แม้ว่าอุดมศึกษาจะช่วยสนับสนุนการเลื่อนสถานะทางสังคมแต่ลูกชาวนายังเสียเปรียบคนชั้นกลางและคนที่มีฐานะในเมืองหลายด้าน

ในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูล ผู้วิจัยใช้ทฤษฎีความรุนแรงเชิงสัญลักษณ์ของ ปีแอร์ บูร์ดิเยอร์ (Piere Bourdieu) และวงศาวิทยาของ มิแชล ฟูโกต์ (Michel Foucault) ทฤษฎีของบูร์ดิเยอร์ถูกใช้เป็นกรอบในการวิเคราะห์ข้อจำกัดในการเข้าสู่ระบบการศึกษาของลูกชาวนาและช่วยอธิบายบทบาทของการศึกษาในการผลิตซ้ำของระบบชนชั้น อย่างไรก็ดีเมื่อวิเคราะห์จากมุมมองของฟูโกต์กลับพบว่าสาเหตุที่อุดมศึกษาไม่สามารถตอบสนองความต้องการของชาวนานั้นเป็นเพราะขาดความตระหนักถึงรากเหง้าความรู้หรือวงศาวิทยาเกี่ยวกับความรู้ของชุมชนเกษตรกร ทั้งนี้เพราะแม้กระทั่งความคิดด้านการเปลี่ยนสถานะทางสังคมเองก็เป็นแนวคิดบนรากของสมัยใหม่นิยมที่เน้นวิทยาศาสตร์ ปฏิฐานนิยม เศรษฐกิจโลก ในขณะที่ระบบความคิดของชาวนาสร้างขึ้นจากระบบความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างชาวนาและท้องนาในระบบนิเวศน์ท้องถิ่น หลักการของการใช้ชีวิตแบบพอเพียงของชาวนาซึ่งต่างจากระบบเศรษฐกิจของสมัยใหม่นิยมและโลกาภิวัตน์

วงศาวิทยาของฟูโกต์อธิบายช่องว่างความรู้ในอุดมศึกษากล่าวคือ ความรู้ในอุดมศึกษามีรากเหง้าจากแนวคิดสมัยใหม่นิยมทำให้จุดหมายปลายทางของการศึกษาคือการเลื่อนสถานะทางสังคม ปัญหาของอุดมศึกษาคือการขาดความตระหนักถึงช่องว่างระหว่างวาทกรรมอุดมศึกษากับวาทกรรมชุมชนชาวนา สิ่งที่น่าเป็นห่วงคือการที่วาทกรรมของทุนนิยมได้เข้ามาควบคุมกระบวนการผลิตอาหารและทำลายความชอบธรรมของวาทกรรมชาวนา อย่างไรก็ดี การต่อสู้เชิงวาทกรรมของวัฒนธรรมชุมชนยังคงดำเนินต่อไปในหลายรูปแบบเช่น การพยายามรื้อฟื้นคำสอนด้านเกษตรผสมผสานของพระบาทสมเด็จพระปรมินทรมหาภูมิพลอดุลยเดช รวมไปถึงระบบเศรษฐกิจพอเพียงที่สนับสนุนให้กลับคืนสู่สังคมชาวนาที่ให้คุณค่าต่อความพอเพียงในระบบนิเวศน์ ในขณะเดียวกันก็เรียกร้องให้อุดมศึกษารื้อสร้างสมัยใหม่นิยมเพื่อจะได้มีพื้นที่สำหรับภูมิปัญญาชาวบ้านที่จะสามารถสร้างประโยชน์ต่อการใช้ชีวิตประจำวันของชาวนา

ภาควิชา นโยบาย การจัดการและความเป็นผู้นำทางการศึกษา	ลายมือชื่อนิสิต .....
สาขาวิชา อุดมศึกษา	ลายมือชื่อ อ.ที่ปรึกษาหลัก .....
ปีการศึกษา 2559	ลายมือชื่อ อ.ที่ปรึกษาร่วม .....

5584224027 : MAJOR HIGHER EDUCATION
KEYWORDS: THAI FARMERS AND SOCIAL MOBILITY / HIGHER EDUCATION AND SOCIAL MOBILITY / GENEALOGY OF KNOWLEDGE / THAI FARMERS AND COMMUNITY CULTURE / HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE REPRODUCTION OF SOCIAL CLASS

SIROJ SORAJJAKOOL: The Role of Higher Education in Relation to Peasants' Social Mobility in Thai Society. ADVISOR: ASST. PROF. APIPA PRACHYAPRUIT, Ph.D., CO-ADVISOR: PROF. SUPANG CHANTAVANICH, Ph.D., 243 pp.

This research explores the impact higher education has on Thai farmers' social mobility. This study utilizes qualitative method (Grounded Theory) to explore the lived experiences of local farmers and their experiences with higher education. This research has three primary objectives: 1) to explore the current socio-economic condition of Thai famers 2) to explore ways in which higher education has facilitated social mobility for this population and 3) to analyze the current condition of Thai peasants in relation to higher education through Bourdieu's theory of social capital and Foucault's approach to genealogy.

Research procedure starts with an overview of the role of Thai higher education under the policy guidance of the National Economic and Social Development Plans in creating greater regional accessibility for Thais. It then proceeds to collect qualitative data based on interviews with four groups: 76 local farmers in 19 provinces in the north and the north eastern regions, six children of farmers currently in higher education, six children of farmers who have completed tertiary education and eight academic scholars/notable farmers.

Research findings show that when it comes to farmers' current status the themes show 1) changes through modernization 2) limited access to resources, 3) increased expense on farming, 4) poor returns on investment, and 5) increased living expense.

In answering the question of the impact of higher education on social mobility of farmers, 1) higher education facilitates vertical mobility through employment other than rice farming 2) Thai educational system provides limited access for farmers' children due to finance, admission process, quality of education in rural schools and distance that remains an obstacle. It is interesting to note the place community culture is still operating among Thai farmers especially the older generation and their corresponding discursive practices. The findings show that while higher education helps to facilitate social mobility, it happens through changing careers and finding employment within the industrial sector. For most farmers, higher education has not positively impacted the lives of local farmers and their livelihood. Mobility takes place via employment. Relative economic mobility takes place for only one participant who inherited a large piece of rice field. Second, even though higher education helps to facilitate social mobility, access to higher education is not readily accessible for farmers and their children in comparison to those middle class and higher in the urban areas.

To explain these two factors, the analysis of the qualitative data utilizes two conceptual approaches: Bourdieu's symbolic violence and Foucault's genealogy. Bourdieu's symbolic violence explains the limited access to higher education Thai farmers experience since education plays a significant role in the reproduction of social class. Foucault's genealogy points to the reason higher education has not been able to meaningfully address the needs of local farmers by showing the lack of awareness of the genealogical root of knowledge for the agrarian community. The concept of social mobility itself is rooted in modernity emphasizing science, positivism, global economy and productivity. Agrarian knowledge is based on the relationship between farmers and their land through the lens of nature geographically located. The principle of subsistence is fundamental among farmers, which is contrary to the economics of modernity and globalization. Foucault's genealogy helps explains the gap in education since knowledge as promoted by higher education is rooted in modernity and thus social mobility as its natural outcome. The gap therefore is the lack of awareness of two operating genealogies and two competing discourses. However the discourse of capitalism with its power to control food production has slowly taken away the space and legitimacy of farmers' local wisdom. Still the resistance as rooted in community culture remains in various communities and seeks a return through King Bumibhol Adulyadej's integrated farming and the principle of sufficient economy, the principle that calls for a return to the process of re-peasantization. It is also an invitation for higher education to deconstruct modernity in order to make room for alternative approaches to knowledge that can enhance the life of local farmers and thus facilitate social mobility within the context of agrarian philosophy.

CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

Department:	Educational Policy Management and Leadership	Student's Signature	.....
Field of Study:	Higher Education	Advisor's Signature	.....
Academic Year:	2016	Co-Advisor's Signature	.....

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Importance and Rationale

This research aims at exploring the relationship between higher education and social mobility among peasants in Thailand. It seeks an understanding of the roleshigher education plays in facilitating social mobility for peasants, the obstacles in achieving this goal, and the current situation pertaining to social mobility (economic and social standing within Thai society) among Thai peasants. The goals are to better understand ways in which higher education in Thailand can assist in promoting social mobility among Thai peasants. Two theoretical perspectives will be utilized in the process of social analysis of the current situation.Michel Foucault's genealogy will be used to analyze the complex relationship between higher education and social mobility, taking into consideration the interplay of knowledge, power, and the legitimacy of truth.While Pierre Bourdieu's approach will be used to explore the place of social, cultural, and symbolic capitals in relation to social mobility through higher education.

In **Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture** (1977) Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron brought forth the argument that higher education, while purporting to assist in social mobility, plays a significant role in the process of reproduction of social class through unconscious perpetuation of social and cultural capitals. They see educational systems as the primary institution that controls the distribution of social status and privileges within contemporary society. This is achieved through affirming dominant social classification as a symbolic power. Commenting on Bourdieu's perspective on education, David Swartz writes

> Bourdieu argues that education actually contributes to the maintenance of an unegalitarian social system by allowing inherited cultural differences to shape academic achievement and occupational attainment. One of Bourdieu's first works on French education, *The Inheritors*, documents the persistent overrepresentation of middle and upper-class students in French universities despite years of education expansion (1997: 190).

Speaking on the role of higher education, Robert Haveman and Timothy Smeeding write, "Higher Education is expected to promote the goal of social mobility and to make it possible for anyone with ability and motivation to succeed" (2006: 129). Haveman and Smeeding remind us that social mobility has traditionally been one of the two primary goals of higher education. According to the 2002 Household and Income Expenditure Survey, data based on 1980, 1998 and 2002 census covering 5074 people in 657 households, there was a strong correlation between income and

level of education. In 2002, 10 percent of those without education received employment in contrast to 84 percent of those with associate's degree, and 91percent of those with bachelor's degree. When it comes to income, those without an education earned an annual income of 4,000 dollars, while graduates with master's degree earned 26,000 dollars a year. The income gap between high school graduates and those with a bachelor's degree was approximately 12,000 dollars per year (Graham and Paul, 2002). A study by Funatsu and Kagoya (2003) shows a close connection between educational credentials and status achievement with the number of years of schooling as one of the most determining variables for income generation within Thai society.

While there is a close connection between higher education and entrances into job acquisitions and security, its role in social mobility is far from becoming a reality. In a longitudinal study conducted by the US Department of Education surveying eight graders 12 years later and their level of education, 51 percent of students from the highest socioeconomic quartile received bachelor's degrees in contrast to seven percent from the lowest quartile (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). Between 1980 and 82, 80 percent of high school graduates from the top income quartile attended college, in contrast to 57 percent from the lower quartile (Ellwood and Kane, 2000). In a survey of 146 top-tier colleges and universities, 74 percent of their entering class is from the highest income quartile, while three percent comes from the lowest quartile. For middle-tier colleges and universities it is 46 to seven percent, while the rate for community colleges are equally distributed (Dynarski, 1999). Within community colleges, a place designed for low-income student, "there are high attrition and low transfer rates among minority and working class students" (Apipa Prachyapruit, 2006: 54).A majority of students from community colleges fail to succeed in transferring and completing bachelor's degrees and often find themselves in vocational programs (Apipa Prachyapruit, 2006). There are subtle and not so subtle reasons why higher education fails to promote social mobility. Haveman and Smeeding (2006) point out that while US system of higher education claims to be based on meritocratic filter namely students' ability, motivation, and preparedness, these three factors are closely link to economic level of students. Students from higher income tend to possess these three traits more so than those from disadvantaged families. In explaining this gap, Apipa Prachyapruit points out that these are often in higher education, and there is a hidden curriculum that is biased against minority and working-class cultures. Citing Bourdier's explanation on the role of social and cultural capital in higher education, Apipa Prachayupruit (2006) states:

> Higher education institutions serve to maintain existing social structure by legitimizing the white middle-class cultures, known as the canon and marginalizing other diverse cultures. While higher education is to serve its main function of transmitting the canon to all students and expect them to assimilate into the mainstream academic culture, regardless of their diverse cultural backgrounds, minority and working-class students are deprived of

cultural capital that is valued in higher education or academic cultural capital (p. 55).

There is yet another greater fundamental question pertaining to this phenomenon. What role does public discourse play in social mobility? Foucault (1972) believes that the maintenance of the dominant discourse perpetuating social class is achieved through the process of the claim to legitimacy of knowledge. And this is why higher education plays an important role in our understanding of social mobility. Within this perspective, social mobility is not merely a movement from one social and economic status to another, but a placement and dis-placement taking place through changing discourse. Genealogy provides a conceptual approach that can help us better understand discursive formation, the relation among knowledge, power, and truth. Foucault believes that the exploration of the broken line, the discontinuity, and the marginal can really help us recognize formation and transition of discourse. For this reason, Thai peasants have been chosen as the population for this research. The broken line and the discontinuity within Thai economic history are perhaps best captured in the lives of this population. According to National and Economic and Social Development Board, between 2006 and 2009 individuals in agricultural sector were ranked among the poorest, with an income level below the poverty line, and purchasing power lower than needed for basic necessities. The inequality extended beyond finance to accessibility to food as well (Krom Karn Phatana Choom Chon, 2004).

A survey in 2000 indicated that 20 percent of the wealthiest Thais consume 45 percent of poultry, leaving seven percent for the consumption of the poorest 20 percent (Nachapon Samard, 2004). Approximately 65 per cent of agriculturists are rice farmers and almost half of the agriculutural land is being used for planting rice. Eighty percent of farmers have not gone beyond primary education. Farmers remain the poorest among various types of agriculturists (TheeraWongsamut, 2013). Poupon (2013), a French researcher on agriculture, observes "Thai agriculture continues to generate fortunes in the processed foods industry and commerce, while Thai farmers continue to live in the greatest destitution, having only just emerged from production modes based on self-sufficiency" (xxi). 2008 survey of the economic status of Thai farmers indicates an increase in debt by 67.94 percent, while income decreased by 47.84 percent (Ponchai Thanawant,2014).

While the nation sought to reduce the economic gap within the country through the National Economic and Development Plans, in reality these developments resulted in greater debt among farmers, social problems in the society, and more farmers seeking jobs other than within the agriculture sector (Somkit Promjui, Sombut Panwisit, Suthat Gongsub, and Wilart Pothisarn, 2003: 19). According to Kanoksak Kaewthep, in 1965 34.8% of products were agricultural and 22.7%, industrial. In 1995, 10.3% were agricultural while 39.5% were industrial. Since 1989 to 2009, the number of Thai farmers dropped from 67% to less than 40%. In 2008, the average debt per family was 107, 230 baht. 80% of farmers are in debt and have difficulty

repaying. 60% of farmers have to pay rent land required for farming. There are 546, 942 agricultural families without land and 969,355 families with insufficient land for farming. On average 90% of farmers own one rai of land, while 10% of farmers own 200 rai. Between 2007 to 2008, farm rentals had gone up 2-4 times.The plight of Thai farmers continues to grow even in the current attempt of Yingluck Shinawatra's government to redistribute wealth through the new rice policy, promising to buy rice at 40% higher than the market price. Vikram Nehru, writing for Carnegie Endowment, states "Unfortunately, less than a fifth of the subsidy is estimated to reach poor farmers. The rest helps millers, corrupt bureaucrats, and large farmers who have surplus rice production they can afford to sell" (2012). A similar concern has been expressed by Pichaay Rutanadilok Na Phuket (2012: 48).

Hence the development of the new economy expressing itself through technology, industrialization, machineries, and finance has altered the status of Thai farmers economically and within the social hierarchy. Being at the lower end of the income bracket and thus, social order, places them at the margin in terms of knowledge and experiences. This suggests that their social and cultural capital stand at the border of mainstream cultural norms. This socio-cultural location has significant implications for reflection in terms of higher education. While we recognize the economic gap between lower and middle-class populations within the country, the challenging question is whether the role of a higher education plays in mitigating this inequity within the society.

The Thai government, recognizing the importance of higher education, has designed a loan program in order to assist underprivileged students to gain access to higher education. In 1996, the government introduced Thailand's Student Loan Fund (SLF). For SLF to work, the government acts as a guarantor for student loans provided by the bank. This loan is to be repaid within a certain fixed period with interest. In order to assist students with this loan, the government pays interests on the debt prior to students' graduation. However useful this program has been, there is a risk factor for minority and marginalized students whose income may not be sufficient for loan repayment. Students defaulting on their loans will have difficulties accessing loans in the future. SLF grants student loans up to 100,000 per year if students meet the following criteria: an accumulated income of parents not exceeding 300,000 per year, desirable academic performance, not in full-time employment, and never having received an undergraduate degree prior to application. This policy is in line with the 8th National and Economic Development Plan. While the loan fulfills its basic functions, concerns have been raised regarding the efficiency of the operation, clarity of articulation of policy, and punctuality in releasing funds for students (Chapman, 2012; Somruedee Wongsming, 1997).

Another attempt by the Thai government to increase accessibility was through establishing regional institutions of higher education such as Khon Kaen University, Chiang Mai University, and Songkla University. It was observed during the early

expansion of these regional institutions, while the attempt had been made, 75 percent of those admitted were from central Thailand and up to 80 per cent came from families operating their own private business. Only eight percent of those admitted were identified as students from an agricultural sector (Paitoon Sinlarat, 2005). While the Thai government seeks to close the gap of inequality, reality reminds us that inequity in accessibility remains. Rungsun Thanapornpan, in **Garn Suksa, Tun Niyom lae Loganuwat**(2011) points to the lack of equal opportunity in education in the past that will only worsen as we move toward the future. This is due to the existing system that leans towards the privileged group: the urban population instead of rural population, the industrial sectors instead of agricultural sectors, and the middle to high income instead of the low-income groups. Suwit Masintree(2013: 296-97) further observed that poor students often attended schools with lower academic standards with little social environments that promoted vigorous academic pursuits in comparison to students from middle and higher income categories. They live in a more congested environment filled with drugs and gambling issues. These social environments placed them in a much more disadvantaged position especially in a very competitive academic system. It is from within this understanding of the current educational setting that prompted Funatsu and Kagoya (2003) to write,

> The enormous gaps in access to education between cities and rural areas deprive a large number of poorly educated children of the farm sector of the chances to seek upward social mobility, and limit the intergenerational mobility needed to become a member of the urban middle classes (p. 256).

In 1916, Thailand established its first higher education institution with students numbering at a few hundred. In 2009 there were 214 institutions of higher education with over two million students. There were 2,150,088 students in the undergraduate programs, 225, 260 in the graduate programs and 20,106 students pursuing their doctoral degrees (Amornwit Nakrathat, 2014). In contrast to this rapid growth in higher education, a hundred years later, the educational level of 80 percent of farmers were at primary level (Theera Wongsamuth, 2014). In 2009 the number of farmers decreased from 67 percent to 40 percent while their debts were average at 107, 230 per family. Eighty percent were in debt while 60 percent have to rent land for farming (Kanoksak Kaewtep, 1999).

This phenomenon raises significant questions for institutions of higher education seeking to facilitate social mobility while being consciously aware of the role and responsibility to this end. How can we come to the understanding of this lack of congruency between the designated role and the reality of the socio-economic situation of peasants? What factors contribute to this increasing gap in accessibility to higher education and subsequent limitation for employment opportunity? What contributes to this complexity? What impact knowledge and power play within the

historical development of higher education? What role do social, cultural, and symbolic capitals play in the process of social mobility?

Research Questions

In view of the reflection above on the critical role of higher education in relation to economic development and status of Thai peasants the questions this study raises are:

1. What is the current socio-economic situation of Thai peasants?
2. What has higher education done to address social mobility among Thai peasants?
3. What explanation may be offered to the complex nature of the relation between the role of higher education and social mobility among Thai peasants?

Objectives

1. Describe the current socio-economic status of Thai peasants.
2. Examine the role of Thai higher education in facilitating social mobility for Thai peasants.
3. Analyze emerging themes related to the role of higher education and social mobility among Thai peasants through the lens of Bourdieu's symbolic capital and Foucault's genealogy.

Scope

This research will focus on the role of higher education in Thailand in facilitating social mobility for Thai peasants. It explores current situation of Thai peasants and their social mobility and attempts by higher education in addressing this issue. What has been done and what are the obstacles in reaching this goal? It seeks an understanding of peasants and their perspectives regarding the roles of higher education in facilitating social mobility for their population.

The analysis of the general themes emerging from this research will be based primarily on the theoretical framework of Michel Foucault with significant theoretical support from the work of Pierre Bourdieu, particularly his writings on education as it relates to social mobility. The main focus in the application of Foucault's genealogy will depend primarily on his writings in **Discipline and Punish** (1995) analyzes the relationship between power and knowledge. The focus is on seeking an understanding of why we are where we are from based on historical perspectives by tracing events and the changing discourse leading to the current situation. In the analysis of the relationship between power and knowledge, Foucault points us to three areas: 1) who are the observers and who are the observed 2) what has been established

as norms and 3) what examinations are utilized to verify that an individual has reached a certain norm? While the analysis between knowledge and power can provide an important insight into the roles of higher education in facilitating social mobility, there is another concept that can help to enhance and compliment genealogy. Piere Bourdieu's provides a bridge that can connect genealogy with social mobility, since his concept of *habitus* and field address the place of power and domination in relation to social mobility. This research will focus on Bourdieu's application of social, cultural, and symbolic capital in relation to social mobility and the role of higher education. An additional concept that can enhance this research is Jean Braudrillard's approach to symbols and signs, in his analysis of *simulacra* where representation has no reality or where its origin has no existence (Gane, 1991). This study will only focus on Braudrillard's consumption of signs and how it relates to social mobility.

Regarding generalizability, due to the qualitative nature of this study that seeks to understand these phenomenas from specified populations and methodology, generalization will be limited in scope.

Terminology

Deconstruction	Deconstruction is a philosophical theory that seeks to uncover deep-seated contradiction in any text and explores its deeper meaning. It is a response to structuralism that claims the ability to uncover the true meaning of truth as presented in the text. In deconstruction there are multiple meanings to the text and not one underlying, unifying truth to the meaning of this text.
Discourse	According to Foucault, discourse is our daily conversation rooted in a "systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, courses of action, beliefs and practices that systematically construct the subjects and the worlds of which they speak." Its creation is strongly correlated to the need to legitimatize power. There is a close relation between power and knowledge and knowledge is an important source to affirm the validity of a discourse that is designed to serve some form of domination.
Discursive Practice	Practices in alignment with codes, norms, and standards within the context of the dominant discourse of that historical time frame.

Factors for Changes	In genealogy, changes are results of interaction between knowledge and power in seeking truth claim. Factors used in this research refer to the dynamic of knowledge and power leading to its domination in the emerging discourse.
Peasants	Peasants in this study refers to local Thais living in rural areas whose primary livelihood is invested in rice farming. They either have limited possession of land for cultivation or are renting land for farming.
Genealogy	Genealogy may be defined as a methodology use to uncover power domination by various factors through the creation of public discourse. It searches for fragmentation and discontinuity in historical developments and studies voices of the marginal in order to gain insights into the interplay of power and cultural movement. It looks for periods within history and the discourse that guides the movement. It traces changes within history and how these changes are closely related to power and domination.
Globalization	According to popular discourse, globalization is often referred to the pursuit of free market, economic liberalization, western domination in economic, political, and cultural life. It also covers global communication and the spread of technology. There is also the idea that humanity stands for one common society through which conflicts are dissolved.
Impact of Changes	Ways in which changes in discourse in relation to higher education (as a source of legitimacy of knowledge) can affect a person's social mobility.
Neo-Colonialism	Neo-Colonialism is geo-political process which developed countries seek domination over developing countries for their benefits through various means such technology, finance, economic policies and politics. It may be construed also as cultural imperialism.
Social Construction	Social construction is a process by which a society creates a Reality suggestive of its universality and expects compliance among those sharing similar social relation. However this social norm is created with a certain agenda to fulfill a particular purpose and it is not universal. Therefore its validity is relative to social context and not what it claims to be.

Social Mobility	A movement of individuals or groups in relation to social position and often measured by the level of education or changes in family income. Vertical mobility refers to movement from one social status to another, often through career, income, or marriage. In vertical mobility there is a definite upward movement within the order of hierarchy f social standing. Horizontal mobility refers to changes in positions (as in career choice) without any changes in social status. An example of horizontal mobility might be a rural farmer moving to urban setting in order to engage in construction work. There is a shift in position but not in social status. Mobility is often facilitated by cultural capital (education), economic capital, social capital (social support), human capital (labor and the level of competency), and symbolic capital (status, class or title).
Sustainability	Sustainability refers to ways of living that is capable of sustaining itself. It is suggestive of the concept indicating that relying too much on external sources generates more dependency and thus less sustainability. However the ability to sustain oneself with reduction in the level of external dependency generates more sustainability. The more one can rely on oneself, the less vulnerable one becomes toward any form of changes be in economic or social.

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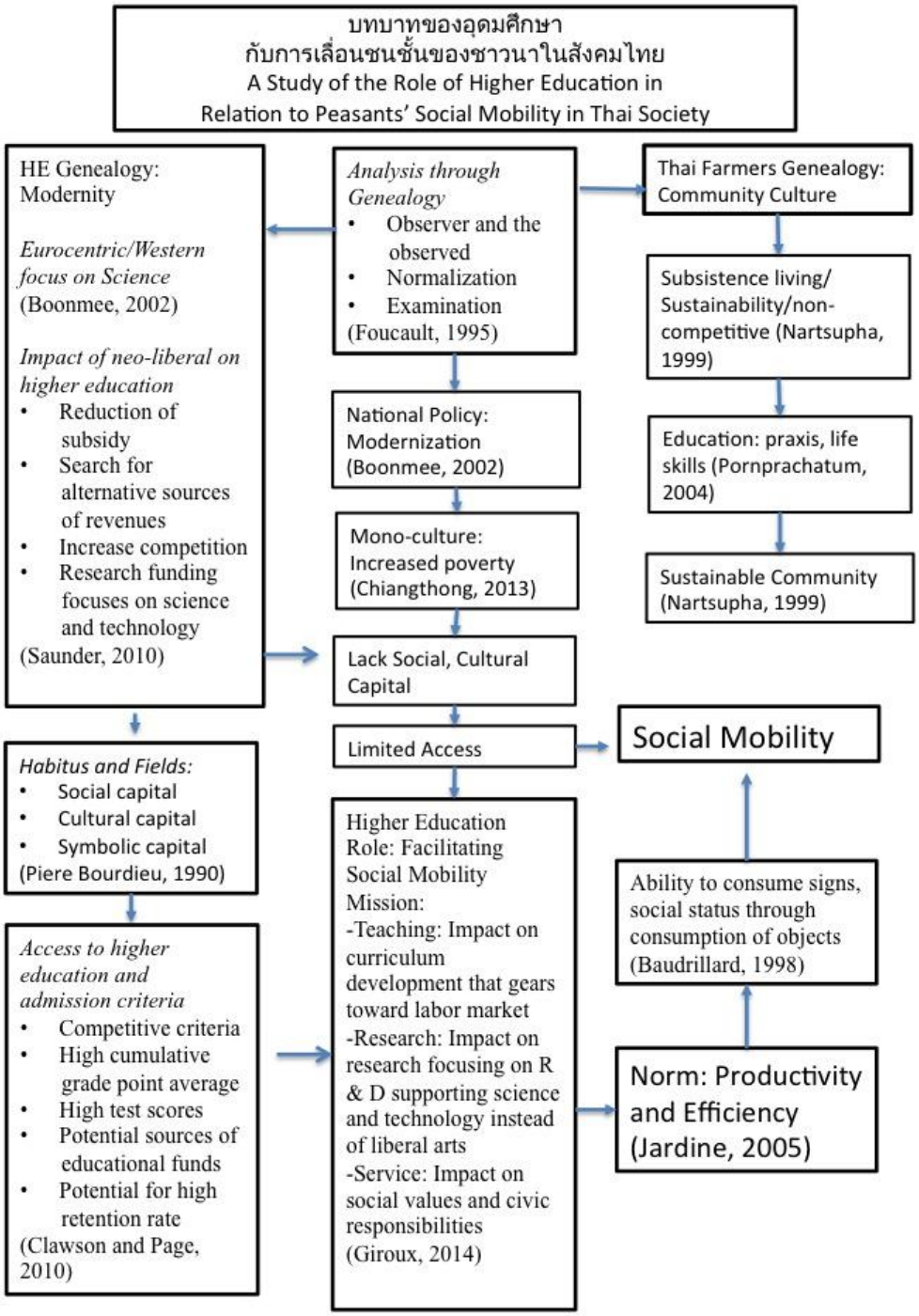
Conceptual Framework



Explanation on Conceptual Framework

Neo-liberal as a political ideology can be dated back to an Austrian economist Friedrick Hayek and popularized in the US by a group of economists at the University of Chicago led by Milton Friedman. He was one of the leading proponents who promoted the practice of free market through deregulation, reduction in subsidy, privatization, and competition. This ideology is one of the main driving forces of the current economic system within the context of globalization (Friedman, 2002).The subtle expansion of neoliberal ideology has been constructed to maximize income for those who have, and is widening the gap between the haves and the have-not (Srichai Pornprachataam, 2005). Since the beginning of the 1st National Economic and Development Plan, which was initiated by Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat, it was driven by World Bank's report entitled "A Public Development Program for Thailand; Report of a Mission Organized by the International Bank for Construction and Development at the request of the Government of Thailand," Thailand's path redirected agriculture toward the development of industries and technologies with the support from the United States government. It was during this period that capitalism began to take root within Thai economy through the promotion of privatization (Amornwit Nakorntut, 2014). Similar to most countries that practiced capitalism, Thai economy witnessed an increasing level of competition that increased in competitiveness permeating every aspect of the social fabric including higher education (Witayakorn Chiengkul, 2010). This perspective is significant in that higher education was assigned a task to prepare Thai population for this emerging industrial society (Amornwit Nakorntut, 2014).

This emerging capitalist economy has created new norms and standards that align themselves with industrial societies around the globe. New expectations and standards require increased academic training in order to feed the labor market which grows significantly more competitive. The same challenge is applied to higher educational institutions as well. Neo-liberal as an ideology has impacted higher education in a number of ways such as, the reduction in subsidy, the need to find alternative sources of income, increase in competition among higher educational institutions, and research funding that focuses on science and technology (Saunder, 2010). George (1999) traced ways neo-liberal ideology, through Chicago School of Economics, has been transformed into dominant discourse through the promotion of international network foundations, establishment of institutes and research centers, publications, and scholarships within the field. This discourse plays an important role in changing perspectives and the methods of management in higher educational institutions who are in compliant with changing market. One of the most obvious is the admission criteria within the context of competition. Clawson and Page (2010) point to the increased demands on higher educational institutions to compete in order to survive. Competition implies stricter criteria for admission resulting in lesser opportunities for lower-middle to lower class. Pierre Bourdieu (1990) introduced the

concept of *habitus* representing one natural social location, the place where one is born into. One's *habitus* contains one's social, cultural, and symbolic capitals. One's capital determines one's ability to succeed within the Field, in this case, higher education. According to Sane Chamrik (2012), Thai educational system has embraced Western approaches to knowledge and by so doing, Western ideology has become a major factor informing the discourse on the role of higher education. This shift in discourse has a direct impact on local farmers who lacks the type of social and cultural capital within the 'field' of higher education. According Bourdieu (1990), the lack of capital limits the 'marginal' from accessing and achieving academic success, thus gaining status within the social order. Numerous studies have shown the negative correlation between higher education and social mobility (Haveman and Smeeding, 2006; Graham and Paul, 2002; Funatsu and Kagoya, 2003; Ellwood and Kane, 2000). According to Paitoon Silarat (2014), access to higher education is determined by an extent, not strictly by one's academic merits, but by one's possession of social, cultural, and symbolic capital. Without such capital, accessibility to a competitive higher education becomes much more difficult. In this case regarding Thai peasants, access to higher education that claims meritocracy, is not as merit-based as it claims.

Besides accessibility to higher education, neo-liberal ideology has also played an important role shaping other roles of higher education such as curriculum design, research and services. In **Neoliberalism's War on Higher Education** (2014) Giroux points out a number of areas where higher education had been greatly affected. Subsidy and funding for educational purposes have also been reduced. Knowledge is valued in terms of instrumentalism by endorsing curriculum promoting marketable skills ,while the good life is determined solely "through accumulation and disposal of the latest consumer goods" (p. 69). Civil responsibility has been reduced and realigned with market values. Speaking of the effect of this economy on higher education Giroux writes, "All evidence suggests a new reality is unfolding, one characterized by a deeply rooted crisis of education, agency, and social responsibility" (p. 16).

In the words of Secretary General of The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Donald Johnson states, "It may strikes us as odd that the idea of gain is a relatively modern one. The profit motive, we are constantly being told, is as old as man himself. But it is not" (cited by Spring, 2013: 127). Technologies and industries do not just create products. They create signs embedded with values defined by productivity and the world of binary opposites filled with social categories. Thus a new norm has been created in which values find legitimacy in the ability to align with productivity and efficiency; and where productivity has no meaning apart from the public ability to consume. Education as a source of knowledge has played a significant role in connecting ideology of success with productivity. Knowledge, from Foucaudian perspective, has the power to control and when this knowledge is aligned with the new economic system, education is then

tasked to produce for the labor market perpetuating the cycle of production and consumption (Jardine, 2005).

Consumption is not purely for products. Consumption is about social hierarchy and status. It promotes social mobility. People buy places within the social order (Baudrillard, 2006). Those who earned their degrees and found employment are now able to consume signs and thereby find themselves within the process of social mobility. The ability to consume signs is the ability to consume social order within the social hierarchy resulting in an increased social mobility. On the other hand, the lack of access to reputable higher educational institutions or the lack of access to higher education in general for Thai peasants (Paitoon Silarat, 2014) implies the lack of one's ability to consume social order and as such this inability also implies stagnant or decline in social mobility (Thanawant Ponchai, 2014).

Those in possession of social, cultural, and symbolic capital therefore, have better chances when it comes to accessing higher educational institutions in contrast to those lacking in opportunities. Accessibility to reputable higher educational institutions implies the ability, according to Jean Baudrillard (1998), to consume signs and symbols. This is achieved through meaning imputed to signs in order to create preferred process of identity formation resulting in its normalization. And higher education, as Bloland (2005) has pointed out, has been tasked to serve this economic system in the name of national development or as Readings (1991) reflected, the role of higher education has been replaced by major corporations that redefine culture in the context of competition as the ultimate value to be pursued and the source of social mobility (Spring, 1998).

Reflecting on the previous perspective on structure and power in relation to the status of Thai farmers is the recognition that status is a place one stands within one's society which does not happen in a vacuum. Operating from linear thinking suggests that hierarchical movement in the order of status can take place when one learns to work within the rules, which may be spoken or symbolic. However, hierarchy emerges from binary thinking and the order of things is often defined by a force that drives its formation (Thongchai Winitchakoon, 1991). Power that breaks the linear historical progression makes societal status relative to its historical location both in terms of time and context. Hence, status changes from time to time, depending on the dictate of each historical period driven by the desire to know, the desire for power (Srichai Pornprachataam, 2005). Power places itself in the center and others are defined through the proximity of its otherness to the center itself. Norms are created, circles are drawn, and others are constantly pushed toward the margin. To be in or out of norms is often determined by the force that drives discursive formation. Instead of a linear progression that we are often taught to believe, power becomes the arbitrary source that decides identity and status of those within society. This arbitrariness of hierarchy and norms is a reminder that often social reality is constructed. The problem however, becomes more complicated since the line is linked with an economic system

and hence poverty is no longer an ideological struggle but an everyday reality for peasants. The perpetuation of this system will ultimately push the marginalized to the place that is no longer sustainable. It is within this context that the question pertaining to the role of higher education becomes critical since power is connected to knowledge and education which has been designated by the society as the gate-keeper of knowledge. To what extent has higher education collaborated to perpetuate this discourse and to what extent has higher education brought about the awareness of this constructed discourse while pursuing its deconstruction?

One of the main theoretical perspectives that will be used to analyze the role of higher education in facilitating social mobility for peasants and the reality of the lived experiences of Thai peasants is genealogy as expounded by Michel Foucault (1988a). Genealogy explores the relationship between truth, knowledge, and power, with the understanding that history is non-linear, but an emergence of dominant discourse through struggle via knowledge over who has the claim to truth and thus, the right to define norms and stipulate standards. The analysis, therefore, focuses on the interaction of knowledge, truth, and power within the historical development leading to the formation of dominant discourse. For this research, the focus will be on changes in discourse within the field of higher education in Thailand and how these changes in discourse impacted Thai farmers in regards to their social mobility within Thai society. By an analysis of archives, records, historical texts, and interviews with farmers. The process in engaging the data will involve uncovering various factors impacting higher education that resulted in discourse transition in Thai society.

Foucault's genealogy recognizes the place of power within social structure and how this structure generates disparity within the society. For Foucault, history is not linear but fragmented with broken lines consisting of conflicts, and tensions that led to competing ideologies which finally end, within a certain historical period, a period with one dominant discourse defining norms and standards. Hence what each historical period has come to embrace as the way of living or that which is normative is indeed a result of the interaction between power and knowledge or truth as universally claimed. It is just one ideology among others. Positivist's claim of objective empirical knowledge is, in Foucault's understanding, a discourse in relation to power within the context of history, politics, culture, and society (Apipa Prachyapruit, 2011). Science, to Foucault, is just another dominant discourse but a discourse nevertheless (Hamilton, 2002). Power does not belong to any one but its significance lies in the use of power through the normalization process. Once a discourse has established norms, people in power are able to use these norms for control and stratification. This use of power is subtle in how ideology becomes normative and how people are then forced to abide by this norm. Using the example of geography Thongchai Winitchakoon (1991) shows how our current understanding of geography emerged from the power of knowledge based on a scientific worldview and military domination. This new power marginalized the old understanding of

geography and recreated a new understanding and new identity of a nation defined by new boundaries. Over time, this new understanding has been fully embraced as norm. Power is in relation to knowledge. Hence knowledge that has been embraced within a certain historical time is knowledge or discourse that has won its place and domination over other ideologies (Apipa Prachyapruit, 2011).

It is from the above perspectives that this study seeks to appraise the history of Thai higher education in relation to peasants' social mobility. The question that a Faucauldian perspective may raise in relation to this issue is, what might be the different discourses within the historical time frame which impacted how Thai society arrived at self-understanding? How has higher education facilitated this transition or what roles did higher education play in this changing discourse? And how did these changes impact the lives of Thai peasants and their social mobility?

Significance of the Study

First, there exists a gap in research literatures on the relationship between higher education and peasants in Thailand. There are many studies conducted on farmers and economic development, farmers and social status, farmers and the impact of development (Bruse, 1979; Thanwa Jaitieng, 2013; Withaya Cheerapan, 2010; Chamaree Chiangthong, 2009; Pok Kaewkant, 1987; Kajonwan Itharattana, 1999; Kittipong Kasempong, 1993; Chattip Nartsupha, 1998). In relation to higher education, there are numerous studies pertaining to social mobility and economy in Thailand (Prakhop Khuprat, 2012; Srichai Pornprachataam, 2005; Pra Phaisan Wisalo, 2012; Paitoon Silarat, 2013; Chapman, 2012). However, when it comes to higher education in relation to peasants, there seems to be a gap in research literatures. This study can help fill the gap and provide an important place for further research on this topic.

Second, literatures along with policy makers recognize higher education as an essential path toward social mobility, especially within the context of today's economic system that depends largely on well-educated labor force. US based research indicated missed opportunities for higher education to serve as the mean for social mobility. Even when the general public and policy makers are of the opinion that such function has been served. When considering social mobility, peasants are perhaps the target population. More information is needed in order to design policies to address this gap. This study can provide needed information to facilitate well-informed policies that can redirect the roles of higher education in assisting the peasant population towards social mobility.

Third, data from this study itself can be a rich source of information that forms the basis that higher education can facilitate the knowledge enhancements for better livelihood, economic growth, and social standing among Thai peasants.

Fourth, this study seeks to analyze discourse impacting higher education and social mobility. The analysis of discourse can generate a critical self-reflection on the

function of higher education in relation to dominant cultural norms and create space for inclusiveness that takes other existing discourses as alternative perspective more seriously. Hence the perspective acquired can provide added dimensions on the roles of higher education in Thailand in relation to national development.

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CHAPTER 2

Review of Related Literature

Introduction

This chapter will review related literature that can offer a platform from which this research can pursue the understanding of the roles of higher education and social mobility among Thai peasants through critical reflection through the lens of Foucault's genealogy and Bourdieu's *habitus*. The aim of this review is to gain a broad understanding of the role of higher education in facilitating social mobility among the marginalized population in relation to changing discourse and impact of economic changes on the disadvantaged. The review will address the following topics: higher education and economy, higher education and emerging discourse, higher education and social mobility and conclude with reviews of the impact of changing economy on agriculture sector, their livelihood and social status within Thai society. The review will conclude with reviews of critical social theories such as Michel Foucault's genealogy, Jonah Galtung's structural violence, Jean Baudrillard's consumer of signs, and Pierre Bourdieu's reproduction of social class through education.

Higher Education and Economy

According to Clawson and Page, many academic scholars regarded the period after the Second World War to the 1970s as the golden era of higher education with government investing in structure for universities. However the decline in US higher education started with Regan's neo-liberal policy (Clawson & Page, 2010; Aronowitz, 2000; Baez, 2007; Giroux, 2005; Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004) of deregulation in the 80sand his famous quote, "Government is not the solution to our problem. Government is the problem." The aim of neo-liberalsist is to promote free-market through deregulation and tax cuts believing in the principle of economic competition for maximum growth and development. The primary argument neo-liberal advocates is the liberation of individuals from the oppressive control of the state through this policy thus allowing them to achieve their full-potential. This logic is rest on the belief that a free-market mechanism will regulate itself. Everyone has equal opportunities toward the acquisition of wealth in a free and competitive market. Due to this equal basis, the accumulation of wealth is justified on the basis of fair competition. The poor are those who did not work hard enough. Neo-liberals also believe that wealth will ultimately trickledown because what is good for the wealthy, is good for the poor (Saunders, 2010). Even though this policy of deregulation led to dramatic economic crisis in the late 2000, the force of neo-liberal voice remains strong. This movement towards a free market has also impacted higher education

when government started withdrawing funding (tax-cut) and encouraged higher education to function more within the framework of a business model with executives running academic institutions. The administrative salaries have ballooned and members of the board of trustees were chosen not because of their academic skills, but their corporate ties. Derek Bok, president of Harvard from 1971-91, warned that "lavished salaries for campus CEO's will only tend to make the problem worse" (cited by Salingo, 2013). Amidst his warning against academic materialism running loose, in 2003-2004, E. Gordon Gee of Vanderbilt University received USD 1,326,786 annual salary, John R. Silber of Boston University received USD 1,253,352, while John Sexton of New York University earned USD 897,139 and the list runs on even in public universities ranging from USD 500,000 to USD 700,000 (Greenberg, 2007). As a result of higher education moving into the business model, colleges and universities became less accessible for the underprivileged, since the requirement for making itself marketable, a good reputation is essential. And good reputation is possible with good quality students. Many institutions raised their SAT scores for admission. Admission selectivity and income level are closely connected to student retention and the possibility of graduation. Numerous studies have shown a correlation between income level and high SAT scores, and the reality of the market forces of these institutions to keep the scores high. Thus more under privilege students are less able to get into higher education resulting in a higher education that continues to serve the high-income population, thus widening the gap within the society. Another negative impact has to do with the decrease in the number of tenured faculty and an increment in contracts teaching because it makes more business sense than to hire tenured professors (Clawson and Page, 2010).

Jeffrey Selingo, former editor of **Chronicle of Higher Education**, in **College Unbound** (2013), observes other consequences of the neo-liberal economic policy such as the way universities are spending millions in order to develop branding for the institutions in order to become more competitive. While the labor market expects more skills, universities come up with new certificates in order to feed the market and gain revenues. What comes next is the decline in the standards of education. When academic institutions utilize a business model, they embrace market mentality. In 2003, two colleges charged more than 40,000 for tuition fees, room, and board. By 2009, 224 institutions had gone over this ceiling, while 58 went over 50,000 dollars per year. Increases in tuition come with a price because the model transforms students into consumers. And as consumers, the principle states 'consumers are always right.' With high tuition, students feel that they have the rights to demand base on what they are investing (Chaffee, 1998; Wellen, 2005). It is especially concerning in view of the increasing adjunct professors, who need their jobs and thus are more inclined to give good grades in return for good course evaluations. And the cycle continues to the detriment of the quality of education (Salingo, 2013).

In his analysis of the impact of neoliberal policies on higher education, Saunders (2010) writes:

> As neoliberal policies, practices, and ideas developed in the United States, a parallel process of neoliberal development occurred in U.S. public higher education. Throughout the past four decades, the economics, structure, and purpose of higher education, as well as the priorities and identities of faculty and students, have been altered to better align with neoliberal practices and ideology. .These changes have substantially altered the conditions in which these roles can be actualized, creating a system of higher education that is better understood as an accentuation of the previous model of higher education, which has always served the interests of capital and the ruling class (p. 42).

The cut back on subsidy for higher education has led to an increased focus on revenues for colleges and universities, reprioritizing the search for funding sources for their survival. This leads to increased emphasis on applied and commercializing research. As a part of the educational experience, students are increasing motivated extrinsically and intrinsic values are slowly diminishing. The focus on economic growth and wealth has altered students' motivation in their pursuit of higher education. The Corporative Institutional Research Program survey between 1966 to 1996, shows that in 1966, the search for a meaningful philosophy in life as the motivating factor for entering higher education was ranked at 80 percent essential or very important, while being financially well off was at 45 percent. In 1996, it was the reverse with 74 percent seeking financial benefits, while 42 percent was assigned to seeking meaningful life philosophy. Further indication is shown where 72 percent agree with the statement "The chief benefit of a college education is to increase one's earning power" (Saunder, 2010: 64-65).

Another important aspect of the effect of changing economy on higher education is in the area of research. Greenberg (2003) observes that most funding is concentrated on research and development (R & D) because of its potential for revenues through emerging products and patents. Commercial funding has become the lifeblood of biomedical research observed by Sheldon Krimsky. "The massive infusion of private R & D is changing the character of some institutions" (cited by Greenberg, 2003: 43). Washburn (2005) writes, "What's truly new--and dangerous—is the degree to which market forces have penetrated into the heart of academia itself, causing American universities to look and behave more and more like for-profit commercial enterprises" (p. 139).

Neo-liberal economic policies have many direct impacts on the roles of higher education. It changes the administrative method moving towards the CEO model within academic institutions, focusing on funding and revenues. Admission criteria

have been increased in order to maintain competitiveness through good reputation. The process decreases opportunities for lower-income students seeking accessibility to higher education. Reducing the number of tenured faculty members and hiring more contract teachers for economic reason. It raises high tuition fees and treats students more like consumers, changing the focus on research by concentrating on R & D with potential revenues. These are among some of the impact economic changes have on higher education.

Higher Education and Social Mobility

Haveman and Smeeding (2009) state, "Higher Education is expected to promote the goal of social mobility and to make it possible for anyone with ability and motivation to succeed" (p. 129). They remind us that higher education has traditionally been assigned the task of assisting in social mobility. They also point out that the existing 'meritocratic filters' that claims to optimize students' potential does not work for the disadvantaged population (Haveman and Smeeding, 2009). What is the role of higher education in facilitating social mobility?

Wolff (2006) observes a sharp rise in wages gained and families during the post-war era up to the 70s. However, since then the growth has been stagnant. This is a significant implication for higher education, since the growth in educational attainment has risen rapidly. The trends for adults completing high schools and colleges shift from 33 percent in 1947, to 85 percent in 2003. For higher education, the number of college graduates soared from 7.2 percent in 1947, to 15.3 in 2003. However when making a comparison with wages, the picture shows consistent stagnation in income increment. Wages rose by 75 percent between 1947 and 1973, and declined by 5 percent in the next 30 years, while educational attainment continued to rise at an accelerated rate. Human capital theory suggests that increment in educational levels corresponds with rising wages. "According to all of the measures of employee compensation, the growth in average wages reached a near standstill in 1973. The Bureau of Labor Statistics series on real hourly wages show a 75 percent increase between 1947 and 1973, and an 8 percent decline from 1973 to 2000" (2006: 228). These numbers indicate the contradiction between high educational achievement and workers' compensation which, when adjusted for inflation, has been stagnant since 1973. According to Wolff (2006), the breakdown of income levels among various groups may be summarized as follows: 53 percent increase among the top quintile, 25 percent increase among the forth quintile, 16 percent in the middle quintile, five percent in the second quintile, and negative 5 in the bottom quintile. In explaining this stagnation, he writes:

> The main reason for the stagnation of labor earnings derives from a clear shift in national income away from labor and toward capital, particularly since the early 1980s. During this period, both overall and corporate profitability have risen substantially, almost back to postwar highs. The stock

> market has, in part, been fueled by rising profitability. While the capitalist class has gained from rising profits, workers have not experienced much progress in terms of wages (2006: 17).

Clawson and Page (2012) argue that there is a strong correlation between SAT scores and students income level. And these two factors play very important role in admission and retention of college students. At Harvard97 percent of students will graduate in four years, while at University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 87 percent return the second year and 47 percent graduate within four years. At local colleges such as Pikeville, 51 percent will not return the second year and only 30 percent will complete their program. Much of the retention level has to do with family income. About half the student population comes from family income, four-times higher than the national average. They attend the best high schools and receive the best preparation. While at Holyoke Community College, most students work full-time, raise children, and do not come from reputable high schools. Their education may, at most, provide a modest increment in their career choice.

When it comes to financial aid, in 2003 big research universities spent 171 million on low-income students and 257 millions for those families whose annual income averaged at 100,000. Driven by the new economic system, financial aid has shifted from a need-base to merit-based (with SAT scores as an indicator). Financial assistance for a family income of an annual 20,000 to 40,000, receive an average increment of 21 percent, while families with incomes of 100,000 receive an average increment of 159 percent. Speaking of SAT scores and admission criteria, students at the bottom 25 percent in socio-economic level scoring at the top quartile, have a 78 percent chance of being in college two years later. Students at the top 25 percent in socio-economic level, but scoring at the bottom quartile, have a 77 percent chance of remaining in colleges two years later. The breakdown of income level among various groups may be summarized as follows: 53 percent increase among the top quintile, 25 percent increase among the forth quintile, 16 percent in the middle quintile, 5 percent in the second quintile, and negative 5 in the bottom quintile (Salingo, 2013).

In their study of social mobility in the US, Haveman and Smeeding (2006) point out, while 80 percent of eight graders wish to pursue college education, in reality only 44 percent of the lowest quintile succeeded, in contrast to 80 percent of the upper quintile. The claim of higher education providing opportunities for social mobility is not what it really is in actuality. Haveman and Smeeding state:

> Contrary to its stated goals and repeated claims, the U.S. higher education system fails to equalize opportunities among students from high- and low-income families. Rather, the current process of admission to, enrollment in, and graduation from colleges and universities contributes to economic inequality as measured by income and wealth. The system thus seems to intensify and reinforce differences in economic status. Though college attendance rates are rising, college graduation rates for U.S. students

> are growing slowly, if at all, and changes in the composition of the college-eligible and college- graduating populations appear to perpetuate existing class differences (p. 128).

Haveman and Wilson (2005), using the Michigan Panel Survey of Income Dynamics, selected 1,210 samples who were born between 1966 and 1970, and followed them till 1990. The indicators were high school graduation, college attendance, college graduation, years of schooling, permanent income, and the wealth of the family. The study shows that while 22 percent of those from bottom quintile attended college, 71 percent from the top quintile entered colleges or universities. The gap between the two groups is almost 50 percent. This gap is not due primarily to the lack of qualification among the bottom quintile of the population. Of the 4,300 students from bottom two income quintiles scoring 1,420 and above on Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT), only 2,750 were admitted to higher education. Haveman and Smeeding (2006) conclude, "The U.S. system of higher education rein- forces generational patterns of income inequality and is far less oriented toward social mobility than it should be" (p. 143).

A historical research by Joel Kingsley on **Meritocracy: Broken Britain's System of Social Mobility: A Bourdieusian Approach to the Persistent Educational Class-Inequalities within Contemporary Britain** (2012) offers insight into the problem of social mobility in relation to higher education in England. The British 1944 Education Act promotes admission to school systems based on IQ as indicated by 11-parts examination. Based on their IQ, students were assigned to various schools. The 1988 Reform Act altered the policy, thus giving choices and funding for students to choose the school they wished to attend. However, even through such changes, mobility remains stagnant. Numerous studies (Goldthorpe, 1987) indicate that while there is a clear indication of absolute social mobility, changes in relative mobility remains the same. Absolute intra-generational mobility refers to changes in income compared to the income one started with. Suppose a person begins her working career with an income of USD 25,000. If a decade later her income is USD 30,000 (adjusting for inflation), she has experienced upward absolute intra-generational income mobility. Relative intra-generational mobility refers to the degree to which individuals move up or down compared to others in their cohort. Suppose a person's income increases from USD 25,000 at the start of his working and earns USD 30,000 but the community general income level is at USD 40,000. This person has increased in absolute social mobility but not relative social mobility.

Study of social mobility from 1972 to 2005 shows no increase in relative social mobility. This indicates that over the past half century of various reformed policies, one's life chances remain unchanged and any attempt to change the playing field has not yielded positive results. Hence the ideology of a fair society remains Britain's rhetoric that cannot be substantiated by the reality of the current social structure. This historical research provided three observations.

First, there is a subtle social capital implication in the promotion of inequality within the world of education. There is a long-standing tradition that elitist positions are dominated by graduates from Oxford and Cambridge, reflected in the reality that all of Britain's Prime Ministers are graduates of these two institutions. A study by Jackson (2009) shows that those who study at elitist universities have three times more access to elitist positions in labor market such as law, judicial, business, finance, medicine, consultancy, policymaking, journalism, and government.

Access to resources among the middle class offers these social group privileges in social standing. Middle class ties with the elite leads to mobilization of cultural capital that results in the preservation of the social class. This is seen through symbolic performances of both gesture and language. The ability to use certain gesture and language as social code will sets them apart as a class, while those with disadvantages are not be able to decode or enter into the circle without the effort to acquire such cultural capital. Hence the promotion of choice in educational attainment as promoted by meritocracy ideology has subtle meaning that actually is bias toward the middle-class and the elite. Lack of cultural capital plays a significant role in the making choices, especially in the perspective of the drive towards a market-based approach in education. Capital is everything and while the design of the policy sounds ideal, in reality, it does not provide what it claims to give, but promotes elitism within the world of academia.

Second, while the government argues through meritocracy that the use of language will provide equal opportunity for higher education, such merit is closely connected to social class. The promotion of the use of linguistic ability by the government is through encouraging parents to spend their free-time helping children acquire better language skills. First, the possession of language in itself is privileged toward a certain class, which implies a certain level of wealth and cultural exposure. Second, time is not a luxury for the working class. Studies show a strong connection between language skills and economic status. Further, there are studies indicating a gap in cognitive ability depending on social groups due to the following factors: nutrition, early schooling, and parenting methods that contribute significantly to brain architecture for the first five years of a child (Feinstein, 2013). Economic hardship, according to Schoon et al. (2011), also serves as a contributing factor to the cognitive gap in brain functioning.

Finally, educational policy is often constructed as a façade to conceal a hidden agenda, as means of 'legitimacy' perpetuating class-inequalities while satisfying middle-class interests. Policy that appears to promote choice in school attendance is within the stipulation that it falls within the catchment of their desired institutions. Which means, students can choose, but the institution reserves the rights to choose which students are admitted into their programs. It appears therefore that financial backgrounds play a very important role in determining students admitted to their programs. Due to the emerging nature of education in connection to market-driven

model, schools tend to be selective toward financial security, thus choosing students who can afford and who's cultural background make it possible for them to perform well academically.

What these policies have in common is that while the rhetoric of choice seems to have become increasingly pronounced in Britain, there appears to be a simultaneous increase in inequality, in that, the marketization of British schools continue to intentionally deepen social-class entrenchment, because ultimately, meritocracy is a zero-sum game, or in other words, increasing the advantages of one group usually entails decrementing for the other. This observation is reflected in the trends which noted static social mobility for over half-a-century (Kingsley, 2012).

Within the context of the Thai educational system, Paitoon Silarat (2013) offers a breakdown in terms of social mobility, taking into consideration location, economy, accessibility and quality of education. In 2008 there were 19,296,909 children within the age range from 6 -24. Of this figure, 13,018,802 were in school and colleges while 6,278,107 were not. The northeast had the highest number of students (7,133,918) followed by the central region (4,310,279). There were 3,431,143 students from the northern region and 1,448,439 in the Bangkok region. However, the number of students without an education in central region was the lowest among all others (26.52 percent). Parental careers have much to do with educational experience as well. The rate of students whose parents are government officials or running a private business is much higher than students coming from rural areas, whose parents engaged in day-labor or agriculture (Paitoon Silarat, 2556). In terms of quality of education, 48 percent of faculty members with earned doctoral degrees are located in the Bangkok region, 16.67 percent in the central region, 34 percent in the northeast region, 38.20 percent in the south, and 36 percent in the east. When it comes to ranking, 73.38 percent of full-professors are located in the Bangkok region, while 9.71 percent are in the northern region. There are 7.55 percent of full-professors in the northeast, 2.52 percent in the central region, 1.26 percent in eastern regions, 36 percent in western regions, and 5.22 percent in the south. The distribution for associate and assistant professors is not too far behind with 66.63 percent at the associate level and 52.24 percent at the assistant professor level in the Bangkok region (Paitoon Silarat, 2013). Funding for institutions also reflects unequal distribution. For example, 16 public universities were well equipped with facilities, quality faculty members and received 21,144,457,400 million resources in 2010, while Rajabhat University with 40 campuses across the nation received 8,840,596,700 million. All these figures are indicative of a system that is designed for the middle to upper-class in Thai society with the focus on urban living. It is regionally, qualitatively, and financially biased toward those who have the resources, while inhibiting full-accessibility for the disadvantaged (Paitoon Silarat, 2013: 185-87).

There is yet another perspective worth considering when it comes to social mobility. At a place where higher education does not serve to provide job security and

thus wage increment, what choice will people with the opportunity for education make under this circumstance? A doctoral dissertation by Gabriela Sánchez-Soto on **The Effects of International Migration on the Educational Attainment and Educational Mobility of Youth in Mexico** at Brown University in 2011, offers another look at social mobility.

The economic crisis of the 1980s had produced a dramatic negative impact on the educational attainment of the people of Mexico. Trade liberalization and economic restrictions had changed the landscape of labor markets, resulting in less opportunities for work in manufacturing, while increasing opportunities for informal work. Hence even though educational provisions had increased, its role in providing accessibility to the job market remained limiting. The market, resulting from economic restructuring had altered values placed on higher education as a mean for social mobility. This change is significant particularly in view of migration. The lack of job opportunities had created a labor market for informal labor across the border. Because of the economic issue in Mexico, education does not seem to be a strong mean toward social mobility. The possibility and accessibility to economic growth lies across the border. Hence migration becomes a venue for social mobility. It is interesting to note that while in the past migrants were men from rural areas, currently more people from urban areas are migrating, including single women. Between the 60s to the year 2000, the percentage of migrants from Mexico increased from two point five to eight percent. Hence socio-economic changes play such an important role in social mobility as well as effecting changes in values placed on higher education.

The study is based on 10.6% sample from the Mexican Census of Population and Housing containing information on 2,312,035 households with records from 10,099,182 individuals. Youth ages 13 to 20 (target population) represent 17 percent of the sample. Seventy five percent live in urban areas while five point five self-identified as indigenous. The data includes information on education, work, migration, and characteristics of parents, households, and living locations. Analysis points to the complex layers of interaction between educational attainment and migration. On one hand, numbers support a positive outcome of international remittances and educational attainment. On the other hand, migration may also discourage the pursuit of education in favor of U.S. Labor Market.

When it comes to work and school status, children receiving remittances are more likely to be in school and not at work. However, there is also the probability of youth being idle when the household receives international remittances. Students living in communities with patterns of migration tend to be less engaged in educational processes and more focused on work or remain idle. For girls, remittances is negatively associated with working more so than attending school. There is a higher level of idleness among girls living in households with migrants. It is interesting to note how migration is related to idleness among women, in relation to school and work.

In terms of educational attainment, the analysis of the census indicates that while there is a positive relationship between education and migration, it is limited to a lower level of education. Migration seems to promote education when it comes to lower grades. But migration has greater negative impact on education when the educational level moves to the secondary level. Perhaps the reason for this transition is the possibility that teens are more influenced by peers who are driven by finances rather than educational goals.

Migration provides one of the strongest provisions for fulfillment of economic needs and hence, remittances have become an important source of income. When households experience economic constraints, migration becomes a viable source to meet their basic needs. Migration is also being used as substitute for consumer credit. Money received from those who migrated to the U.S. is often used to fund various local projects including education for their children. Migration is also a strategy for social mobility. Remittances received provide long-term increments in social status. Studies indicate that families receiving remittances through migration often are better off than those without remittances from U.S. In Mexico where education does not increase opportunity for employment, migration is seen as a viable option for social mobility, because low-skill jobs in the U.S. pay better. On the other hand, families play an important role in providing aspiration. Families supporting migration will model their children to prefer crossing the border for social mobility. Children's expectations are often influenced by their parents' expectations.

This research raises another important question for the study of social mobility. Where education does not improve income level, tools leading to acquisitions of job security seem to reprioritize the need for educational attainment in favor of the labor market.

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Agriculture and Economy

The industrial growth in Thailand has a significant impact on Thai agricultural products. The cycle of poverty for farmers in Thailand probably started in 1957, with the initiation of a strategic plan for national development. This change in the national policy signified the shift from agriculture to industrialization. The aim of this national policy was the bridging of the gap between the rich and the poor. But its results indicate otherwise (Kanoksak Kaewtep, 1999).

Agricultural products have for a long time, been the major exports for Thailand with an 11 percent growth rate during 1980 – 1996, due to rising trade items such as rice, rubber, sugar, and frozen chicken and shrimp. In 1996, the total value of exports for agricultural commodities was 16,500 million dollars. However, the total increase in imports has also increased with developmental trends at the rate of 17.4 percent between 1980-1996. With globalization, increased competition, free trade, trade policies, and measures of trade have had direct impacts on productions. "Furthermore, the implementation of the WTO agreements is expected to have impact

on the production situation in major exporting countries, including Thailand" (Kajonwan Ithrattana, 1999: xv). This impact on economy is reflected in the decrease in the agricultural sector from 80 percent in 1960, to 70 percent in 1980, and 35 percent in 2008 (National Statistics Office, 2008). This liberalization of trade in the global economy generates a significant impact on the Thai economy, especially in view of the following mandates: reduction of tariffs, cancellation of import restrictions, elimination of agricultural internal support, and export subsidies. Since Thailand has been a member of WTO since 1981, it is obligated to abide by the trade agreement which implies a reduction of total tariffs by 24 percent in 10 years (starting from 1995). Thailand had to allow imports of products that are not normally imported at the rate of three percent of domestic consumption. This rate was raised to five percent by 2004 with low taxation (open access to addition of 23 farm commodities), reduced internal subsidy by 13.3 percent (reduce domestic support from 873 million dollars in 1995, to 761 million dollars in 2004), and reduced export subsidies by 24 percent.

Table 1: Comparison of Agricultural and Industrial Products in Thailand

Year	Agriculture (%)	Industry (%)
1965	34.8	22.7
1980	25.4	28.5
1985	19.5	29.2
1988	16.9	32.5
1992	12.0	38.5
1995	10.3	39.5

(Source: Kanoksak Kaewtep, 1999)

Kajonwan Itharattana(1999) described challenges faced by the Thai agricultural sector, "The adjustment of Thailand is to reduce import duties by an average of 24%. This will open up Thai markets to increased imports of commodities with prices lower than those of local products" (p. xvi).During the 2000 Millennium Summit in New York City, heads of state were unanimous in challenging the benefits of the economy of globalization, calling for a more cautious consideration of a greater just society with a better distribution of resources (Global Policy Forum, May 2000). According to social activist Nantiya Tangwisutijit (1997), "the country's natural resources and the rural poor will be exploited on a greater scale as the government tries to deal with the economic crisis by boosting export competitiveness and deal with the economic crisis by boosting export competitiveness and foreign investment." The following scenario reflects experiences of many farmers in Thailand. Due to their lack of credit, farmers submit their land deeds in exchange for loans. Loan sharks collect up to 120 percent annual interest. Consequently, farmers watch their landholdings shrink, until one day the fields that their ancestors tilled and raked for

decades are no longer theirs. Workers in their own fields, till and rake for otherson the very land they once owned. From landowners to field workers, they labor until everything is lost. It is not uncommon for poor farmers to buy rice on credit to feed their families. A farmer in Ban Buak said, "Investing in farming means selling their inheritance in order to have enough money to invest. The harder we work, the poorer we get. But we have to do it, otherwise we will have nothing to eat (Sorajjakool, 2003).

Not only do Thai farmers face the challenges dealt to the economic impact through globalization, changing policies, and trade agreements. The movement toward industrial development has also brought significant changes to the life and the economy of their daily living as well.

Since the initiation of national development plans that look toward industrial development for growth, the status of Thai peasants seems to depreciate with a changing economy. Kittipong Kasempong (1993), in his study of the impact of capitalist ideology on farmers, indicates the shift in the first national development plan toward the use of technology and high productivity in the field of agriculture, which results in a form of replacement such as the exchange of labor (traditional practice) to wage compensation. This shift shows an ideological change where, due to demand for high production, the concept of sharing was slowly replaced by monetary compensation. The second change came with industrialization where by success has been defined through monetary accumulation. Young people prefer industrial work to farming and cultural values that come with the process of industrialization have redefined a farmer's status. Kittipong Kasempong's study seems to imply how changes in ideology affects farmers' own self-perception within the society and how society, in adapting to the new ideology through the process of industrialization, has redefined itself culturally using monetary accumulation as a defining factor.

Satawat Yoo-aun's 1993 study on the impact technology and modernization had on farmers, traces a significant transition from farmers' quiet and simple life style toward competition and an intense struggle for survival in a changing world. According to reports by farmers, new technologies require greater financial investment for production cost such as fertilizer and insecticide. Increased productions result in greater gaps within their society and thus, changing the status of farmers. Consumerism has replaced old values of shared community.

Another related study that shows a similar result was conducted by Theerawadi Wongthongsun (2008) through Chiang Mai University. This study took place in Lumpoon Province investigating sons of Thai farmers regarding economic changes and job security. In chapter two of the study, the author traces three periods of transition in the life of farmers in a select district. In the early period of the life of the village, there existed an economic gap between wealthy farm owners and owners of small farms. Even though the gap existed, poor farmers were able to provide for themselves and take care of their families. With the coming of industrial development

and change in technologies, the life of farmers became more critical. Due to the government development policy, farm-lands were turned into longan plantations, feeding local markets and industrial growth. Some farmers who were able to diversify did well and improved their conditions of living. However, for the vast majority who lacked sufficient investment funds, they ended up with increased debts, resulting in the movement of the next generation towards abandoning their farms. They began entering factory jobs that required non-skilled labor, since the option pursue farming was to risk getting into greater debt. At the very same time while there was a great demand for non-skilled labor, due to the nature of development and technologies, there were needs, though few, for individuals with appropriate academic degrees for certain jobs. With the new generation coming, farmers realized that, if their children were to have a future, higher education was a necessity. This leads to the question of the role of higher education among farmers in Thailand.

Agriculture and Higher Education

This section will explore a couple of studies on the relationship between higher education and agriculture, looking at the impact of higher education in relation to development and growth both at the communal and individual level. The first two studies look mainly at higher education in agriculture, exploring preferences for the learning methods and the role of women in research and development in agricultural education. The next category looks at higher education and social mobility within the context of farming and agriculture. The last part deals with social mobility and higher education in Thailand within the context of Thai farmers.

1. Agriculture and Approaches to Higher Education

Trede and Whitaker (2000) researched the educational needs of beginning farmers in Iowa through questionnaires sent to 286 participants in 1997, with 48 percent of responses from the sample. The study shows that most beginning farmers prefer experiential learning and problem-solving methods for their educational preferences. They view life-long learning as the primary mode of education with on-site education focusing on specific topics. They believe that radio, information services, and newspapers are their preferred mode of delivery, in contrast to high-technologies and instructional media.

A research by Beintema and Marcantonio on **Female Participation in African Agricultural Research and Higher Education: New Insights** (2000) shows that while females play a significant role in African agriculture in relation to workforce, agricultural research and education are disproportionately dominated by men. There is a great need for greater female participation especially in view of the fact that women bring different insights and perspectives to the understanding and practices of agriculture. Study indicates a 20 percent increase from 2001 to 2008 in terms of agricultural research and education in this region and half of this increment came from female population. There is an average annual increase of 8 percent for

women in the agriculture profession, which is a higher than the rate among males, suggesting a closing of the gap between male and female. In terms of advanced degrees in 2007/8, 27 percent of women held PhD degrees in contrast to 37 percent among males. Levels of female participation in Ethiopia (six percent), Togo (nine percent), Niger (10 percent), and Burkina Faso (12 percent) were particularly low. The number of female participation at the management level is rather low (14 percent). Female professionals are better represented in social sciences while hard science is still dominated by men including agriculture.

2. Agriculture, Social Mobility, and Higher Education

Park's research on **Modernization and Views of Education among Farmers and Factory Workers: A Comparative Study of Ghana, India and Brazil** (1976) reveals perspectives of impact of modernization on education. In this quantitative research, Park used data from "Technology and Culture Project" covering five countries: United States, Japan, Brazil, Ghana, and India. The field research was completed in 1973. Park selected only data from three countries for the purpose of analysis and comparison. These were Brazil, Ghana, and India. Regarding the impact of modernization on education, Park states:

> Modernization broadens the views of education in such a way that the values of education are increasingly recognized for the development and expansion of the total human potential; in the process of modernization education is viewed not only as an instrument for enhancing the ability of children to fulfill an occupational role, to make a living, and to contribute to the betterment of the society, but, more importantly, provides the opportunity by which children can learn, appreciate, and improve their intellectual and cultural heritages, become acceptable social beings, and develop into mature and stable persons in order to have an enriching life (p. 196).

Regarding the negative impact of modernization on education among farmers and factory workers, the literature points out three areas of concern. First education is irrelevant and may be an intrusion into the traditional family living. Second, education has little connection to the economic life of the local society. The underlying assumption to which Park sought to confirm is that a positive view of education is in proportion with increased modernization of the individuals. In this study Park found that the more modern a person is, the less likely he or she is to be concern with the negative outcomes of education. Further, he or she will be less likely to interpret the negative outcomes from a moral standpoint or in relation to the maintenance of family structure and rural living. Lastly, the individual will be more able to look at issues from a more critical perspective as a result of the educational process (Park, 1976). Regarding educational aspiration, for Brazil and India, the more modern a person, the higher the level of educational aspiration. However in Ghana, the higher the level of

technological advancement, the lower the level of educational advancement. This, according to Park, could possibly be accounted for by the high disparity between educational attainment and economic structure (Park, 1976).

In **Higher Education, Mobility and Inequality: The Finnish Case** (1996), Kivinen and Rinne's study indicate the pattern of reproduction of social class within the Finnish educational system. Children from families with high educational backgrounds tend to stay longer within the educational system, while children from lower higher educational backgrounds remain much shorter within the system. Children from white-collar families usually continue to further their educational experience through post-secondary to university levels. Children from labor backgrounds often pursue vocational training, while children from agricultural populations often remain within agriculture practices without education or through some agrarian university studies. In concluding their study, the authors, reflecting on Bourdieu's perspective, stated "it (educational system) maintains existing structures, reproducing rather than reducing differences between social groups" (Kivien and Rinne, 1996: 310).

A study pertaining social mobility and higher education among farmers in West Germany using 1971 census data on occupation and social change based on 1 percent of the population age 15 and above. 80,000 of the participants were from the farm sector which was divided into three main groups: those who were actively working in the farm, those who used to work in the farm then moved to a different sector, and those who lived with their parents while pursuing higher education with the aim of obtaining an occupation outside the farming sector. The result shows that the status of sons of farmers who remain in the farming occupation depends largely on their fathers' occupation and status rather than their educational attainment. However for those leaving the farm sector, their social status depends largely on their educational attainment instead of their social background and that their first occupational status determines subsequent vertical social mobility for them. Hence it may be concluded that a farm background is a handicap for the attainment of status in the non-farm sector. And educational attainment is the primary contribution to social status for those with farm background who seek occupation in the non-farm sector (Brüse, 1979).

Thai Farmers, Social Mobility, and Higher Education

Numerous studies have been conducted on topics such as rural living and economy, farmers and social mobility, farmers and changing economy, traditional Thai community and their economic system. Chattip Nartsupha (2008) and his research team explored Thai economic system after 1960 through Western influence of individualism and materialism in three stages. The first stage aimed at understanding the structure of Thai economic system after the implementation of capitalism. The second stage was an attempt at understanding characteristics of Thai

communal living prior to capitalism. And the third explored cultural norms and practices of traditional Thai community. The final stage was an attempt at searching for Thai economic and cultural identity and changes that affected the country.

An extensive research on the life of Thai farmers in the northern region was conducted by Yos Suntsombat and his team. They explored the economic system of traditional Thai communities and the slow penetration of capitalist system among rural farmers (Yos Suntsombat, 2003). A similar study was done by Thanwa Jaitieng (2003) focusing on northern region of Isan (northeast of Thailand). An edited volume **Chonnabod Thai: Kasetakorn Radub Klang lae Rang Ngan Rai Ti Din** (Thai Rural: Middle and lower-class farmers and farm-labor without land) (2013) by Jamaree Chiangtong, Watta Sukansiln, Jareewan Rukchart, Sa-nga Meesang, and Preeyawan Jaipinta on the life of rural Thailand discussing varieties of issues among Thai villages and farmers such as landless farmers, migration, changing forms of agriculture, agri-business, and the transition experienced by farmers moving from farms to industry. In his book **Nee-sin Kasettakorn Thai** (Debts of Thai farmers), Withaya Jeerapan (2010) researched the issue of debts among farmers seeking to understand how they deal with their debts. The study analyzed debt management for those who joined "The Project to Solve the Debts Problem of the Poor" and identified contributing factors.

While there are many studies on the topic of rural living in Thailand, farmers and social mobility, there is a research gap when it comes to the relationship between the roles of higher education among farmers pertaining to social mobility. There are few references to the role of higher education and social mobility among the poor and Thai farmers. Campell, in "Paying for Higher Education in Thailand" (2013), raised the question of accessibility to and effective management of student loan. Paitoon Silarat's (2005) analysis shows that even with the plan to expand education into other regions such as the north, northeast, and in the south by setting regional universities, the number of students entering these regional universities were mainly from central Thailand. In **Kwam Luern Lum lae Kwam Mai Pen Tum Tang Karn Suksa** (Inequality in Thai educational system) (2013), Paitoon Silarat contrasted the number of new students admitted to Chulalongkorn University and Thammasart University from 1976-1986, with an average of 54 percent among students whose parents were engaged in business, while the percentage of students from the agricultural sector ranged from five percent to one point six percent with the smaller percentage during 1985 and 86. Rungsun Thanapornpan (2001) believes that as we move toward globalization, the gap in relation to accessibility to higher education will increase due to the economic structure that leans toward the privileged group. Suwit Masintree (2013) and Funatsu and Kagoya (2003) see similar patterns emerging in the field of higher education and the need to address ways to close the gap between the poor in rural Thailand and the urban middle and upper class Thais.

Critical Social Theories

1. Michel Foucault's Genealogy

Paul-Michel Foucault (1926-84) was born in Poitiers, France, to a well educated- family. He was the second child of the three siblings and his dad was recognized as a prestigious surgeon for the local community. The world to which he was born was one of chaos and uncertainty. The post-war climate of France was dominated by three philosophical outlooks: existentialism, phenomenology, and Marxism. Emerging themes from the writings of Sartė, Heidegger, and Marx were common academic consumption that became formative for Foucault who studied philosophy at *École Normale Supérieure* and took his *licence de philosophie* in 1948. Foucault's passion for social issues led him to believe that the post-war communist party was progressive offering hope for the working class and the possibility of the realization of socialism. Briefly he joined the communist party but soon realized the limited academic philosophy the party could offer. He turned toward psychology in 1950, completed his *licence de psychologie* and pursued a diploma in psychopathology. His research and teaching during this period led him to one of his early popular publication in 1954 **Mental Illness and Psychology**. His teaching led him to Sweden, Poland and Germany and at Hamburg he completed his text on madness that earned him a doctorate. In 1964 he served as professor of philosophy at the University of Clemont-Ferrand. Thus beginnning an exciting era of Foucauldian provocation in the world of philosophy, psychology, and sociology. According to Smart (2002) Foucault was

> Celebrated and criticized, paraphrased, and misrepresented. He has been described as the 'enfant terrible of structuralism', an archaeologist of Western culture, a nihilist and more soberly as a philosopher-historian whose work must be differentiated from both conventional philosophy and history (p. 12).

But to understand the coming of Foucauldian perspectives requires an understanding of the person, Paul-Michel Foucault who, in his rebellion against his father, Paul Foucault, remains for us Michel Foucault (Smart, 2002).

The world of conflicts, violence, and aggression creating a sense of uncertainty that constantly reminds a person of the inevitable, the being-toward death, was the world to which Paul-Michel was raised as a child. Poitiers was occupied by Germany and remained a witness to Jews being rounded up and sent to concentration camps. In 1981, reflecting on his early life Foucault wrote:

> To have lived as an adolescent in a situation that had to end, that had to lead to another world, for better or worse, was to have the impression of spending one's entire childhood in the night, waiting for dawn. That prospect of another world marked the people of my generation, and we have carried with us, perhaps to excess, a dream of Apocalypse (cited by Miller, 1993: 39).

What direct effect this social context had for Foucault is not fully clear but the life of Foucault even in his young age was, admittedly unhappy, with a father who described him as a juvenile delinquent and was unsatisfied with his academic performance. He was withdrawn and suffered from intense isolation. As a young adolescent in school he was described as eccentric and violently idiosyncratic, with certain disturbing behaviors especially when he was spotted chasing a classmate with a dagger. In an intellectual debate, he was aggressive and unpredictable though mostly introverted and reserved. If chosen, he could be bitterly sarcastic and mocking. He did not have many friends and most thought he was crazy, but they all recognized he was brilliant. The deep internal conflict expressed itself in his suicidal attempts. One night in *École Normale* he was found on the floor. He had just slashed his chest with a razor. For some, his attempt was treated as an expression of his struggle with homosexual tendency (Miller, 1993). Whatever that might be, perhaps from the inner life of Foucault germinates the seed of archeology and genealogy as an attempt to deconstruct for the sake of the pursuit of authentic self, the very self that his father and peers defined as non-normative. So the task of deconstruction became an existential calling. And to Nietzsche he turned, searching for the answer to the quest of authenticity. In August of 1953, Foucault was absorbed by Nietzsche's **Untimely Meditations,** a product of his desperate struggle to understand himself. Speaking of Nietzsche he recalled "Nietzsche was a revelation. I read him with a great passion and broke with my life…I had the feeling I had been trapped. Through Nietzsche, I had become a stranger to all that" (cited by Miller, 1992: 67). "The riddle which man must solve," writes Nietzsche, "he can only solve in being, in being what he is and not something else, in the immutable" (cited by Miller, 1992: 68). It is this riddle that paved the path for Foucault further work in deconstruction, the road map toward the discovery of the self that remains the fundamental core of genealogy. Nietzsche writes "True, there are countless paths and bridges and demigods that would like to carry you across the river, but only at the price of yourself, you would pledge yourself, and lose it. In this world there is one unique path which no one but you may walk. Where does it lead? Do not ask; take it" (cited by Miller, 1992: 70). Foucault was not ready to pay the price and lose himself. He picked the unique path and took it. Where it leads, the world has some clue and we have come to better understand ourselves within the socio-cultural context of our discourse, gifted through the understanding of archeology and genealogy.

Genealogy explores the relationship between truth, knowledge, and power with the understanding that history is non-linear but an emerging dominant discourse through struggle via knowledge over who has the claim to truth and hence the right to define norms and stipulate standards. The analysis, therefore, focuses on the interaction of knowledge, truth, and power within the historical development leading to the formation of dominant discourse.

Speaking of discourse, Foucault recognizes the place of power within social structure and how it generates disparity within the society. Discourse is conceived as phrases, statements or the use of language that is aligned with norms and societal rules created through power struggle initiated by knowledge. It is a form of collective beliefs within a certain historical period that has come to dominate and claim universality. Historical period, from Foucault's perspective, is a non-linear process consisting of fragments with broken lines fueled by conflicts and tensions, leading to competing ideologies and the emergence of one dominant discourse defining norms and standards.

Hence what each historical period has come to embrace as the way of living or that 'which is normative' is a construction emerging from struggles relating to power and knowledge. Foucault reminds us that in the end, it is just one ideology among other possibilities. Heteronomy is that reality Foucault seeks to convey. Positivist's claim of objective empirical knowledge is, in Foucault's understanding, a discourse in relation to power within the context of history, politics, culture, and society (Apipa Prachyapruit, 2011). Power is exercised through establishing norms and norms have the power to control and stratify. This use of power is subtle in that once ideology becomes normative, people are then forced to abide by this norm. Underlying power is knowledge. Knowledge that comes to dominate within a certain historical period is that knowledge that has gained a primary space over other ideologies (Apipa Prachyapruit, 2011).

Genealogy differs from traditional historical research in that genealogy looks for parts of history that were neglected or ignored. It affirms knowledge strictly as perspective in contrast to the belief that knowledge is grounded in universal truth. Finally, whereas traditional history sees events in the light of extra-historical constitution, genealogy focuses on a single event in an attempt to understand the multiplicity of related factors. Methodologically, because genealogy does not affirm universal and linear continuity, genealogy seeks out discontinuity within history. Second, events do not culminate in ultimate destiny, but events are consequences of conflicts, chance, and error in relation to power and unintended consequences. Finally genealogy affirms the view of knowledge as perspective (Hamilton, 2002).

Foucault's genealogy and its implications are best understood within his own personal development of his perspective. In his early career as expressed through **History of Madness in Classical Age** (1961), Foucault argued that madness was conceived differently through a different era and that every dominant discourse

impacted the mentally ill differently. Foucault believes that in the end it is not mental illness that causes alienation, but alienation that leads to mental illness. Which goes to affirm his point that the institution that has the right to define, controls. Through different eras people were perceived as mentally ill depending on the definition of that era and the dominant discourse. Hence, madness was, in many ways, a question of definition. In **Order of Things** first published in 1973, Foucault provided an archeology of knowledge tracing changes in the meaning of knowledge through Western history from Renaissance to present with the intent to show that knowledge is not a fixed entity. It changes through time. Foucault uses the term episteme to refer to scientific discourse of a particular era. It is an unconscious structure of knowledge, an epistemology of a certain time period that dictates the possibility of knowledge. An unconscious assumption regarding what is true and what is not from which derived everyday language and practices of a certain historical time. However Foucault came to realize that these early writings only seek to show various discursive practices without addressing how changes took place through time.

Episteme is an essential core of Foucault's archeology whereby a statement becomes meaningful not because of its function for expression, but because of the rules that guide the meaning of a statement. These rules, for Foucault, are not grammatical or semantic. It is about a how a statement complies with discursive meaning. Hence the meaning of a word is dependent on the discourse. Archeology seeks to compare transitions taking place within history. But it was unable to address causes for historical contingency. And this was precisely Foucault's next attempt through **Discipline and Punish** (1995). While history wishes to record progress in ways prisoners are treated, Foucault sees, through the lens of genealogy, a new method of control through discipline. In his analysis, penitentiary employs three factors as means for control: observation, normalization, and examination. Observation is the power to control. The observed will constantly come under the monitoring eyes of the observers who then align observation within a certain criteria. And to make the process more extensive, the power to observe is delegated within the order of hierarchy. The modern power is not about revenge and punishment but monitoring through discipline so that people will arrive at a desired standards or norms. It is about reform and reform implies alignment with that which is normative. This concept of norm is prevalence in our society such as the practice of medicine, industrial processes, and educational quality assurance. Examination is the process that combines hierarchical observation with normalizing judgment. At this junction is a clear expression of the connection between power and knowledge. In Foucault's words "the deployment of force and the establishment of truth" (1995: 184). This is so because knowing is controlling; the one who knows, controls. Examination also suggests documentation whereby subjects are then recorded and stipulated in accord with established categories through the process of standardization. Subjects become digits and defined in terms of averages, standard deviation, norm, percentile etc. The

process of observation (or tracking in higher education), normalization, and examination creates a society in accord with the dominant discourse. Discipline becomes a tool for control according to the predefined standards. In this way genealogy is able to go beyond identifying various discursive practices and identify causes for non-linear historical contingency. In **History of Modern Sexuality** Vol. 1 (1990), Foucault takes this concept a step further. He recognizes that the knowledge of sexuality through scientific discipline, gives the power to dominate human sexuality, defining and guiding. However Foucault comes to understand that not only is external knowledge able to control. In many ways this knowledge, when internalized, becomes a power of the subject to regulate him/herself. Individuals internalize these norms as defined through science of sexuality and seek to regulate themselves in order to conform to these norms. Thus the control is both external and the internalized becomes, for the subject, internal regulation through the knowledge acquired, or in Foucault's term, the technology of the self.

History of Sexuality: The Use of Pleasure, Vol. 2 (1990) and **History of Sexuality: The Care of the Self**, Vol. 3 (1988) take readers to the final conclusion of Foucault's philosophical system. In vol. 2 Foucault shows contrast in the understanding of sexuality between ancient Greek approaches to sexuality in contrast to Christianity. While Christianity emphasizes moral codes (right and wrong practices), ancient Greek speaks of the practice of sexuality in ways that can enhance life. There were many prohibitions as well but the focus was to show practices that were not productive for life's enhancement. This emerging concept in the later writings of Foucault led to the development of the concept of aesthetics of existence. Understanding how discourse operates provides us with freedom to choose ways to live life creatively. It is to create our lives as the work of art which is possible when we realize what Foucault called "history of the present," history of how we have arrived where we are historically, through negotiation of power leading to an emergence of dominant discourse. Understanding why we are where we are in this historical development gives us freedom to create life aesthetically for ourselves. Bringing this into the context of education, Foucault promotes the need to explore knowledge in places that have been ignored or relegated to the margin. Education needs to recognize differences and in order to recognize differences, education should set as priority the exploration of discontinuity instead of continuity, marginalized beside that which is normative (Apipa Prachyapruit, 2011).

This research will employ Foucault's genealogy as a methodology in the analysis of educational discourse with the focus on identifying the place of power in relation to knowledge. The process seeks an understanding of the normalization of a discourse by asking question pertaining to who does the observing and identifying examinations used to measure the standardization of a population. Within the context of Thai farmers, this research explores ways in which farmers have been located

within the order of social hierarchy through emerging norms created by the new discourse and subjected to examinations for the purpose of alignment with standards.

2. Jonah Galtung's Structural Violence

There are other theories that support Foucault's analysis of the place of system and its ability to marginalize within a society. Jonah Galtung (1969) speaks of the need for awareness of structural violence in our society. To Galtung, violence causes a gap between what is attainable and what exists. This gap is avoidable and its cause is structural. Using the example of the lack of clean water and food, violence is not because there is not sufficient water or food. However it happens because the economies are structured as such and thus creates unequal distribution. He writes, "Violence is…the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual, between what could have been and what is. Violence is that which increases the distance between the potential and the actual, and that which impedes the decrease of this distance" (p. 168). This perspective of the role of structure in the creation of unequal distribution can provide a basis for understanding in which the economic system and standards within higher education affect social mobility of Thai farmers.

3.Jean Baudrillard's Consumer of Signs

Critical theory is another important critique of social structure. There are many schools of thought descending from Marx. One such theory is that of Baudrillard, who started out critiquing consumer society. Starting from critiquing consumer society, Baudrillard next explored the idea that our current socio-economic structure is at the post-industrial stage. In this post-industrial age, units to be analyzed are no longer that of products, but signs or symbols that these products communicate. For Baudrillard, Marx was dealing with a society that was searching for productions that will be sufficiently produced and distributed. But in the 20th century productions have become excessive and capitalism's aim is to induce rapid and excessive consumption for maximum gain (Karnjana Kaewtep et al., 2000). A product is never just a product in itself. A product becomes a sign that signifies something the market wishes to convey. What people consume is not so much products in themselves, but signs that come with these products. The consumption of signs comes with great implications. With signs there is no limit to consumption unlike products, where there may be limit to what one needs. With signs, consumption becomes consumption for what these signs represent to society. And there is no real limit to signs. Signs signify social meaning. A pair of pants is a pair of pants, but with signs, a pair of pants is not just a pair of pants. It comes with status and social hierarchy. It can differentiate one from others within the society where one lives. It can place one above the others. Hence our society has created signs that convey values and because of the need for values, this economic structure will continue to maintain itself. Baudrillard believes that our capitalist society has generated a sense of alienation within the society and in to deal

with alienation people turn to consumerism as an attempt to deal with their experience of alienation (Apipa Prachyapruit, 2011). Reflecting on the concept of signs, Mike Gane (1991) writes, "As differences are structured into objects, it is precisely the differential social relations which are consumed" (p. 59). It is important for people to realize that these structures are there to create control for the benefits of a minority who is at the top level of the economic system, and the perpetuation of this system will perpetuate greater discrimination within the society. This analysis of products as signs is essential in understanding the status of Thai farmers due to the fact that farmers generate products but not signs. Signs are symbols use to negotiate social hierarchy. It differentiates people within social orders. Products do not function quite the same way. Baudrillard's consumer of signs can provide a lens through which changes in the concept of production from sustenance to production, primarily for cash, helps in the understanding of the power to consume signs and the place within the order of social hierarchy among famers within the changing discourse.

4. Pierre Bourdieu's and Reproduction of Social Class through Education

Another important theorist that provides a significant bearing to the concept of social mobility to be address in this research is Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002), a French philosopher, anthropologist, and sociologist whose humble upbringing provided resources for his perspectives on social hierarchy. In **Distinction: A Social Critique of a Judgment of Taste** (1979) Bourdieu laid out conceptual basis for the analysis of social order. Social space is the place where negotiation takes place. Within this social space there is, what he termed 'field', within which people function. There are many 'field' and in each 'field' many players. Each 'field' has a game rule from which one plays. There may be political field, family field, and academic field. In each 'field' are standards from which one needs to operate. There are ways one can move toward domination since each field is embedded with hierarchy. People come into each field with various 'capital.' Bourdieu talked about social, cultural, and symbolic capital. People who possess more capital have better chances to dominate within the field that they operate. Hence the dominant group often dictates certain cultural norms from which others need to comply in order to move up within the social hierarchy. This is where those in the margin will always struggle because of the lack of social, cultural, and symbolic capital needed to get up within the field. Bourdieu also discussed the concept of *habitus*. *Habitus* refers to the disposition from which one acquired through one's own upbringing. This *habitus* therefore influences how one view the world and the social relations. Within *habitus*, an individual needs to have the ability to make the distinction between preferred and non-preferred 'taste' within each field. Hence this implies the ability to produce preferred practices and being able to differentiate based on social categories inherited within the field.

Bourdieu brought this sociological perspective into the field of educational analysis. In **Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture** (1977), he points out

the often cited idea that Western educational institutions are known as agencies for class reproduction. Educational systems have the tendency to reproduce social order by down- playing cultural capital of the dominated groups. This is achieved through classifying and tracking methods often used in higher educational system as defined by dominant group's cultural capital. Bourdieu argued that culture, education, and language are areas where struggle for legitimacy of knowledge takes place. And hence, educational institutions as primary bodies for these fields play an important role in the reproduction of social class and social order. Within the scope of this research, Bourdieu's approach to social, cultural, and symbolic capital can show how reproduction of social class exists within Thai society. It also illustrates the impact this has on Thai peasants who seem to lack these three elements necessary for access to higher education and to succeed in our society within the current economic system.

Summary

This review of related literatures covers higher education and changing economy, higher education and social mobility, agriculture and economy, agriculture and higher education, Thai farmers, social mobility, and higher education and social critical theories. From the literatures, the emergence of neo-liberal economic policy implemented during the administration of Ronald Regan had a definite impact on higher education in various dimensions such as the reduction of state funding, leading to public higher education institutions moving more toward a business model, impacting the quality of education. This transition had a direct impact on social mobility through higher education. Admission criteria increased in order to heighten competitiveness and in such an environment, students from higher incomes due to social, cultural, and symbolic capital had a much greater chance for admission than students from low incomes.

The majority of Thai farmers, from reviews of literatures, are among the population under the category of low-income. Changing the economy has altered the lives of Thai farmers. Where sustenance was the primary aim of farming, it now shifted to farming for production in order to convert crops into cash. This competitive approach changed the cultural life of local farmers, increasing dependency on chemical fertilizers, patent seeds, and pesticides. Debt level increased with farmers losing their land and turning toward hard labor and migration. When it comes to higher education among farmers, there are not too many studies on this topic. Studies were mostly concentrated on mechanisms of farming or agriculture related curriculum. In Thailand, there are many studies conducted on Thai farmers. However research on the relationship between Thai farmers and higher education seem to be lacking. There are references to farmers' accessibility to higher education but literatures are very limited on this topic.

This information on higher education, changing economic policies, social mobility and Thai farmers raise significant questions when viewed from Foucault's genealogy. How did The First to the Seventh National Economic and Development Plans initiated in 1963, by Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat, affect discourse on higher education in Thailand? What new concept of truth emerged in a developing nation and how was this truth implemented? And further what role social, cultural, and symbolic capitals contribute to social mobility of certain population in Thailand and how the changing social stratification impact Thai peasants? These are questions that frame approach to this research on social mobility among peasants in Thai society.

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CHAPTER 3

Research Methodology

Introduction

The primary aim of this study is to understand the role Thai higher education plays in facilitating social mobility among Thai peasants in selected villages in Northern Thailand. It looks at attempts made by Thai higher education institutions in addressing the issue of social mobility among Thai peasants, obstacles in achieving this aim, and the current situation of Thai peasants in relation to social mobility, including their perspectives on the role of higher education. This study employs historical and qualitative (Grounded Theory) methods in seeking an understanding of the stated issue. For historical analysis, this study uses historical texts, academic records, archives, documents and statistics from various sources on higher education, social mobility, and the social status of Thai peasants. Qualitative data will be based primarily on interviews.

Sources of Information

1. Document

1.1 Historical texts dealing with social mobility, history of higher education, economy, life of Thai farmers and peasants, and theories pertaining to social mobility.

1.2 Policies: higher education policies, National and Economic Development policies, higher educational institutions' policies on admission and programs for the underprivileged.

1.3 Historical archives that may be relevant to the study

1.4 Statistics relating to admission, retention, economic growth, census etc.

2. Sampling

Due to the complex nature of identifying these participants, snowball and convenient sampling methods were utilized, thus giving access to participants who could best share information on the topic of this study. The first group of participants was selected based on a research by Ajarn Thitiya Lao-an of Rajabhat University, Loei. A government official working for local tourism facilitated recommended contacts for interviews. The next referred group was identified through a personal acquaintance recommending names from Viengchairung, Chiang Rai. For the rest of the participants, the researcher drove through areas in the north and the northeast

populated by rice farmers. Many stops were made along the way or in various villages interviewing farmers and, at times, their family members.

3. Key Informants

This qualitative research conducted interviews with four groups of participants. The first three groups represent Thai peasants in transition. The fourth group represents academicians and reputable farmers whose research engages issues related to economy, education and Thai farmers. These four groups were selected for the purpose of comparison with the aim of extracting variations in different populations in relation to economic and social status within the context of higher education.

The rationale for choosing these four groups is so that appropriate comparison between the four groups can provide rich data contributing to the understanding of the role of higher education in facilitating social mobility in relation to resources, skills, access, knowledge of the field, significance of higher education in bridging the gap, transition in social mobility and geography. The four groups consist of 1) Thai peasants who have been negatively impacted by changes in the economic system, 2) first generation children of peasants/farmers in higher education, 3) alumni whose parents were farmers and 4) academicians and reputable farmers who engage in research relating to education and Thai farmers.

Every participant is given a code as identity reference. The code is listed under Appendix I to Appendix V. The first alphabet refers to the population (F for farmers, C for children of farmers and A for academics or reputable farmers). The second (and in some case the third), represents the name of the province. The number shows sequence in the order of the interviews.

3.1 Thai farmers who have been negatively impacted by changes in the economic system. This first group consists of 69 Thai peasants from 19 provinces in the northern and the northeastern regions of Thailand. The interviews started in Ku Ka Sing, Roi Et Province in reference to a study by Thitiya Lao-an's "Peasant society in Isan region, from 1957-2007: A case study of Ku Ka Sing village, Roi Ed Province" (2010). From Roi Et, the interviews expanded to include 10 provinces in the northeast region and nine in the northern region of Thailand. The study traced impacts of modernization on lived experiences of local farmers and the transitions occurring through the process. This first group offers the lived-experience of impacts by the current economic development and sheds some light on their understanding of the role of higher education as a mean to cope with changes in economic development.

Table 2: Participants, Provinces, Gender and Educational Level

No.	Province	No of Participants	Male	Female	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
1	Roi Et	7	6	1	4	2	1
2	Surin	3	1	2	3		
3	Srisaket	5	2	3	2	2	1
4	Yasothorn	1	1		1		
5	Kalasin	3	3		3		
6	Chiang Mai	3	3		3		
7	Chiang Rai	5	4	1	4	1	
8	Lampang	4	2	2	3	1	
9	Phitsanulok	5	3	2	3	1	1
10	Phichit	3	2	1	2	1	
11	Kampangpetch	3	1	2	3		
12	Sukhothai	3	1	2	3		
13	Ubon	4		4	1	2	1
14	Buri Ram	4	1	3	4		
15	Udon	4	2	2	4		
16	Nong Khai	2		2	2		
17	Loei	3		3	2		1
18	Nong Bua Lamphoon	1		1		1	
19	Khon Kaen	4	4		3		1
	Total	67	36	31	50	11	6

3.2 First generation children of farmers in higher education. This second group consists of six undergraduate students whose parents are farmers and are currently pursuing higher education. There are students at Rajabhat Loei, Khon Kaen Campus majoring in math, law, and Thai language studies. The other three major in nursing at Asia Pacific International University. All students are from the north-eastern region. Two of the participants are males, the rest of the participants are females. This group offers perspectives on their views of higher education and the role it has on social mobility, the rationale for seeking higher education, their desired future goal (whether it remain in agriculture or otherwise), and their understanding of the lived-experience of Thai farmers.

Table 3: Children of Farmers Currently in Higher Education, Gender, Institutions

No.	Province	No. of Participants	Male	Female	Rajabhat Loei	Asia Pacific International University
1	Nongbua Lumpoo	1		1	1	
2	Nakhon Phanom	1		1	1	
3	Khon Kaen	2	1	1	1	1
4	Ubon	1		1		1
5	Mahasarakham	1	1			1
	Total	6	2	4	3	3

3.3 Alumni whose parents were farmers. This third group consists of six alumni whose parents were peasants. This group represents those who have graduated from their programs and are now working. Their careers were the direct result of their academic achievement. Five of the participants were originally from the northeast region with one from Chiang Mai. All participants except for one, returned to their provinces for their careers. Their majors consist of Thai studies, management, economics, education and political science. One participant completed her undergraduate degree in education. Three participants completed their master's degrees. One of these three earned two master degrees (MA and MBA). A participant who currently serves the local school district completed his PhD in Thai Studies. Two participants work for a local municipality. Three serve as teachers both in public and private schools. One is a manager for a local bank.

Table 4: Children of Farmers Completed Higher Education, Gender and Academic Degrees

	Province	No. of Participants	Male	Female	Bachelor	Master	PhD.
	Roi Et	4	2	2	1	2	1
	Chiang Mai	1		1		1	
	Bangkok	1		1		1	
	Total	6	2	4	1	4	1

3.4 Academicians and reputable farmers. The last group consists of five academicians, one activist and two reputable farmers. The five academicians were able to offer perspectives as researchers and scholars relating to local farmers and higher education. The two reputable farmers have familiarity with the Thai educational system while working the field

themselves. They possess hands-on field experience that adds significant perspectives to the study. The social activist interviewed has been working with farmers for over 40 years and participated in various academic forums reflecting on the issues of local farmers. These participants represent the following institutions: Chiang Mai University, Rajabhat University, Ubon University, Chulalongkorn University and Thammasart University.

Table 5: Academics and Reputable Practitioners, Gender, Rank

No.	Province	No. of Participants	Male	Female	Instructor	Assistant Professor	Professor	Other
1	Chiang Mai	3	3				1	2
2	Khon Kaen	1		1	1			
3	Ubon	1		1		1		
4	Buri Ram	1	1					1
5	Bangkok	2	2				2	
	Total	8	6	2	1	1	3	3

4. Research Procedures

The data gathering process and analysis to enhance this approach will be within the framework of historical and qualitative method focusing on grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). This approach aims at drawing conceptualization from historical texts, documents and lived experiences of the population identified and theorizing on how various themes are related (Suphang Chanthawanit, 2548).

4.1 Data Gathering

4.1.1 Documentary Study. One of the primary tasks is gathering of historical data through various forms of texts such as policies, National Development Plans, journal articles, research articles, historical texts, archives, academic records etc.

4.1.2 Observation. The research process for the second stage commences with observations of participants in their lived-experience. It takes notes of daily living of local Thai farmers by first exploring the physical setting in order to understand the environmental and geographical implications of the participants. Suphang Chanthawanit (2548) suggests the followings to be observed: action (the daily living of the population, activities, process of engaging in certain activities such as planting or rituals), meaning assigned to activities, community social structure, participations by members of the

community and the environmental setting. It also aims at getting acquainted with the people and noticing first impressions of the location and the people. Establishing some form of relationship is another essential step and perhaps one way to do this is to find a local whom the researcher can follow in order to get a sense of the community, their ways of living, the type of conversations engaged in, and their aspiration (Chai Phothisita, 2556).

During the data collecting process, observations of the living conditions of farmers were noted including the environment surrounding their living condition, the activities in the fields for some who were at the time of the interviews breaking the soil, spraying insecticides and spreading seedlings. Housing conditions of farmers contribute to an understanding of their living condition. The size of the land together with access or lack of access to irrigation systems provided added information on whether they are able to grow other crops or have to migrate to cities for employments.

The field notes start with cryptic jotting, follows by detail descriptions of things observed, analytic notes such as mental notes as you write the description or certain connections with certain theories, and subjective reflections of your personal experience which could be surprises or certain emotion evoked during the process (Berg and Lune, 2012).

4.1.3 Interviews. Interviews lie at the very core of this qualitative study, seeking to elucidate experiences of local farmers, their place within the new development, and to reminisce life within a certain historical time frame. For Thai peasants, the analysis of interviews yields significant information regarding lived experiences of Thai peasants, their views on social mobility, higher education, changing discursive practices, and the negotiation of power within the field of knowledge. Respecting participants' point of view and paying attention to their language and the way they assign meaning to events, the ways they conduct their daily living were crucial to the process (Charmaz, 2006). For academicians, the interviews offer perspectives on higher education attempts at facilitating social mobility and the existing gap including discourse formation and discursive practices affecting this population.

Interviews were semi-structured, guided by a list of open-ended questions. These questions, aimed at exploring peasants' reflection on discourses pertaining to economic and social status, social mobility and the role of higher education, were constructed tentatively with the intentionality of openness for views that could emerge during the interviews. They are designed to provide an understanding base on the lived experiences of Thai peasants and rich resources from academics engaging in research among Thai peasants.

Questions for the first group (Thai peasants who have been negatively impacted). For the first group, the first two questions look at lived experiences and

perception of changing discourse in agriculture. The next three questions focus on higher education and social mobility. The last three questions are focused on genealogy aiming at understanding changing discourse through the use of words and symbols within a community. The focus on the last question is how they perceive the process of attainment of the set standards or norms. Their understanding of ways they can achieve attainment within the society and increase their social mobility. What process they need to go through? Who controls the process? What role higher education plays in this achievement? This question can reveal what is the norm, who controls the standards for achieving the norm, and how one needs to self-regulate in order to attain status. The last four questions are applied to every group.

a. Describe what it is like to live as farmers (daily activities, family life, things that give meaning, and the common challenges in life).

b. Describe the impact industrialization has on your life?

c. Describe your educational experiences and how it affected you?

d. Have you considered pursuing higher education? If not, why didyou not consider? If yes, what prevented you from pursuing?

e. Do you think having a college degree can alter your life? If so, in what way has higher education altered your life?

f. Describe your perception of your current status as farmers?

g. Explain what these words mean to you: "success,""development" and "productivity" in relation to your social status within the community.

h. How can one achieve success, how can a person become productive, and what does a developed community look like?

Interviews of farmers took place between January and August of 2015. The first trip was started on the 4th and completed on the 8th of January. The provinces covered during this trip were Roi Et, Surin, Yasothon, and Kalasin. The second trip was from January 27th to 1st of February and covered Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, and Lampang Provinces. The third trip started on the 10th of February and completed by the 14th covering Phitsanulok, Pichit, Kampangpetch, and Sukhothai. The fourth trip was from 17th of February to the 20thcovering Ubon, Srisaket Suri, and Buri Ram. The fifth trip took place between 17th and the 20th of March covering Udon, Nong Khai, Loei, and Nong Bua Lamphu. The last trip was in August of 2015 and the interviews were conducted in Khon Kaen.

Questions for the second group (first generation children of peasants/farmers in higher education). Questions one to three are designed specifically in order to assess and compare perceptions of the last two populations. Question four seeks an understanding of their perception of the relationship between higher education and social mobility. Similar to the questions for the first group, the last four questions relate to the concepts in genealogy.

a. What motivates you to pursue higher education?

b. What obstacles you faced in getting access to higher

c. What do you think about the role of higher education in promoting social mobility?

d. What do you hope to gain through higher education after completion of your degree?

e. Do you think having a college degree can alter you life? If so, inwhat way has it altered your life?

f. Describe your perception of current status of farmers?

g. Explain what these words mean to you: "success," "development" and "productivity" in relation to your social status within the community.

h. How can one achieve success, how can a person become productive, and what does a success mean?

Interviews of students from Rajabhat Loei, Khon Kaen Campus, were facilitated by Thitiya Lao-an, a social study instructor at this university. Interviews of nursing students were arranged through Jarurat Sriratanaprapat, nursing instructor at Asia Pacific International University, Bangkok.

Questions for the third group (alumni whose parents were farmers). Questions one to three are designed specifically in order to assess and compare perceptions of the last two populations. Question four seeks an understanding of their perception of how higher education has affected their social mobility within their current context. Similar to the questions for the first two groups, the last four questions relate to the understanding of genealogy.

a. What motivates you to pursue higher education?

b. What obstacles you faced in getting access to higher education?

c. What do you think about the role of higher education in promoting social mobility?

d. How do you view Thai farmers/peasants and their current social and economic status in Thai society?

e. Do you think having a college degree can alter you life? If so, in what way has it altered your life?

f. Describe your perception of current status of farmers/peasants?

g. Explain what these words mean to you: "success," "development" and "productivity" in relation to your social status within the community.

h. How can one achieve success, how can a person become productive, and what does a developed community look like?

Participants from Roi Et were recommended by a local contact in Ku Ka Sing. The participant from Chiang Mai was an acquaintance and the final participant is a school teacher that the researcher is familiar with.

*Questions for the fourth group (academics who engage in research relating to Thai farmers and peasants).*The following questions seek an understanding of the role of higher education, the obstacles and challenges face in promoting social mobility among Thai peasants.

a. What do you think about the role of higher education in promoting social mobility?

b. How do you view Thai farmers and their current social and economic status in Thai society?

c. Describe your perception of your current status of Thai peasants and farmers?

d. What do you perceive as obstacles for higher education in promoting social mobility among Thai peasants?

e. What are challenging factors facing higher education in facilitating social mobility for Thai peasants?

The open-ended questions permitted participants to articulate experiences from their own perspectives. During the interviews, the researcher followed each question with probes in order to deepen and clarify meanings of participants' responses. There were different lengths for interviews depending on circumstances and the intention of the interviews. The interviewing process started with in-depth interviews from each region (starting in the northeast, followed by the northern region). The initial in-depth interviews in the northeast region took place in Ku Ka Sing, Roi Et Province whereas the in-depth interviews in the north started in Viengchairung, Chiang Rai Province. Shorter interviews were conducted for the purpose of saturation. After the initial interviews in Ku Ka Sing, a question was added based on responses of participants. A theme of farmers' identity and culture started to emerge and hence the question "what does it mean to be a farmer?" was added. This was soon followed by a second question regarding living expenses. It was observed that the heavy expenditure goes way beyond investments in agricultural production. Hence a question, "How have you been affected by the cost of living?" While pursuing the question regarding higher education, it was observed that farmers do not have much to add except when it comes to admissions and expenses. In an attempt to understand this scarcity in response to this question, the researcher expands the concept of education to knowledge and local wisdom. Hence an inquiry regarding local knowledge and wisdom within the agrarian society was added. More responses were gathered through this question especially from the older generation and from children of farmers who observed practices and teachings of their parents.

4.2 Coding

"Coding," according to Charmaz (2006), "means naming segments of data with a label that simultaneously categorizes, summarizes, and accounts for each piece of data" (p. 43). It is an attempt at sorting out data into segments for the purpose of further analysis. Coding helps to reduce data into units that is easier to work with. It consists of reading and re-reading texts. The aim of the first level of coding is to identify what is "happening" in various sections of the text. This type of coding focuses more on action in order to avoid a conceptual leap that can be distracting from

getting to the meaning of statements by participants. This stage remains very tentative and allows the process to remain open for data that might be missing. The primary aim is to make sure the codes fit the data and not the other way around. This research follows Charmaz's (2006) suggestions in conducting the first level of coding: remain open, stay close to the data, keep codes simple, preserve actions, compare data, and move quickly through data.

During axial coding, the researcher groups different identified codes together forming initial meaningful categories. This second stage of coding helps to group together large amount of data into categories by identifying resemblance from open coding. Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest exploring schemes such as conditions (circumstances or situations surrounding the phenomena), actions (ways participants respond to issues or problems), and consequences (outcomes of actions) in this second stage of coding. It assists in relating "categories to subcategories, specifies the properties and dimensions of a category, and resembles the data that was fractured during initial coding to give coherency" (Charmaz, 2006: 60). During this stage of coding, the researcher looks for codes that have close connection and group them together using concepts that best describe these words and phrases. Attention was paid to conditions within the lives of farmers that impact their views and experiences.

The third level of analysis consists of theoretical coding. During this stage emerging themes and patterns were identified. This is where detail descriptions take place and from these descriptions, narrative contents analyzed highlighting patterns from observations and interviews (Berg and Lune, 2012). The main part of this stage is theorizing based on the identified categories by exploring meaningful relationship and causal relation among categories.

Once major themes emerged and a theory started to form, the researcher started theoretical sampling aiming at greater clarification and solidifying identified categories which, at this point, were not as clearly defined. Chai Phothisita, (2556) indicates that the beauty of qualitative research lies with the fact that the process of analysis can take place before the completion of the data gathering process. Hypothetical concepts are a useful platform for constructing theories emerging from on-going collection of data. Theoretical sampling differs from previous sampling in that this second stage of sampling is informed by the emerging theory based on the analysis of the data. Its aim is to seek validation and saturation.

After in-depth interviews in two regions and the emergence of patterns became clearer regarding the living conditions of farmers and their views of education/knowledge, the researcher made two more trips with the intent of clarifying themes and patterns. The first trip was through lower parts of the northern region consisting of Pitsanulok, Sukhothai, Kumpangphet, and Pichit. The second trip started in Udon and moved on through Nong Khai, Loei, Nong Bua Lamphu, and Khon Kaen.

At the completion of interviews in Khon Kaen, through further refinery process of data according to theoretical perspective, the emerging themes appeared to have reached saturation. According to Charmaz (2006), "categories are 'saturated' when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights, nor reveals new properties of your core theoretical categories" (p. 108).

4.3Refining Categories

The refinery process takes place through a continual comparison to see whether or not a new response corresponds with a previous category (Flick, 2002). The aim of the comparison is to seek a conceptualization based on patterns emerging from participants' reports of their experiences. These explanations help to account for variation in responses. As various themes developed, the researcher went back to the interviews to see if the analysis explained each case. In instances where analysis does not offer sufficient explanation, the analysis was revised. Revisions include renaming categories, developing new categories, and identifying alternative paths or processes. At the completion of the refinery process with clear emerging patterns came the task of conceptualizing and exploring relationships among these various categories in order to find the most meaningful explanation. Once themes, patterns and a theory emerged from field notes and interviews, the process seeks further historical data and other relevant information from documents to further clarify the identified theory through the lens of other research and related literatures. Theorizing in the final stage of the analysis seeks a meaningful explanation of the lived experiences of Thai farmers in relation to the role of higher education and social mobility. In this final stage, it is not merely identifying categories, but finding the most theoretically viable framework that best conceptualizes the relationships of knowledge, modernization, education, the social and economic decline among farmers, and the place of agrarian culture within their current lived experiences. This research is intentional in making certain that the emerging theory is based as closely as possible on the data (Ng and Hase, 2008).

4.4 Analysis

In analyzing this qualitative data, the preliminary process involves statistical overview of participants, a comparison of population with a focus on the roles and functions of higher education and finally thematic analysis. The analysis of themes will progress through three theoretical concepts: Bourdieu's social capital, Foucault's genealogy and community culture as an alternative. Bourdieu's concept of social, cultural, and symbolic capitals is utilized as primary lens in the understanding of the role of social capitals in relation to access to higher education among farmers' children and the location of power within the dominant discourse. Foucault's genealogy explores changing discourse through words and phrases and the meanings

attribute to them over time. In **The Order of Things** (2001), Foucault points out that often we think of language as a mean to translate experiences into words but in actuality, experiences themselves are formed by language itself. The analysis also pays attention to changes in what was construed as normative and finally the relationship of knowledge, power, and truth. The analysis seeks to uncover who defines what is normative, who has access to how words are being used, what legitimacy is given to validate norms, and which institutions or individuals regulate means of attaining these norms? Finally, experience and perspectives of farmers within their historical cultural practices, in alignment with the concept of sufficient economy, are examined as a possible alternative form for higher education.

4.5 Validity

When it comes to trustworthiness, this research seeks validity in three areas: descriptive, interpretive, and theoretical validity. For descriptive validity the interview process pays careful attention to note taking including ways to provide accurate description of the process observed. To minimize errors, timely reviews of notes and comparing the transcription to audio recording where contents appear unclear or ambiguous was implemented (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Where data appears to be in conflict, the researcher rechecks the information with the transcriber for accuracy. To ensure interpretive validity, the researcher seeks to obtain participants' viewpoints, thoughts, expression, and perspectives as best as possible by refraining from personal interpretations of statements by participants, or by finding ways of arriving at better explanations of expressions, or statement by participants. One technique often used to ensure interpretive validity is through peer checks or participatory process (Maxwell, 1992). Another method utilized during this study is to triangulate the emerging categories with individuals in the discipline. Four individuals were consulted for the purpose of triangulating the categories: Rattana Lao, lecturer at Pridi Bhanomyong International College, Thammasart University, who authored **A Critical Study of Thailand's Higher Education Reforms: A Culture of Borrowing** (2015) for the area of higher education; Thanwa Jaitieng of Rajabhat University, Kalasin, the author of a number of chapters and research articles on Thai farmers and Kriengsak Kittisab, a local school administrator and a farmer in Ubon Ratchatani province, for cross-checking views and perspectives regarding Thai farmers; Vitchatalum Laovanich, adjunct professor at Mahidol University whose dissertation utilized Foucault's genealogy, for methodology. When it comes to theoretical validity, the research process critically reflects on how patterns and concepts come together; how the emerging themes result in a constructed theory that best explains the phenomena. This implies constant care to reflect back on the relationship between theory and patterns and the constant critical process to adjust theory for it to capture the phenomena more accurately (Johnson, 1997). Further, an emerging theoretical perspective from this study is placed in constant dialogue with other researchers working on related topics.

Summary

Once data from participants, focusing on the impact of changes in public discourse, has been analyzed, the emerging themes are brought in to further enhance issues identified. Through the analysis of historical texts and records as means to better grasp the impact of changes in public discourse had on Thai peasants and social mobility. A summary is drawn from categories emerging from historical and qualitative data on the role of higher education in facilitating social mobility for Thai peasants through the lens of Foucault's genealogy and Bourdieu's *habitus* seeking an understanding of ways changing discourse within higher education impacts social status of Thai peasants.

The researcher approached this data as a Thai who was born and raised in Thailand, but whose academic and clinical trainings have been primarily Western oriented. The interest in this area emerges from a) previous research on human trafficking in Thailand and the impact of economic development on migration and b) increasing awareness within the academic context of the place of power given to higher education in defining knowledge and the increasing economic gap in our society.

Research Process

Objectives	Sources	Data Collection	Data Analysis/ Process	Outcome
Describe current socio-economic situation, social status of Thai peasants and their perspectives on the place of higher education within their everyday experiences.	Archives, records, documents, texts, demographic information, educational policies, census, statistics and qualitative information from informants from four groups (those who are negatively affected, 1st generation children of farmers in higher education, alumni, and academics)	Researching sources in the form of documents, archives, demographic information, educational policies, census, statistics and interviews with four populations.	Descriptive analysis of historical texts, documents etc. and qualitative data. Utilize the process of grounded theory in the process of coding, sampling and theorizing.	Description of current socio-economic and social status of peasants in relation to social mobility and the role of higher education.

Research Process

Objectives	Sources	Data Collection	Data Analysis/ Process	Outcome
Examine the role of Thai higher education in facilitating social mobility for Thai peasants.	Archives, records, documents, archives, texts, demographic information, educational policies, census, statistics and qualitative information through interviews with academics.	Researching sources in the form of documents, archives, demographic information, educational policies, census, statistics and interviews with academics.	Descriptive analysis of historical texts, documents etc. and qualitative data.	Identified plans, programs, and initiatives by higher education in addressing social mobility among Thai peasants.
Analyze emerging themes related to the role of higher education and social mobility among Thai peasants through lens of Bourdieu's symbolic capital and Foucault's	Emerging themes from historical and qualitative data, Foucault's concept of genealogy (the formation of dominant discourse through relationship between knowledge and power) and Bourdieu's social, cultural, and symbolic capital.	Researching conceptual and philosophical perspectives on Foucault's genealogy and Bourdieu's *habitus*.	Bourdieu's Social Capital as the primary theory follows by genealogy (study the place of power within discourse by looking at the connection between knowledge, power, and truth claim, Foucault, 1975). While genealogy is the primary focus, the procedural steps in the analysis of the interviews will follow that of grounded theory.	Identified factors leading to changes in public discourse on higher education in Thailand and impacts on social mobility of Thai farmers in relation to economic and social status within Thai society.

CHAPTER 4

The Context: Higher Education and Social Mobility in Thailand

Introduction

The cultural transition and methodical changes in agricultural cultivation, particularly among rice farmers, find their roots in ideologic domination. The gradual shifts and changes need to be placed within the context of an on-going struggle of two discourses, the emerging domination of modernity within the context of globalization and the long tradition of community culture prevalence among agrarian communities in rural Thailand. The control of food production through science and technology has placed a limit on access to everyday survival of local farmers. The bio-politic of the new ideology has significantly transformed the landscape of rice farming in Thailand. One of the most significant factors for this transformation is knowledge. The legitimization of new knowledge with a utopian promise has education as an institution that facilitates its realization. Hence to understand the lives of farmers and the drive toward social mobility through education calls for a historical perspective as context, without which the narratives of Thai peasants only reinforces philosophical and economic marginalization. This chapter offers a historical context exploring the impetus for development and the role of higher education since the 1st National Economic and Development Plans in the early 1960s. It relies on historical information, documents, and statistical data to provide a broad context that includes political environment, development ideology, and the rapid expansion of higher education across the country to address local needs and increase accessibility.

Social Mobility: A Preliminary Reflection

A middle age farmer from Srisaket lives in a shack with his wife on a small piece of land. One of his children graduated from a reputable university while the other is currently studying. “No debt,” he informed. When asked how he did it, “Simplicity,” was his response. A certain depth was felt as he walked toward the field. And yet farmers received only lip service as the backbone of the country when in actuality, poor and uneducated were commonly felt perceptions.

In 2012, Wendell Berry was invited to deliver a Jefferson Lecture, one of the most prestigious honors by the United States Federal Government for intellectual achievement in the area of humanities. The lecture was titled, “It All Turns on Affection” and it contains the following statement:

> The cost of this has been paid also in a social condition which apologists call “mobility,” implying that it has been always “upward” to a “higher standard of living,” but which in fact has been an ever-worsening unsettlement of our

> people, and the extinction or near-extinction of traditional and necessary communal structures (Berry, 2012: para. 48).

For Berry life consists of the 'boomers' who 'pillage and run' striving for that upward mobility. And there are the stickers who stay because they love where they are and their land. His strong appeal is an invitation for people to cultivate affection for the land, because the opposite has wasted the world in ways that ultimately will be inhabitable. Here he cites Foster in describing the boomers:

> It is the vice of a vulgar mind to be thrilled by bigness, to think that a thousand square miles are a thousand times more wonderful than one square mile…That is not imagination. No, it kills it…Your universities? Oh, yes, you have learned men who collect…facts, and facts, and empires of facts. But which of them will rekindle the light within (cited by Berry, 2012: para. 61).

The land lovers are not the pursuers of upward mobility. Affection for the land, for Berry, is the agrarian vision of Thomas Jefferson leading one to stay content within one's cultural location in contrast to the dominant discourse seeking to dignify 'mobility' only to witness communities being consumed where "much has been wasted, almost nothing has flourished" (Berry, 2012: para. 72).

This reference to Wendell Berry may sound odd as a place to begin the research on social mobility, but the greater irony is the location of this lecture, the location of community as that primary advocate and financial force for mobility offering the most prestigious honors by the Federal Government for intellectual achievement to Wendell Berry, the person whose counter-culture agrarian root is anything but the boomers. It is in view of this irony that this research seeks to unfold. Berry's speech is placed within the context of world economy judging values based on accumulation of wealth. Within this discourse, social mobility becomes the standard toward which every community strives to achieve. The examples are numerous. In September 2014, the World Bank organized a half-day conference on the topic of "Economic Mobility and Shared Prosperity: Insights from Middle-Income Countries" where by the objective of the conference was to improve the economic mobility of the less well-off and find ways to promote upward mobility (World Bank, 2014). In **Economic Mobility and the Rise of the Latin American Middle Class** (2013), Ferreira et al. traced how over the past 15 years, changes over social class took place among 43 percent of all Latin Americans, resulting mostly in upward mobility. The authors gave cautionary notes on ways to make sure that this mobility comes to full fruition. Research by Cesar et al. (2015) **on Economic Mobility in Europe and Central Asia: Exploring Patterns and Uncovering Puzzles** shows achievement in poverty reduction through education and employment, and also recommends that ensuring sustainable progress toward economic mobility request policies that promote human capital accumulation and job creation. Before explaining various charts showing how far behind Britain is in promoting social mobility, Simon

Rogers (2012) writes “Social mobility is the kind of thing all politicians can sign up to.”

Social mobility seems to be based on a particular assumption that upward movement is a form of directive that every society should pursue for the well-fare of their citizen. It is in view of this juxtaposition that this research proceeds in answering questions regarding social mobility as facilitated by higher education and the lived experiences of Thai peasants including their perspectives on the production of knowledge, the type of knowledge that extends an invitation to stay and remain or what Berry calls the stickers.

Social Mobility: The Question

What is social mobility? What drives the push for this mobility and its anticipated benefits for the societies and the global community at large? This question takes on a significant meaning in view of Thai peasants since they are among the poorest in the country. Approximately 94 percent of the 21 million inhabitants in the Isan region lived in rural areas. Of the above number, 80 percent of the total workforce is in the agriculture sector. Most are smallholders and approximately 85 percent of these farmers are able to meet their basic needs (Barnad, Trebuil, Dufumier and Nongluck Suphanchaimart, 2006). According to the 2013 Agriculture Census, 50 percent of households own between 10 to 39 rai. Income generated per rai is at approximate 2,000 baht. Pasuk Phongpaichit states that as high as 800,000 households are landless and earn approximately 1,400 baht per person per month. According to Thanawant Ponchai (2014), farmers’ debt increased by 67.94 percent while their income decreased by 47.84 percent. This context suggests the importance of the nature of this research based on this population in relation to social mobility. The needs of local farmers imply a sense of urgency in how higher education can facilitate transformation and hence the primary aim of this study is to understand how higher education facilitates social mobility for this population. However, the results based on data from historical texts, documents, statistical data, and qualitative data raised a different type of question. Instead of questioning how higher education has facilitated social mobility, the question, based on the lived experiences of farmers, now turns on social mobility itself. What drives the push for social mobility? Why should education facilitate social mobility? What is the underlying assumption when we speak of social mobility? Is it possible to construe social mobility as a form of discursive practice within a particular genealogy? It is to this question that this research seeks to systematically unpack and excavate in order to arrive at a better clarification. The answer to the above questions regarding the role of Thai higher education and social mobility of Thai peasants will be explored in the following sequence.

Chapter 4 describes historical context for the rapid expansion of higher education in Thailand. One of the primary issues explored in chapter 4 is the question

of how social mobility comes to play an important role within a Thai historical context and the formation of a discourse that drives this production of knowledge, plus the venue to disseminate through higher education. Due to the historical nature of the content of this chapter, information is based primarily on historical research, documents and statistical information.

Chapter 5 explores the current socio-economic status of Thai farmers. It covers mainly the economic and social status of Thai farmers. The main themes emerged from qualitative data gathered through the interview process are based on 67 local farmers in the north and northeast regions, including interviews from first generation children of farmers in higher education and children of farmers who completed higher education. Hence the way each theme and subheading is arranged is in accord with ideas and concepts from farmers. In reporting each theme, data from other sources such as statistical information, research data and other historical documents are utilized for the purpose of supplementing and supporting emerging themes.

Conceptually, chapter 6 seeks to understand the impact of the production of knowledge on farmers in their everyday living. This chapter explores the impact higher education has on local Thai farmers and their social mobility. The information is based on participants' lived experiences.

In seeking an understanding of the interconnectedness of various themes in accord with the third objective, chapter 7 theorizes and analyzes emerging themes in order to ground them on the basis of the data from the lived experiences of the participants within their socio-economic and political contexts. The discussion is explored through discourse analysis, the economic assumption underlying the dominant discourse that drives the social mobility as a form of discursive practice. Social capital and genealogy are utilized as attempts to answer the question how farmers arrived at the current socio-economic location.

The final chapter covers conclusion, discussion and recommendations. Recommendations aim at exploring various alternatives higher education can facilitate to promote growth and nurturing for local Thai farmers and the upcoming generation.

Social Mobility: Related Issues

Social mobility appears to be the gold standard of every society with the vision of a better community and a more proportionate distribution of wealth. The level of intergenerational mobility becomes an important indicator of how well a community has achieved this goal. Sturgis and Buscha (2015), write:

> The level of intergenerational social mobility in a society is widely taken as a yardstick of its fairness and equality, outwardly signaling whether citizens achieve social and economic status through hard work and ability, or as a result of advantages bestowed upon them by their parents. The compelling

> argument that increasing social and economic fluidity between generations makes a society fairer is girded by a more instrumental economic discourse; that the allocation of individuals to occupations on the basis of merit is a more efficient use of the available 'talent pool'. In a socially fluid society, therefore, jobs will be filled by individuals possessing the most suitable attributes to undertake them, with higher levels of economic output and productivity accruing as a result. By implication, then, increasing social mobility should yield benefits, not only for deserving individuals but for society as a whole (pp. 512-513).

If the concept of mobility works out in ways corresponding to theoretical understanding, everyone should have equal opportunity to move up in the ladder of social hierarchy and merits instead of privileges become the defining factor for mobility. As such it has become an important issue among politicians and policy makers in their attempt to create a better society. Among politicians, media commentators and educators, education is fundamental in facilitating social mobility (Ishida, Muller and Ridge 1995). According to British government, 13 of the 17 indicators regulating short-term and medium term progress toward increasing social mobility are measures of educational attainment (HM Government 2011a). Writing on the role of education Sturgis and Buscha (2015) explain the importance of the role of education in facilitating social mobility pointing to two empirical variables. "Educational attainment is highly predictive of socio-economic achievement and socio-economic origin is strongly related to educational attainment" (p. 513). The policy goal therefore is to delink this correlation by designing policy whereby socio-economic origin will not be a determining factor in the attainment of education. According to Haveman and Smeeding (2006),social mobility has traditionally been one of the two primary goals for higher education. There are clear statistical figures showing differences in income level between those with earned degrees and those without. Through higher education, it is commonly believed, opportunity for social mobility is made available for the disadvantaged. Public higher educational systems have been tasked with the creation of economic efficiency and social equity. The first goal is achieved through feeding the labor market with acquired skills by subsidizing postsecondary education. The second goal is to make sure there is an even start for young people making certain parental socio-economic status which does not affect their entry into higher education. A study conducted by Greenstone, Looney, Patashnik, and Yu (2013) shows that a child born into the lowest quintile has a 45 percent chance of remaining in the same social location and a five percent chance of moving on to a higher quintile. Those from the lowest quintile who earn college degrees have 16 percent chance of remaining within the same quintile and a 19 percent chance of moving to the top quintile. Without a college degree, a person from the lowest income bracket will most likely remain in the same socio-economic level, but an individual earning a college degree has a much better opportunity to move to a higher quintile. Education, argues Greenstone et al., (2013) has among the highest

returns in comparison to other forms of investment. From 2010 to 2013 a high school graduate without a college degree earns USD 30,000 per year, while those with bachelor's degree earn just under USD 60,000 per year. Individuals with advanced degrees may earn over USD 80,000. Those who attended college but did not complete the degree still earn USD 7,000 more than high school graduates, while those holding associate's degree earn over USD 10,000 more. From an investment point of view, the returns from earning an associate's or bachelor's degree exceed 15 percent on average and those who attended college but did not complete the program still earn 9 percent more. This is significant in comparison to average returns of investment in stock markets at a little over five percent or three percent for gold, Treasury bonds and T-bills.

From an economic point of view, higher education is recognized as institutions that yield high returns for investment especially within the context of global economy. The expansion of tertiary education therefore plays a very essential role in offering that possibilities for mobility for various demographic populations. This expansion, as a response to market demands, is shown in the increment of the number of adults receiving tertiary education from 19 percent in 2000 to 29 percent in 2010. Bob Goddard, in **Making a Difference: Australian International Education** (2012), estimates the number of students enrolled in higher education will reach 262 million by 2025 from 178 million in 2010. Reflecting on the issue of expansion of higher education, Gibney (2013) writes: "the higher education boom is driven by efforts to cultivate knowledge economies in developing and emerging countries." This concept of knowledge economy forms an essential underlying ideology that drives the pursuit of development through knowledge and education. Within this context social mobility remains an important symbol rooted in capitalism. Carnoy (1990) writes:

> Formal education is one of these symbols. Universally, but particularly in societies marked by large differences in material consumption and social status, acquiring formal schooling represents possibilities for individual social mobility, even though relatively few actually achieve such mobility. At an ideological level, capitalist states have promoted the concept that a society with more schooling will be marked by greater income equality and more democracy, even though, empirically, the link between expanded schooling and income equality, while positive, is rather weak. Thus, at both the individual and the societal level, the promise of education for greater equality is strong symbolically despite the absence of a conforming reality (p. 70).

It is from the lens of this development ideology imbedded within the history of Thai higher education that one can better grasp the underlying force that drives the rapid expansion of tertiary education in Thailand.

Education in Thailand and the Economics of Social Mobility

In the early 1960s economists were seeking explanation for high economic growth rates beyond traditional factors during the post-war United States and found an important additional growth factor in the concept of human capital as proposed by Nobel Prize winner, Gary Becker. This concept has subsequently informed development policies around the world through the guidance of World Bank. It is recognized that education is key in human capital theory. In Thailand, the gross domestic product (GDP) doubled during the period between 1960 and 2000. The average educational level in the 1960s was three years of education and less with GDP below USD 2,500 per capita. However in 2000, the average rate of educational level increased to seven years and GPD grew to USD 5,000. The comparison of income and educational level in 2005 shows the following:

Table 6: Average Monthly Income by Educational Level

Education Level	Average Wage
Primary or less	4,390
Secondary	6,772
Higher Education	17,680
Unknown	17,680
Population average	8,259

(Source: World Bank, 2014)

Hence the level of education can make a rather significant change in income level. The study further shows by the age of 25, individuals with tertiary education earn Baht 5,000 more than those with either primary or secondary education. At retirement, those with tertiary education receive Baht 40,000 in comparison to Baht 25,000 for those in secondary education and Baht 5,000 in primary education (World Bank, 2014). Beyond the economic, education also brings about other positive changes within a community.

> Investments in education lead not only to private but also to social rates of return. Economists have estimated that there are substantial social benefits of additional years of education. Besides economic or monetary returns, non-monetary private returns may come in the form of improved health conditions of individuals, increased efficiency in making personal choices, expanded ability to learn new technology or better opportunities to pursue higher levels of education. Higher educational levels are also associated with reduced crime rates. For female students, longer participation in education is linked to a reduction in fertility rates and eventually net population growth, which in turn

> are associated with reduced poverty. More years of schooling are also associated with greater awareness about HIV/AIDS transmission and protection, an epidemic of great concern in Thailand and the region as a whole (World Bank, 2014: 6).

The above explanation and statistical information confirm the importance of the function of higher education and its potential in facilitating social mobility within the Thai context.

Social Mobility and Development (*Karn Pattana*) in Thailand

In order to understand social mobility in Thailand and the role of higher education, it is essential to place the development of its ideology in historical context so as to better grasp socio-political and economic forces that shaped and formed the discourse of modernization in conjunction with economic mobility of the nation. What was driving the nation in this direction? Why was development (*pattana*) such an important ideological term in this historical period? What was accomplished? What roles do institutions of higher education play in the production of knowledge toward modernization and industrialization of the nation? What has higher education accomplished from the 1st National Economic Development Plan up until the 21st century?

1. The Historical Context of Development Ideology

Even though not much can be said regarding the direct role Thai higher education plays in facilitating social mobility for Thai farmers, but indirectly, numerous attempts have been initiated in order to help address the problem of economic gap within the country. And this gap is most visible among Thai farmers who, for many generations, have been placed in the lowest hierarchical social category economically and otherwise. Hence every attempt to bridge the gap has direct or indirect impacts on farmers both positively or negatively.

While many attempts took place throughout Thai history, the 1960s, historically and politically took a significant turn. Around this period Thailand was experiencing political and economic instability through changes in leadership from Luang Phibunsongkhram to Phote Sarasin, and finally, to Thanom Kittikachorn. This internal instability had significant implications in view of the spread of communism in Indo-China. The geo-political implications were global in scope. The two competing global ideologies were at play in this region and Thailand was caught in the middle. Thailand became a strategic geo-political location for the U.S.To plant seeds of capitalism and modernization as a form of resistance to the spread of communism within the region. As a result, there emerged a close connection of Thai-U.S. relations.

> For the United States, the rise and spread of communism in Indochina carried global implications, and was perceived in that context. This meant that

> Thailand, whatever its inherent value, was important primarily for its utility in the struggle to prevent further Communist gains in Indochina. This also meant that America's global responsibilities dictated a fundamentally broader perspective on regional security issues than that taken by the Thais. For Thailand, on the other hand, the struggles of Indochina were of much more immediate concern. Should Communist forces prevail, they would be established not thousands of miles away but just across the Mekong, directly threatening the security and existence of the Kingdom itself (Randolph, 1986: 27).

It is in light of this historical context that the political maneuvering focusing on Western ideology of development by Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat could be understood. In the early 1958, Sarit Thanarat was in the U.S. for medical treatment. While there, he held consultations with Eisenhower and Dulles regarding the future of Thailand. According to Wyatt, Sarit Thanarat was "reflecting on the self-serving and fractious behavior of legislators, on unbridled and mainly destructive press criticism, and on labor strife and demonstrations that seemed to him to be paralyzing the kingdom" (Wyatt 2003, 270). He, in consultation with Thanat Khorman who at the time served as Thai Ambassador to the U.S. decided that it was time for a true revolution to take place in order to return Thailand to stabilize in light of the internal instability and the threat of communism. On the 20th of October 1958, he returned to Thailand, abolished the constitution and declared martial law. Describing what took place on this date, Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit (2009) write:

> On 20 October 1958, he carried out a second coup, declared martial law, annulled parliament, discarded the constitution, banned political parties, and arrested hundreds of politicians, journalists, intellectuals, and activists. The US cheered and granted US $ 20 million in economic aid. The State Department memorialized that this was not a coup but 'an orderly attempt by the present ruling group to solidify its position.' Sarit called it a 'revolution' (p. 148).

Aside from establishing his "political ideology on indigenous principles of authority, on a traditional type of social and political hierarchy, and on old paternalistic styles of rule" (Wyatt, 2003: 271), development was one of his primary goals. The push for development as stated in President Truman's inaugural speech in 1947 was well understood by Sarit Thanarat and expressed through his vision for Thailand. Development means progress and the Thai word '*pattana*' (development) became a catchword during his leadership. "Our important task in this revolutionary era is development which includes economic development, educational development, administrative development, and everything else" (cited by Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, 2009: 150). He popularized the slogan "Work is money. Money is work. This brings happiness." And with this slogan he welcomed the World Bank to Thailand. Thus began the new era of development.

> The Sarit government's commitment to development soon could claim substantial accomplishments. More than any previous government, it attended to rural needs through highway construction, irrigation, rural electrification, and agricultural research and extension work. Particular attention was paid to the most densely populated and poorest regions of the country, and especially to the northeast, where Sarit acted out of his own family background and Lao roots. The government made concerted efforts to improve primary education and committed itself to lengthen compulsory primary schooling from four to seven years. It increased the numbers of students in secondary schools by 63 percent between 1958 and 1962, while also expanding vocational training. It increased the annual production of new teachers by 79 percent in the same period and began a major expansion at the university level by opening new universities in Chiang Mai and Khon Kaen and planning for similar expansion in the southern provinces. Coupled with these efforts went stronger centralized economic planning under the National Economic Development Board, with five-year development plans beginning in 1961 that emphasized investment in irrigation, transportation, electric power, and education (Wyatt, 2003: 272-273).

Central to Sarit Thanarat's development plan were local farmers who formed the backbone of the country. Development meant the potential to transform the poorest population of the country into thriving communities through various means that come with modernization and technologies. The ability to change the status of local farmers and offer them a better living standard was central to his development plan. In 1960 he gave a public lecture to a group of farmers and in that speech he stated:

> Agriculture is the surest way leading towards a free and stable (*mankhong*) life. You can help yourself without having always to depend on others. To "establish yourself" (*tangtua*), agriculture is the surest way…Although your house might be in a very poor condition, it is still a happy and peaceful place, for it is your own.
>
> In the past, we held the belief that the life of the farmer is a lowly lot, without any chance for progress or wealth. But now, conditions have changed immensely. The study of agriculture has progressed to the point where farming can produce wealth and happiness. The world has given agriculture more prestige; nations attest that farmers are the most important sector of society constituting the nation's backbone, the nation's nourisher…The government, and myself in particular, have given great consideration to the farmer, we are improving and supporting agriculture by carrying out irrigation and water supply programs, by improving and creating transportation facilities, improving public health, and carrying out community development projects to increase the return farmers earn from their labor. However, there are many farmers, and immediate results are not possible. There must be a comprehensive plan that will involve time and money. Nevertheless, it is my firm and unalterable decision that I shall to the best of my abilities continue to

improve the livelihood of farmers (cited by Thak Chaloemtiarana, 2007: 153-54).

In the above lecture, it was clear for Sarit Thanarat that the well-being of farmers was central and that new knowledge to be acquired through modernization could pave the way for the improvement of their living standard because "study of agriculture has progressed" and this could result in "wealth and happiness." But immediate results could not be achieved without a "comprehensive plan" and this plan involved time and money. His conception of the comprehensive plan for development implied the integration of Thailand into world economy with capitalism as its guiding ideology. For Sarit Thanarat, one political ideology was clear to him, to develop is to modernize. And modernization, in his estimation, meant better living for Thai people across the country. To achieve this betterment required improvement of roads, irrigation, education, the outward appearances of villages and towns, cleanliness of houses and proper social behavior (Thak Chaloemtiarana, 2007: 149). Turning these into reality he drafted the 1st National Economic Development Plan through the help of World Bank. However, Thak Chaloemtiarana observes (2007), Sarit Thanarat's idea of development was negotiated by the political circumstances such as the political situation in Laos that posted security threat to Thailand and the recognition of the need for U.S. support and intervention. Hence the plan to improve the life of local Thais was constantly being readjusted out of considerations for the requirements of the U.S. government policy in Southeast Asia. This readjustment significantly impacted the objectives of the 1st National Economic Development Plan. Pertaining the on-going discussion regarding social mobility, it is interesting to observe that this 1st National Economic Development Plan did not differ by much from recommendations by the World Bank in substance.

According to the recommendations by the National Economic Development Board:

1. The primary objective of the National Economic Development plan is to raise the standard of living of the people of Thailand. This succinct statement appears to suggest a purely material goal, without regard to social/cultural and aesthetic values. But while material well-being may be an end in itself, it is also, and more importantly, a means to a further end, in so far as the achievement of this objective would enable all citizens to live a fuller, more creative, and happier lives.
2. The achievement of this objective requires that there should be an increase in the total per capita output of goods and services and that this increased output should be equitably distributed so that, to the extent possible, all citizens, and not merely a privilege few, derived benefit from it.
3. It is believed that in Thailand increased output will be mostly readily secured through the spontaneous efforts of individual citizens, fostered and assisted by Government, rather than through Government itself entering directly into the field of production. The key note of the public development programme is, therefore, the encouragement of economic growth in the private sector, and the resources of Government will be mainly directed to projects, both in

> the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors of the economy, which have this objective in view. Over the next three years, the construction of irrigation works, the building and improvement of roads and other means of transport, the provision of inexpensive electric power, and other physical "infrastructure" projects will claim the bulk of Government expenditure. Agriculture extension and research, technical training, vocational education, and other projects to extend technical knowledge will likewise take a high share of Government investment. The use of resources for the purposes and other Government programs will provide means and opportunities for increased production and enable the private sector to expand on its own initiative. Government will also under take to provide for the expansion of social services (National Economic Development Board, 1964).

The above statement from the National Economic Development Board shows the priority of material accumulations and production outputs as means toward the improvement of the quality of life. And education became the tool for maximization of productions. Through these recommendations, development meant industrialization and modernization as defined by Western standards. Science and technology were introduced to the world of agriculture, and the practice of sufficiency in farming went through ideological changes resulting in cash crops for export. The movement in accord with the 1st National Economic Development Plan was a transition from agrarian society toward greater alignment with capitalism (while capitalism was already well established in Thailand under the leadership of Plaek Phibunsongkram, it was not fully realized since it was under the regulation of the government). The U.S. Government encouraged Sarit Thanarat to take capitalism to the next level by opening up the market and released capitalism from full regulations by the government (Amornwich Nakornthap, 2014).

For Sarit Thanarat, education was one of the main driving forces for national development and had a special place in the 1st National Economic Development Plan. The U.S. Government had a very distinct role in supporting development as a whole and educational plan as well. The educational piece was closely connected to the need to integrate Thailand into the world economy. Leadership in economics and technical fronts who shared U.S.' vision of development was needed. Even prior to the term of Sarit Thanarat, since the launching of the Thai-U.S. technical and economic cooperation, the U.S. invested heavily in Thailand. A historical review of Thai-U.S. relations by Wiwat Mungkahdi (1986) shows that in 1950 the Fulbright Foundation launched the educational aid program whereby 800 Thai students were able to complete higher educational training in the U.S. In subsequent two decades following, the U.S. Government spent USD 35 million for the development of human resources in Thailand. The aid covered numerous areas such as vocational training, medical training, teachers' training and general liberal education. It is interesting that agriculture received a very special attention by the U.S. Government.

> A central figure in this field of cooperation was American rice-breeding expert Dr. H. H. Love of Cornell, who spent seven years in Thailand researching local rice seed breeds and carrying out a rice improvement program. The United States was, in fact, widely involved in the country's agricultural development-including irrigation, soil and water management, agronomic development, and agricultural credit and marketing" (Wiwat Mungkandi, 1986: 8).

According to Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit (2009: 151) "Several senior officials were taken to the USA for training. Around 1500 went on Fulbright or similar grants between 1951 and 1985. The numbers of Thais attending U.S. higher education rose from a few hundred in the 1950s to 7000 by the early 1980s."

Approximately 80 percent of those sponsored students returned and served as professors in various universities in Thailand. U.S. Scholars, under sponsorship of the U.S. Government, provided guidance in the development of teaching methods and curriculum development. In this respect, the Rocky Fellow Foundation played an active role assisting in the development of science curriculum (Amornwich Nakornthap, 2014).

From the lens of this historical background, the initial role of higher education may be framed within the context of development in relations to National Economic and Development Plans and the need to integrate Thailand into the world economy through modernization and industrialization. And the actualization of this plan would not have been possible without knowledge and thus the role of higher education in facilitating this growth and development.

After reviewing educational policies in developing countries such as China, Cuba, Tanzania, Mozambique, and Nicaragua, Carnoy and Samoff (1990) point out how leaders of these countries used education as means to achieve the goal of social transformation. And the promotion of education for change took place not in rhetoric but in actuality mobilizing the entire populations to achieve universal literary for the sake of expansion. They write:

> Education is seen in such societies as a route to all things. It is expected to be the primary vehicle for developing and training skills to ensure that the next generation in the society is adequately prepared for the specific tasks that the society expects of it. It is expected to be the place where appropriate ideas, values, and worldviews will be developed so that from the process of schooling there emerges a new person-not simply someone with skills, but also someone with an understanding of his or her own role in the world and of what is important for that society (p. 7).

Hence, argue Carnoy and Samoff, (1990) educational system plays both roles in producing political democrats and economic capitalists and thus social mobility forms an important symbolic meaning within the dominant discourse of development. Before proceeding to the next section, it is important to keep in mind the role the U.S. Government played in the growth and development of Thai higher education from the

early stage because it has significant philosophical implications in subsequent development and directions.

2. Historical Development of Higher Education

This section explores various factors such as political, economic and otherwise that shaped and formed historical development of Thai higher education from the 1960s till the movement toward globalization. The 1st National Economic and Social Development Plan of 1961 played a decisive role in the expansion of education for the purpose of national development focusing on economic development, increased agricultural productions, improved quality of exports, expansion of industries (such as cement, textile, sugar, paper, tobacco etc), energy, transportation, trade relations and finance (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, n.d.). Education, as clearly stated within the plan itself, was tasked to align its goals with the above agenda of the 1st National Economic and Social Development Plans. The first stage of the plan (1961 to 1963) involved designing educational plans to promote economic development through vocational trainings in order to increase production capacity. The second stage (1964 to 1966) focused on preparing various types of labor forces as the country was expanding economically. Vocational trainings remained one of the primary goals but with increased quality in order to meet the skill needs of the market and increased the number of trained individuals to feed the industries. Regarding the role of higher education, the plan included the expansion into various regions of Thailand such as Chiang Mai, Khon Khaen, and Songklanakarin Provinces. Heavy emphasis was placed on programs such as engineering, science, technology and others that could assist the economic development of the country. Many institutions of higher education refocused their goals and aligned themselves with the stated plans offerings academic programs in areas such as management for development, political science, business administration, basic science, applied science, and technologies. The 2nd National Economic and Social Development Plan under the leadership of Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn reaffirmed the continuity of the 1st national plan by expanding compulsory education, improved vocational trainings, and enhanced offerings of universities and encouraged private educational sectors to become parts of the 2nd development plans. From 1964 to 65 there were 4.95 million primary and secondary students or one in six of the total population, nine technical colleges and 27 teachers training colleges in every region of the country training students at the associate and undergraduate levels (Amornwich Nakornthap, 2014).

The next stage of development was initiated by the emerging spirit of democracy particularly among university students in the later part of the 1960s. What paved the way for this movement was partly due to the Thai-U.S. relations within the context of anti-communism whereby U.S. support was a necessity in combating rising tide of regional communism. The presence of U.S.Military was clearly felt with over

50,000 American soldiers on Thai soil fighting in a neighboring country. With economic growth came modernization and increased number of U.S. educated Thai scholars embracing Western values. But Western economic and military supports came with Western values promoting democratic political structure.

> The longing for democracy, freedom, and the rule of law grew. At the same time, despite being drawn to the liberal values of American culture, students vehemently criticized American racism— embodied for them in the murder of Martin Luther King Jr. (1968). They also criticized developments in America's involvement in Vietnam, particularly the "My Lai Massacre" of March 1968, in which hundreds of unarmed South Vietnamese citizens, including children and the elderly, were mercilessly slaughtered. Countering official anti-communist propaganda, students now started to call the American government the "White Peril." Gradually, sympathy for socialist values spread, inspired, in particular, by the Chinese Cultural Revolution (Kittisak Prokati, 2009: 99).

This longing for democracy and freedom did not sit well among university students under the leadership of Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn. The tension started mounting with increased number of demonstrations taking place from 1971 onward. In 1973 when nine students from Ramkamhaeng University were expelled for criticizing members of the government for their illegal conducts, students from various universities took to the streets. On October 13, 1973, the peaceful demonstration grew rapidly to the size of over 500,000 students and was met with violent crackdowns by the military. October 14, 1973, is remembered as '*Sibsee Tula Mahawipayok*' (Tragedy of October 14) where 77 students died and 857 were injured when the military rolled out tanks and live bullets were fired at demonstrators (Plaek Kempila, n.d). While there were many roadblocks toward greater democracy such as the political elites reaction for self-preservation leading to the students massacre on the 6th of October 1974, a *coup d'etat* by Admiral Sagat Chaloyu in 1976 and the era of 'Half a Constitution' during this period, greater consciousness was implanted among the population, a consciousness that have gained its momentum. This awareness was translated into various realms include the field of education and thus the increasing need for greater equitability in terms of access to education for the purpose of closing the income gap within the country. In 1974, a committee was established to reform the foundation of Thai educational system with one of the goals of reducing inequality and supporting the younger generation in various regions of the country. This goal was met through the establishment of Sukhothai Thammathirat University, a distant education institution, in 1978. From 1972 to 1982, the number of students attending higher educational institutions increased from 60,000 to 600,000 within a period of 10 years. Besides, non-formal education was made available for adults that would not fit into the regular formal educational structure thus increasing the number of those attaining education at various educational levels. Further, in order to promote the quality of education, the status of Prasarnmit College of Educational

was promoted to Srinakharinwirot University thus enhancing the status of educators and their capabilities (Amornwich Nakornthap, 2014: 77-83).

The rapid economic growth of the 1980s and the 1990s with 12 percent GDP from 1987 to 1990 and eight percent from 1990 to 1994, placed Thailand on the verge of becoming the fifth Asian tiger (Thongchai Srivadhana and John Cater, 2006). Pro-corporate economic policies were implemented while privatization encouraged. Policies lobbied by corporations' facilitated expansion of business. Connections with political power were utilized to avoid red tapes and bureaucracy making for smooth and rapid business transactions resulting in accumulations of wealth among the minority of population with access to resources. Reflecting on the relationship between corporate and the government during the economic boom, Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit (2009) write:

> Much of the profits of the boom went to the old conglomerates, which continued to diversify into new business opportunities. But financial liberalization and the sheer pace of the boom allowed others to participate. Several of the new entrepreneurs began from the provinces. The most successful of the era, Thaksin Shinawatra, came from an established business family in Chiang Mai. Thaksin rose rapidly by gaining government concessions for the new sector of telecommunications, and by exploiting the rising stockmarket. In five years from the late 980s, his net worth rose to over U.S.$ 2 billion (pp. 204-05).

Thailand growth was exponential and every other areas of the society were affected. Modernization led to increased urbanization. Tertiary education helped feed the much-needed expanded market. In three decades from 1970 the number of tertiary educational institutions increased 20 times. The size of Thai middle class expanded at a rapid pace (Baker and Phasuk Phongpaichit, 2009: 207).

However the bubble economy was not able to sustain itself. The accumulation of non-proactive loans reached a critical point in conjunction with the weakening of Thai currency (Amornwich Nakornthap, 2014: 89). By 1995 the stock market started to slide, the property market had shown itself to be incongruent while export growth faltered. Market speculation against Thai baht led to the leaking of foreign capitals. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) stepped in with USD 17.2 billion and insisted that Thailand float its currency (Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, 2009: 258). The stock market crash of 1997 led the government to shut down 58 finance companies. In a period of one year Thai companies went from too much credit to no credit in the mid-1997. The stock exchange of Thailand (SET) index reached the bottom at 300 points in 1997 (Thongchai Srivadhana and John Cater, 2006).The economic crisis awakened among Thai people to a new awareness of the negative impact of globalization. Some saw globalization as the process of enslavement of Thai economy, while others perceived the crisis as the lack of readiness within the country. Even devote promoters of globalization became cautious and recognized the need for Thailand to promote

internal institutions in order to survive in a volatile global market. Anan Panyarachun, who cautioned Thailand to not reject globalization acknowledged the need for a more self-reliant approach and the promotion of the Thai-way. “In the pit of the crisis,” wrote Baker and Phasuk Phongpaichit, “localists dominated the debate. They blamed the crisis on the prior pattern of development” (2009: 261). Voices emerged calling for a return to local economy and the ways of self-reliant based on “cultural economics which is not about money alone, but also about family, community, culture, and the environment” (261). This historical development formed a context whereby education was tasked with duties to connect with local communities in providing basic education and to work closely with various communities in order to high light the importance of education in promoting community culture and self-reliant approaches toward ways of living (Amornwich Nakornthap, 2014:90-91). However the force of globalization was accumulating its momentum and thus the counter-cultural shift toward sufficiency was soon override and the world of higher education kept up with the global pace by forming policies that would set Thailand toward a more competitive path in the global market where knowledge is now traded as a commodity. In 2000 The Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment was established for the purpose of auditing educational quality and keeping higher education competitive.

This brief recounting of the history of higher education in Thailand aligns with its impetus, the drive toward modernization. Since the 1st National Economic and Development Plan, higher education was aware of its role in facilitating development. Assuming modernity as the tool, it took part in the reproduction of knowledge in various forms from creating the infra-structure to preparing a population for a particular labor market needed to help develop the country. The expansion of regional universities was a necessity offering programs such as engineering, science, political science, business administration, and technologies. The collective consciousness of the spirit of democracy and the October 14 demonstration contained traces of modernity and Western influences. It is interesting to note that while the crash of the 1980s led to the rising awareness of the negative impact of modernization and globalization, the pushed for sustainability did not last that long. The movement toward globalization soon returned with greater force, the neo-liberal policies soon came to dominate. International Monetary Fund and Asian Development Bank stipulated loan-terms requiring, as in many other countries, reducing budget funding for education. Varghese (2001) states:

> Another important feature of developments during the crisis period were bail-out packages provided by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. These insisted on privatization of university services, more decentralization of the decision making processes in education, and institution autonomy for universities and other institutions of higher education (p. 196).

In view of this development, Rattana Lao (2015) observes that "key policymakers in Thailand looked to the United States and referred to its educational experience as a benchmark and a rationale to promote policies" (p. 71). For these policymakers, privatization and decentralization were keys. The introduction of quality assurance (QA) is the new frontier in Thai educational system perpetuating the dominant discourse, the economic globalization (Rattana Lao, 2015).

3. Expansion of Higher Education

As stated earlier, the 1st National Economic and Social Development Plan put in place the expansion of higher education in three primary regions, Chiang Mai University in the north, Khon Kaen University in the northeast, and Songklanakarin University in the south. A rapid industrial and economic growth would not have been achievable without proper training of young people toward the emerging process of modernization. Beside the establishment of regional institutions for higher learning, the persistent focus on development also led to the expansion of teachers' training colleges, open universities, private universities and community colleges.

3.1 Chiang Mai University. January 15, 1964 Chiang Mai University was established. During the early stage, there were only three faculties: humanity, social sciences and basic science. The establishment of the university was in alignment with educational development plans for the northern region. The plans included advanced professional trainings, research, academic support and preservation of cultural heritage. At the very same time the institutional establishment was an essential part of the national economic development. Main features of the university reflected western educational modality such as becoming a comprehensive and residential university that served as the center for regional academic services with a curriculum offering basic general education. During the early stage numerous oversea scholarships were made available to local professors while at the same times many trips were made in order to observe academic and administrative operation of various universities in foreign countries. Currently the university operates 20 faculties with 296 programs consisting of 36 doctoral programs, 15 higher diploma programs, 127 degrees at the Master's level, and 92 undergraduate programs (Chiang Mai University, n. d.)

3.2 Khon Kaen University. As early as 1962 the vision of a regional university servicing the northeastern region was formulated under the leadership of Sarit Thanarat. It was initially named Khon Kaen Institute of Technology and upon the official establishment of this institution in January of 1966, it became known as Khon Kaen University. Various forms of support came in from Australia, New Zealand and other international agencies such as the United Nations, Fulbright and Peace Corps of the United States. As an institution that was established for the purpose of regional development, Khon Kaen University began its operation with four faculties: agriculture, engineering, science and arts. In the preface to **Khon Kaen**

University: 10 Years Anniversary (1974), Professor Pimon Kolkit, then president of the university, stated that purposes of the university are 1) to produce agriculturists who are well informed of modern agricultural methods 2) engineers prepared to utilize modern technologies 3) science teachers for regional schools 4) medical doctors and nurses ready to serve in various regions of the country 5) engineers who are trained to work with various industries that the government established as needed for the development of the country 6) applied scientists for various disciplines. These programs were of urgency as the nation sought to move toward modernization. The rest of the program such as languages, social sciences and liberal arts would be initiated during the second stage of development (p. 15). Since then it has expanded to 21 faculties serving 105 undergraduate majors, 129 master's degree programs, and 59 doctoral programs.

3.3 Songklanakarin University. In the early 1960s the Thai Ministry of Interior was given the responsibility to develop the southern region. Establishing an institution of higher learning was essential for the development of the southern region out of which emerged a plan to start a university. March 13th, 1967, is known as the "Foundation Day" for Songklanakarin University with its first regional campus in Pattani Province. The first three faculties were engineering, science, and education with 33 majors focusing on science and 25 in liberal arts. Between 1970 and 1980 more faculties were added to various campuses in the south such as Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Faculty of Management Science, Faculty of Natural Resources, and the Faculty of Pharmacy. Currently the university consists of 25 faculties offering 238 programs of study 20 of which are at the doctoral level, nine in the specialization of medicine, 86 programs of master degree level, 2 graduate diploma level, and 121 undergraduate programs (Prince of Songkla University, 2014).

3.4 Teacher Training College. By the end of the 1st National Economic and Social Development Plan, there was a dramatic increased in the number of students completing high school and other vocational programs and thus a corresponding need for increasing number of teachers to accommodate the growing population seeking advanced educational training. By 1965 there were 8,052 teachers with multiple levels of academic training. Then came October 14, 1973, and the growing awareness among Thai population for greater equity within the society. The demand for greater equality was translated into the administrative functions of the role of teacher training colleges resulting in a legislative act permitting Teacher Training Colleges to grant bachelor's degrees. This legislative act had a significant implication for the growing regional needs for higher education. Still it was not growing at a pace fast enough to sufficiently address the regional need for tertiary education. Hence in 1982 another act was passed allowing Teacher Training Colleges to offer undergraduate programs other than education major and the first two fields to be offered beside education were science and liberal arts. Another factor contributing to

the growing need to expand program offerings was the inability of various educational institutions to absorb graduates majoring in education resulting in the proliferation of programs by Teacher Training Colleges as the status changed to Rajabhat University in 2004 with 40 Rajabhat Universities within Rajabhat University System serving all regions in Thailand: five in Bangkok, eight in the north region, 13 in northeast region, 9 in central region and five in southern region.

3.5 Open University. Another development seeking to address the growing need for higher education was the concept of an open university whereby students would be admitted into the university without having to take entrance examination with no limits as to the number of students being admitted. The concept of an open-university was pushed through by the House of Representatives and by 1971 Ramkhamhaeng University was established with program offerings through Faculty of Law, Faculty of Management, Faculty of Humanities, and Faculty of Education. In the early years, 70 percent of students were from the working class and only 30 percent, high school graduates (Apirom Na Nakorn, 2009: 11). Comments made by Professor Sukhum Nuanskul, President of the university from 1983 to 1987, in response to critiques regarding over flooding the labor market with graduates (producing 70,000 graduates in 13 years) pointed out that the idea of admission without entrance examination was designed to give opportunity to students. Traditionally in Thailand approximately 100,000 students applied annually and about 10,000 were admitted. Not being admitted does not mean they were not good enough, according to Sukhum Nualskul. At Ramkhamhaeng University about 100,000 students were admitted yearly and about 10 to 15 percent graduated. Through open universities, students could no longer blame the system for the lack of opportunity to pursue higher education because it is readily available if they so choose (Sukhum Nualskul, 2009: 15). Ramkhamhaeng University, as an open university, takes provision of opportunity for access to higher education to another level.

Beside Ramkhamhaeng University, the movement toward greater equity that was initiated by the event of October 14, 1973, was also instrumental in the creation of yet another open university in another type of format. On the 5th of September1978, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University was established offering courses and programs through distant learning format thus creating another venue for learning opportunity beyond the limitation of space and distance. Like Ramkhamhaeng University, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University and distance learning as an additional pedagogical method added another important feature to attempts by the Thai government at making available more opportunities for students wishing to pursue higher education.

3.6 Private University. In the early 1960s, requests were being submitted for private sectors to take part in providing tertiary education due to the projected expansion of high school graduates. The Education Council rejected the proposal on the ground that quality of education may be compromised due to the lack

of oversight and the fear that private institutions might be fertile soils for political ideology (considering the political climate of the 1960s). However, not being able to restrain the demand for tertiary education due to the amount of students not being absorbed into higher educational institutions, the Education Council decided to open doors for private sectors. The decision was based on the need to absorb students recognizing that the government did not have sufficient financial backup to grow tertiary education sufficiently in order to address the large number of students without access to higher education. There were initially six private colleges: Bangkok, Sripratum, Krik, Dhurakij Pundit, Thai Chamber of Commerce and Pathana. Currently there are 22 private universities in Thailand offering programs to meet the demand for tertiary education (Amornwich Nakornthap, 2014: 196-97).

3.7 Community College. During the 3rd Educational Development Plan a proposal for the development of community colleges was submitted with the intent of meeting growing regional needs in certain disciplines and to generate a more equitable educational system. In 1977, Phuket Community College was established offering certificates and associate degrees to address growing unemployment rate of high school graduates and undergraduate students whose fields did not match with the labor market. During the 8th National Economic and Social Development Plan the government recognized the lack of sufficient provision of higher education at the regional level. At the time the existing 490 public and private institutions were not able to accommodate the demand for tertiary education. Factors such as distance, finance, availability of time, travel inconveniences, and current work situation for income generation were taken into consideration. The provision of tertiary education at district level through community colleges seemed appropriate. In 2008, community colleges were recognized as institutions of higher education and are operating in 20 provinces in Thailand thus completing the goal of making higher education available in every province in Thailand (Amornwich Nakornthap, 2014: 271-73).

4. Finance and Higher Education

4.1 Budget allocation. On average Thai government allocated 20 percent of the national budget or four percent of GDP on education. The amount does not always remain the same. For example from 1999 to 2005, the budget expenditure on education increased by 5.5 percent and from 2005 to 2008, 17.6 percent. In 2007, 355, 241 million baht or 4.19 percent of GDP were allocated to education (Witayakorn Chiengkul, 2010: 36). Of the total amount in the budget line for education, 17.9 percent was allocated to higher education. Of this amount 81 percent went to operational expenses (personnel, subsidies and other operation related costs) while 18 percent was for capital expenditures (three quarter for investment such as land acquisition and infrastructure) and one quarter for learning materials (World Bank, 2008). Sandrine Michel (2010), in **The Burgeoning of Higher Education in**

Thailand, noted that "the share of the budget allocated to education roughly matches the proportion of the student population in the total population" (p. 32). In terms of institutional distribution, the government provided up to 8,784.1 million baht to Mahidol University. And over 3,000 million baht per university were allocated to Chulalongkorn, Khon Kaen and Kasetsart Universities. Rajabhat University System received on average 200 million baht per institution (Witayakorn Chiengkul, 2010: 39). Over all the amount of investment by the Thai government on education is rather significant. Approximately 80 percent of public funding for education comes from the government (Somkiat Tangkitvanich and Areeya Manasboonphempool, 2010: 713). The following table offers a broad picture of budget being allocated to education for the fiscal year of 2000 to 2014.

Table 7: Gross Domestic Product, National Budget and Educational Budget: Fiscal Year 2000 – 2014 Unit: Million Baht

Amount	% (+ increase – decrease)	% of G.D.P.	% of N.B.	Fiscal Year
221,051.1	6.0	4.1	25.7	2000
221,591.5	.2	4.3	24.4	2001
222,940.4	.6	4.0	21.8	2002
235,444.4	5.6	4.1	23.5	2003
251,233.6	6.7	4.0	24.4	2004
262,938.3	4.7	3.7	21.9	2005
294,954.9	12.2	3.7	21.7	2006
355,342.2	22.7	4.2	22.7	2007
364,634.2	23.6	3.9	22.0	2008
419,233.2	15	4.1	21.8	2009
379,124.8	22.3	3.79	22.3	2010
422,527.5	20.4	3.96	20.4	2011
445,527.5	5.5	3.8	18.7	2012
493,892.0	10.9	3.9	20.6	2013
518,519.1	16.4	4.1	20.5	2014

(Source: Ministry of Education, 2014)

Table 8: Higher Education Budget for the Fiscal Year 2002 to 2014 (Unit: Million Baht)

Total Budget	Higher Education Budget	Fiscal Year
222,940.4	32,008.3	2002
235,444.4	33,347.9	2003
251,233.6	33,480.4	2004
262,938.3	40,308.3	2005
294,954.9	48,152.3	2006
355,342.2	58,444.3	2007
364,634.2	67,011.2	2008
419,233.2	72,058.6	2009
379,124.8	62,604.2	2010
422,527.5	71,749.8	2011
445,527.5	73,821.3	2012
493,892.0	83,326,3	2013
518,519.1	87,721.9	2014

(Source: Ministry of Education, 2014)

Concluding her observation of financial investment in education by the Thai government, Michel states:

> Thailand has financed the expansion of its education system through sustained economic growth. The demographic changes have allowed it to go beyond the limits permitted by the growth of the economy. The result was an impressive rise in enrolment at all levels (Michel, 2010: 34).

4.2 Student Loan Fund. Aside from investing on average up to four percent of national GDP into education, out of which 17 percent goes to higher education, the Ministry of Finance in 1996, designed The Student Loan Fund (SLF) to lighten the financial burden of poor students. Bruce Chapman (2012) of Austria National University captured well the place of student loan in the broader picture of human capital when he writes:

> A sustained effort to upgrade human capital is needed for countries in Southeast Asia to increase living standards to those of the advanced economies. Higher education and access to it are essential in boosting long-term productivity and supporting economic outcomes that are crucial to a country's ability to integrate into the increasingly knowledge-based global economy (2012: para. 1).

To accomplish this goal, Thailand initiated Thailand's Student Loan Fund (SLF) in 1996. In SLF, the government serves as the guarantor for student loans through banks. Students are required to pay back within a fixed time period usually with government paying for interests during the period while students are still in school. The down side for this type of loan is related to the availability of employment and the amount of remuneration. The lack of employment and the level of remuneration make this loan vulnerable toward defaults. The second type of loan implemented for a short period in Thailand was income contingent loan that was designed to take into consideration future economic circumstances and to be collected through the tax system (Chapman, 2012).

Among high school graduates who did not enroll in higher education, the two main reasons were the lack of financial resources and the need to earn a living. According to Somkiat Tangkitvanich and Areeya Manasboonphempool:

> The inability of low-income families to finance investment in higher education has implications for economic efficiency in that the investment in higher education is below an optimal level. It also has equity impacts in that low-income families are under-represented in higher education (2010: 713).

This is where SLF plays an important role with the main objectives of increasing opportunities for students from low-income families and promoting a more long-term distribution of income equality across the board. SLF covers tuition fees, education-related expenses, and living expenses. Only students whose family income falls below 150,000 baht per year are qualified to apply for this loan. The ceiling for student loan is determined by the level of education and the field students applied to.The ceiling for high school students is set at 26,000 baht per year whereas for vocational schools the ceiling goes up to 36,000. Undergraduate students in the field of social sciences, art and humanity may request for loans up to 85,000 baht while medical students' loan is set for 174,000 baht per year. During the first 10 years, SLF assisted 2.6 million students with the loan value totaling 200 billion baht (Somkiat Tangkitvanich and Areeya Manasboonphempool, 2010).

5. Curriculum and Development

The ideology of development seeking to improve lives and close the economic gap within the country is reflected in the various curriculum designs as well. According to Paitoon Sinlarat (2015), the development of curriculums in Thailand as early as 1961 focused on the need to speed up development in the country and transform Thailand into a new industrial community. There were courses and programs in development administration, development education and development economics being offered. Areas receiving greater attention were areas that align with the process of modernization such as engineering, medicine, geology, technology of various forms, economics, and business administration. As economic competitions became more aggressive and globalization more influential, more funds were being channeled into the development of curriculums that could meet the demands of the market. Hence, even in the area of curriculum design, the government has been consistent with the focus on economic development with the aim of making it possible for Thailand to remain competitive within the new global economy. Academic contents are a crucial part in the national transition toward a greater integration into the international community with the hope that economic gain will naturally trigger down creating communities with greater distribution in wealth and access to national resources. And thus local farmers' quality of life would be improved as a result.

Conclusion on Higher Education's Contribution to Development

Historically, how has higher education in Thailand facilitated growth and mobility for local Thai farmers? A lecture by Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat offers an insight, development is key for the well-fare of local farmers. Knowledge is an absolute prerequisite. And thus came a rapid expansion of higher education in Thailand with the understanding of the trigger down effects reaching local farmers. Perhaps the word development is key to unpack the force that perpetuates reproduction of knowledge through higher education. To develop (*pattana*) assumes the socio-political location of under development; to buy into the rhetoric of the dominant discourse defining 'third-world countries.' The acceptance of Western development ideology by Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat in itself implies the acknowledgement of Thailand as uncivilized since, according to President Truman, the degree of civilization of a country is measured by the level of production. The level of production of civilized nations is exemplified by countries such as the United States, Great Britain, and other prosperous nations and their 'superior knowledge.' Reflecting on early concept of development Juliana Essen (2005) writes:

> The early modernization school of development proposed that in order to promote true economic development, the obstacle of "traditional" culture must be overcome. In Arthur Lewis's modernization model, the market sector

> would expand through the eradication of the 'traditional economy,' whereby the 'backwards sector' would provide labor at below-market cost to the swelling capitalist sector. When labor was no longer abundant, wage rates would rise, signaling the complete absorption of the subsistence sector by the market (pp. 152-53).

To civilize and develop further imply a pre-existing a way of living prior to the project aiming at development. Hence this movement toward modernization and industrialization presumes a different type of the production of knowledge qualitatively different from the prior state. In fact, it suggests a movement from an inferior type of knowledge toward a more superior form of knowledge, the type of knowledge that has the potential to create a modern society. From this perspective, one possible interpretation is that higher education has become the patron of this knowledge and the means whereby its dispersion takes place; that the reproduction of this knowledge through higher education is the enabler of mobility giving its form a type of dignity. It is the potential path of the boomers. But what might be the cause of pillaging along the path of development? Massive attempts were made in the early 1960s by Sarit Thanarat to modernize Thailand while retaining traditional values but as Wyatt (2003) puts it, at what price?

> Development was intended to reinforce and justify this order, but in practice it worked to undermine it. Economic development strengthened the middle class; educational expansion contributed to the Westernization of their values, or at least to doubts about some Thai values; and close association with American policy created burning political issues. In the end, short-term strength and stability were purchased at the price of longer-term instability and even political crisis (p. 276).

Driven by development ideology, Thailand, under the leadership of Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat and the 1st National Economic and Social Development Plan initiated a major project unlike any in the past to set a stage toward expansive modernization and industrialization. Since modernization is unachievable without knowledge of science, technology, economy and Western cultural practices, higher Education has been tasked with responsibilities to impart knowledge necessary to make this transformation a reality. At the core of development ideology is the common assumption that as the country progresses, progress will naturally end with greater equal distribution for the country. The peasants, the farmers, the poor will be caught up in a linear progression toward greater social mobility. Since 1961, through political turmoil (October 14, 1973 '*wan maha wippayok*') and various economic crises, Thai higher education has gone through various adaptations and survived while persistently striving toward development and the integration within the greater competitive international academic and economic community.

After many decades of strategic planning and investment by the Thai government to increase opportunity and development for the country, higher education has gone through rapid growth and significant expansion with curriculums

designed to navigate the country toward modern industrialized nation. As of 2013, the number of employee serving the Ministry of Educator is at 857,764 out of which 117,686 civil servants are parts of the Office of the Permanent Secretary. There are 186, 214 serving The Office of the Higher Education Commission (MUA) (Ministry of Education, 2014: 20).

Table 9: Distribution of Students by Educational Level for the Academic Year 2013

Vocational Education & Certificate Programs	Diploma Programs	Undergraduate Degree	Graduate Diploma	Master	Higher Graduate Diploma	Doctorate Degree
302,023	14,061	1,870,738	5,451	197,500	1,442	25,364

(Source: Ministry of Education, 2014)

The total number of students enrolled in higher education is at 2,416,579 with 2,186,822 at the undergraduate level and 229,757 students in graduate schools. The number of students in provinces other than Bangkok reached 1,341,330 in 2013. Public funding for the entire higher education is at 84 percent while only 16 percent comes from private sectors (Ministry of Education, 2014). This significant growth takes place through consistent expansion from a few institutions of higher learning centrally located in Bangkok to 78 public universities, 31 private universities, and 32 private colleges in comparison to one institution of higher education in 1961, with a couple of hundred students.

The intend to develop and increase opportunities through the 1st National Economic Development Plan resulted in the establishment of regional universities such as Chiang Mai University, Khon Kaen University, and Sonklanakarin University follows by changing status of Teacher Training Colleges into Rajabhat Universities in 2004, serving various regions in the country (5 in Bangkok, 8 in the north region, 13 in northeast region, 9 in central region and 5 in southern region). In 1971,Ramkhamhaeng Open University was established with the capacity of serving up to 100,000 students and in1978, Sukhothai Open University as the first distance learning University came into operation. When the government budget became tight but the need kept expanding, private sectors were granted permission to provide tertiary education. Still there were pockets of students in various regions that could not find accessibility to higher education and therefore in 2008, regional community colleges were recognized as institutions of higher education operating in 20 provinces around the country. Yet even while Thailand has gone through rapid expansion of higher education, poor students still struggled to find their places in universities. To address this issue various scholarship programs and Student Loan Fund were established.

Fifty plus years after the 1st National Economic Development Plan, Thai higher education has come a long way in facilitating national development and modernization with 857,764 employees serving the Ministry of Education, more than two million students and over a hundred institutions of higher learning extending educational opportunity to every provinces Thailand. While these plans may not be construed as directly addressing the needs of local farmers, approximately 40 percent of the country's population is household members in agricultural sector living mostly in rural areas in various provinces occupying the land space of 514,000 square kilometers (FAO, 2010). Without the expansion of higher educational institutions into all these provinces together with scholarship fund and loan fund, accessibility for this population would have been very limited.

It is interesting to observe that while mainstream discourse in higher education endorsed modernity and its economic system in attempting to become a part of the global world, there are local initiatives that recognize limitations of modernity especially within the context of Thai farmer seeking to offer alternatives to that which is being made available through mainstream educational system in Thailand. While the number remains very small in comparison, it does speak to the presence of a particular discursive practice within Thai culture.

Has Thailand achieved its goal through the establishments of institutions of higher education over the past 60 plus years in facilitating social mobility? Is social mobility the natural progressive linear path that every society should pursue or is it a form of discursive practices from within a particular production of knowledge? And, one might ask, this rapid expansion of higher education in Thailand is achieved at what price?

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CHAPTER 5

Current Conditions of Thai Peasants

Introduction

The recognition of the essential role of knowledge in national development has led to the rapid expansion of higher education in Thailand. A modern world, with modern technologies promising a thriving industrial society, requires a different type of knowledge. The past many decades have witnessed the intentionality of knowledge in the construction of a developed nation. The vision of thriving agrarian communities translated into national plans and policies was implemented by succeeding governments. The changing economy aims at prosperity triggering down to the margin, from urban to rural, from businesses to farms and fields. Where has this rapid expansion of higher education aiming at national development landed for local farmers?

This chapter describes the current condition of Thai farmers, thus fulfilling the first objective of this study. The chapter starts with a general description of farmers globally follows by the current situation of Thai farmers looking at household, farm size, gender, age, educational level, and economic status. This context provides an overview of local farmers across the country. The last section focuses on emerging themes based on interviews with farmers in the northeast and northern parts of Thailand. It represents perspectives and point of views of local farmers regarding their life circumstances.

Farmers: Global Perspective

Seeing development as the drive to bridge the gap of income poverty raised the importance of agricultural population since they are, globally, among the poorest by economic measures. A study conducted by Sarah K. Lowder, Jakob Skoet and Saumya Singh (2014) relying upon survey supported by World Census of Agriculture (WCA) initiated since 1930, offers a demographic lens of this population. While the data may not provide the most accurate representation, it is perhaps the best available source to construct profiles of current status of farmers around the world. Estimates of the number of farms based on 157 member countries of Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) plus 10 non-member states stand at 570 million farms. Of these 570 millions, 500 millions are small family farms or approximately 90 percent of farms are owned by individuals, small group of individuals or households. The actual number is probably higher due to the lack of data from 37 FAO member states plus the estimation that relies on old census from many low- and middle-income countries. Of the 570 million farms, 74 percent are located in East Asia and the Pacific. China alone represents 35 percent while 24 percent are located in India. Sub-Sahara Africa

owns nine percent while seven percent is found in Europe and Central Asia. Middle East and North Africa represent three percent while four percent of all farm holdings are located in Latin America and the Carribean.

Pertaining farm sizes, there is a trend showing its decrease among low and lower-middle income countries. On the contrary, average farm sizes increase among upper-middle-income countries and a clear increment among high-income countries. It is estimated that 72 percent of farms are smaller than one hectare, 12 percent are from one to two hectares while 10 percent are between two to five hectares. Six percent of the farmland is bigger than five hectares. Hence approximately 410 million farms are less than one hectare in size and 475 millions are lesser than two hectares. In explaining the distribution of farmland in general based on available data, Lowder, Skoet and Singh state (2014):

> Globally, about 95 percent of farms are smaller than 5 hectares and they operate about 20 percent of farmland. In low- and lower-middle-income countries as well as, East Asia and the Pacific (excluding China), South Asia and in Sub-Saharan Africa about 95 percent of farms are smaller than 5 hectares, and they operate the majority of land in those countries. In upper-middle-income countries (excluding China), high-income countries, Latin America and the Caribbean and Middle East and North Africa the majority of farms are likewise smaller than 5 hectares in size, but they operate less than 10 percent of farmland (p. 17).

It is in light of this that development takes on the challenge of farmers' population. When George Woods took over the presidency of World Bank he noticed that while agriculture employed two-third of the world poorest population, only eight percent of loan was granted up until 1963. Thus he initiated agricultural research in conjunction with Rockefeller and Ford Foundations. By the early 1970s, under the leadership of McNamara, agriculture became the focus of development as an attempt to address the reduction in poverty gap among developing countries (Patel, 2008). What is crucial to understand according to Raj Patel, is that the transmission of *knowledge* became the focus of what was to transpire among farmers especially through intensive promotion of Green Revolution for agriculture. "Specifically, in legitimizing the Green Revolution," writes Patel, "knowledge matters" (2013: 3-4). Reflecting on the possibility of the second Green Revolution in India he writes:

> The importance of knowledge isn't simply restricted to ways of cultivating and propagating, nor even to the genetic information within India's biodiversity, although it includes that too. The knowledge that matters here extends to ways that the government knows how to support and invest in agriculture-as Friedmann suggests, one of the things that is now *known* among international development policy elites is that subsidized exports are foolish. The domain of this knowledge is a battlefield (Patel, 2013: 4).

This knowledge as a battlefield informed development ideology permeating Thai politics since the early 1950s, through a dramatic push initiated by the 1st National Economic and Development Plan with the vision of modernization aiming at improving the lives of farmers and facilitating their social mobility through increased productivity and integrating agriculture into global economy (per Friedmann's understanding of the elitist knowledge). After citing extensive transformation in agricultural landscape through knowledge and technologies Martin Pineiro (2007) writes:

> Over the last two decades, advances in sciences like molecular genetics have enabled rapid development of biotechnology for agricultural production. Meanwhile, economic globalization and trade liberalization has increasingly exposed agriculture in developing countries to international markets and multinational corporations. Technologies that exist as marketable products, like seeds, agrochemicals and agricultural machinery, have grown quickly (para. 12).

Modernization requires academic trainings of younger generations who could contribute to growth and development of the country in the area of science and technology. At the very same time new knowledge was needed in order to help build the much needed infra-structure. Tertiary education offered that promise to move the country to a different level and thus its potential to increase productivity could bridge the gap and help redistribute wealth within the country. The National Economic Development Board stated in 1964, "Agriculture extension and research, technical training, vocational education, and other projects to extend technical knowledge will likewise take a high share of Government investment" (p. 152). Hence the role of education has to do with agricultural research related to science and biotechnology, generating human capitals for modernization of the country, and building infra-structure such as roads, water system and electricity whereby rural communities could be better integrated into the global market. The knowledge of modernity that could transform traditional farms into industrial mechanized farms with high yields together with a new market economy hold the promise of the new agricultural era, the new generation of farmers. The question is, has this vision that started 60 some years ago through building infra structure, promoting new knowledge and establishing institutions of higher education been fulfilled among Thai farmers?

Thai Farmers 'ชาวนา'(*Chao Na*): General Demographic Information

For the people of Thailand 'ชาวนา'(*chow na*, people of the field) refers tothe majority of the population whose livelihood depends on rice farming. Their lives are closely intertwined with their land and its potential to yield natural products through consistent cultivation for their consumption and survival. They are often perceived as socially situated among the lower category within the society with insufficient

acquisition of knowledge through formal education thus preventing them from becoming socially mobile within Thai social hierarchy. On average, they own small pieces of farmland. Landless farmers rent paddy fields for cultivation or provide labors for others.While they sell rice in exchange for currency, farmers normally keep a portion for their annual consumption.Due to economic constraint and limited resources, they engage in other types of supplemental work, agricultural or otherwise, to sustain themselves.

1. Households

According to Thailand Agriculture Census 2013 (กรมสถิติแห่งชาติ, สำมะโนเกษตร 2556), there are 5.9 million households (25.2 percent of the entire population) in the field of agriculture occupying 116.6 million rai or on average 19.7 rai per household. The majority of famers are concentrated in the northeastern part of Thailand follow by the northern, central and the southern regions.

Table 10: Number of Household and Size of Land Used for Agriculture
(Source: Thai Agricultural Census, 2013)

Region	Number of Household	Percentage	Land Size in Rai	Percentage
Northeast	2.7 millions	46.4 %	54.6 millions	46.8 %
North	1.3 millions	22 %	27.5 millions	23.6 %
South	1 million	17.3 %	14.9 millions	12.8%
Central	0.9 million	14.3%	19.6 millions	16.8%

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2. Land

When it comes to the use of land and land size, 87.8 percent own less than 40 rai. Approximately 50.7 percent own 10-39 rai and 0.05 percent own140 rai and up. About 78.7 percent of farmers own their land while 10 percent both own and rent land for agriculture. Eleven percent of farmers rent land for cultivation. Between 42.4 to 67.5 percent of the land is being used for planting rice while 20.5 to 34.8 percent for other types of crops.

Table 11: Ownership of Land

Size of Land	Percentage
Less than 6 Rai	23.3
Between 6 to 9 Rai	13.8
Between 10 to 39 Rai	50.7
Between 40-139 Rai	11.7
140 Rai and above	0.5

(Source: Thai Agricultural Census, 2013

3. Gender and age

Regarding gender, 63.7 percent of ownerships belong to men, a decrease from 8.6 percent in the past 10 years. Ownerships of land by women are at 36.3 percent, an increment of 8.6 in a decade. Most farmers are 35 years of age and up with a trend in the decline of farmers in this age group and an increment among those 65 years and older. According to Mark Gorman (2012), due to decline in agricultural employments, between 1985 and 2003 the number of farmers below the age of 40 fell by almost 20 percent while farmers within the age range of 60 and up almost doubled and has the highest median age than any other types of industry in Thailand.

Table 12: Age of Farmers

Age of Farmers	No. of Farmers
Below 25	34,313 (0.6 %)
25 to 34	306,140 (5.2%)
35 to 44	1,088,389 (18.4%)
45 to 54	1,834,958 (31.1%)
55 to 64	1,545,605 (26.2%)
65 and above	1,096,316 (18.5)

(Source: Thai Agricultural Census, 2013)

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4. Educational Level

Majority of farmers' educational attainment remains at primary level (64.8 percent) follows by high school level (16.4 percent). The gap between those with primary and secondary levels among farmers is 48.4 percent. Of the total 5,905,714 farmers in Thailand, 4,633,815 farmers' educational attainment is at primary level and below or approximately 80 percent with 5 percent of the population in tertiary level. These figures have greater significance when compared to the general population. According to the National Statistic Office, in 2010, there were 14,150,863 registered students in the entire country with 1.8 million students in pre-school, 5 millions in primary school, 4.8 millions in high school, 2.4 millions in tertiary education.

Table 13: Educational Level

Level	Total	Percentage
Bachelor degree or higher	148,844	2.5
Associate degree	155,273	2.6
High School	967,782	16.4
Primary School	3,826,652	64.8
Less than Primary School	600,869	10.2
Others	10,238	0.2
Lack of Education	196,056	3.3

(Source: Thai Agricultural Census, 2013)

The above description offers a broad general picture of Thai farmers, land sizes, age of the heads of the household, gender distribution and numbers of households engaging in farming/agriculture.

5. Thai Farmers and Economic Status

In 2014, Thailand exported 10.8 million tons of rice worth USD 5.37 billion, an increase of 63.6 percent from 2013 (Fernquest, 2015). Rice production is the number one agricultural exports for Thailand brining in values at 12.37 percent of national GDP (ThanaratPilavong et al, 2012).While rice production generates substantial income for the nation, this does not seem to be the case for local farmers (Thai Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Poverty Level Among Agricultural Households, 2010).There are approximately four persons per household with three of the four contributing to labor. According to agricultural census collected by National Statistics Service in 2013, 28 percent of 5.9 million farmers earned 100,001 baht through agricultural products. Approximately 28 percent earned an average between 50,001 to 100,000 baht while the rest has income level below 50,000 baht per household. Average age of the head of the household is 54.47 years old. This average reflects national distribution for all farmers in Thailand. The figure for poor farmers with limited farmland shows a different picture all together. Poor farmers are categorized among the lowest 20 percent in income level. The average income per household is at 50,656 baht or 11,125 per person with average land size of 17.81. When it comes to loan, the National Statistics Service (2013) indicates 47.2 percent of farmers are in debt.

Table 14: Net Income and the Size of the Land (Baht per Family)

Land Size	National	Northeast	North	Central	South
< 10 Rai	37,225	17,539	37,592	51,324	53,999
10 – 29 Rai	75,622	35,964	78,206	146,498	123,381
30 – 59 Rai	182,987	130,645	157,793	274,179	225,436
60 and above	428,767	248,887	480,299	489,426	459,194
Average	113,211	59,622	126,052	188,959	128,829

(Source: Thai Agricultural Census, 2013)

Table 15: Net Income, Land, Age and Gender

Types	National	Northeast	North	Central	South
Net Income/Household	50.656	51,638	48,070	49,159	52,644
Net Income/Person	11,125	11,040	11,063	11,349	11,809
Land Size	17.81	18.73	17.02	17.63	11.68
No. of Family Members	4.60	4.73	4.37	4.34	4.58
Age/Head of the Household	55.32	55.50	53.69	57.24	55.87
Male Head of the Household	81.45	79.51	88.19	79.03	81.32
Female Head of the Household	18.55	20.49	11.81	20.97	18.68

(Source: Thai Agricultural Census, 2013)

Based on the above information it may be reasonable to summarize profiles of Thai farmers as follows: Majority of farmers live and work in the northeastern region (45 percent) with the second largest concentration in the northern region (22 percent). Half of all farmers own between 10 to 39 rai while 12 percent are in possession of 40 rai and above. Among these farmers, 0.5 percent has in possession 140 rai and above. Seventy-eight percent of the population has earned up to primary level with five percent in the tertiary level. Seventy-five percent of the population is 45 years of age and up with 64 percent of men as heads of the household. Average income per household is between 50,000 to 100,000 and about 47 percent of these farmers are in debt.

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Emerging Themes: Life of Thai Farmers and Their Current Situation

The followings are descriptions and analysis of the current situation of Thai farmers based on categories derived from qualitative data collected through interviews with 67 farmers in 19 provinces in the north and northeast of Thailand and supplemented by supporting documents and statistics. The analysis will cover mainly ways in which rice farmers manage economic challenges they are currently facing in their everyday lives. Qualitative data pertaining their views on education and their children's education will be described and analyzed in the next chapter. The average age of these participants is 52. When it comes to gender, there are 36 males and 31 female participants. The average number of children is two per household. The average land size for those who own their land is 14 rai per household. For those renting farmlands for rice planting, the average size is 32 rai per household. When it comes to educational level, majority of farmers earned primary 4 (23) and primary 6 (27). Five of the participants completed undergraduate degrees, one obtained an associate degree while 10 completed high school and one, Mathayom 9. The followings are two tables comparing age, gender, educational level and the size of land between those who earned college degrees and those who did not.

Table 16: Participants with College Degree: Age, Gender, Educational Level, Land Size

Province	Age	Male	Female	BA	AA	Land/Rent	Land/Own
Roi Et	61	1		1			50
Phitsanulok	51		1	1			11
Ubon	30		1	1			12
Srisaket	52	1			1		8
Loei	55		1	1			7
Khon Kaen	62	1	1	1			17
Total	52	3	3	5	1	0	17.5

Among farmers with college degrees, their average age is 52. There were three male and three female participants. Five earned their undergraduate degrees while one completed an associate degree. The farmer from Phisanulok practices the principle of economic sufficiency while Srisaket farmer is employed by the military but continues to work on his farm on a regular basis. The farmer in Loei is semi-retired. She continues to receive some financial support from a local NGO.

Table 17: Participants without College Degrees: Age, Gender, Educational Level, Land Size

Province	No.	Avg Age	Male	Female	Primary	High School	Avg Land/ Rent	Avg Land/ Own
Roi Et	6	57	5	1	4	2		45
Surin	3	65	1	2	3			5
Srisaket	4	46	1	3	2	2		6.25
Yasothorn	1	54	1		1			5
Kalasin	3	55	3		3			6.3
Chiang Mai	3	62	3		3		9.6	2.3
Chiang Rai	5	58	4	1	4	1	9.4	14.8
Lampang	4	49	2	2	3	1		5
Phisanulok	4	56	3	1	3	1	5	9.75
Phichit	3	58	2	1	2	1	23	5
Kampangphet	3	48	1	2	3		16.6	10
Sukhothai	3	42	1	2	3		36	2.6
Ubon	3	38		3	1	2		7
Buri Ram	4	41	1	3	4		8.5	7.5
Udon	4	50	2	2	4			16
Nong Khai	2	60		2	2			6
Loei	2	51		2	2			8
Nong Bua Lampoo	1	57		1		1		5
Khon Kaen	3	62	3		3			20.6
Total	61	53	33	28	50	11	15.4	9.8

For farmers without college degrees, the average age is at 53. There are 33 male and 28 female participants. Fifty of the 61 participants' earned primary education and 11 completed higher school. The average total land size is at 12 rai per participant (the average shown in the table is the average per province). It is interesting to note that rental of land takes place among those without college degrees. The present situation of farmers is best described as a constant struggle to survive and make ends meet. Finding ways to finance the livelihood has become their main preoccupation. Whereas hard work within a conducive environment was, historically, the determining factor in farmers' ability to survive and provide for the family. Currently hard work alone remains merely one of the many contributing variables toward their survival. Increasingly farmers find themselves in greater debts with high cost of investment, low yields, low returns, and increased cost of living within the allure of materialism, decreased availability of natural resources, increased educational expenses for their children and the lack of understanding by general

public regarding their on-going struggles. And their future in this changing world offers no promises that things will get better making moving forward seems more complex. Based on interviews, the prospect of living primarily as rice farmers is almost unachievable. And there are many factors that contribute to this shift in the lives of Thai farmers during the last few decades. This section will describe and discuss the following emerging themes: 1) modernization and traditional methods 2) limited access to resources 3) increased expenses on farming 4) poor returns on investments and 5) rising cost of living.

1. Modernization and traditional methods

When asked about changes that occur in farming methods, a farmer from Khon Kaen joking invoked the song "ผู้ใหญ่ลี" (Head village Lee).The song was composed bySuksri Sri-auksorn, a satire critiquing the development plans imposed by the government. It implies the lack of understanding of local villagers. With deep anguish this farmer kept repeating the phase, "now everything is about money." Then he made reference to the common propaganda during Sarit Thanarat's government, "งานคือเงินเงินคืองานบันดาลสุข"(work is money, money is work, the root of happiness). But money was not for him to enjoy or for most local farmers even in the midst of hard work because work does not get translated into money within the new economic system (FKK4).

Many farmers fondly reminisced the time when money was not the dominating currency. While farming was difficult due to the texture of the soil and the availability of water, they were of the opinions that life was sustainable. Field seedbeds were tilled by hoeing and weeding. Clay like soil sliced with a hoe, and the slices were then broken up with the side or back of the blade. Rice fields were prepared using buffalos to pull wooden plows. Villagers came together to plant seedlings. The fields were divided by low dikes into small squares which permit precise control over water level. Again during harvest time, villagers came together (ลงแขก) helping one another harvesting rice. Reapers grasped a bunch of rice in his/her left hand, holding the sickle in his/her right hand, he/she pulled it in a quick upward motion which cut the stalk about 2 feet below the ear. Rice was then left drying on the stubble for about two days before being placed in the shocks for threshing. Farmers brought the rice home to the granary in bullock carts. Rice was produced primarily for their own consumption. Extra rice was sold in the market. Without the convenience of technology, plowing, transplanting and harvesting were difficult, but it was manageable. There was plenty of food available such as frogs, snails, fish, and vegetable in the fields. Expenses were low. They were able to spend time with family members and all worked together for sustenance. Then came development with the use of chemical fertilizer and pesticides. These chemicals kill fish, snails, frogs, and other vegetable. Polyculture is replaced by monoculture. Rice gets converted to cash

in order to buy food in the market. “The way of life has changed. Sufficiency is not the current practice unlike before. It was manageable. I wish I could go back in time. We used to live sufficiently. There was very little expense” (FR2). A farmer in Chiang Rai talks about the availability of resources in the past. “In the past there were plenty of crabs, shrimps and fish in the field. But because of the use of chemical, there are very little left. Certain species are pretty much gone. Before, we did not have to invest too much money. Right now we need to buy vehicles and equipments. We need to really invest. We use to walk to the rice field. Now we need motorcycles. The competition is so high that without investment in modern technologies, we just cannot compete” (FCR1). A farmer from Viangpapao describes food situation in the past. “We used to grow rice and catch fish. There were in abundance. I used to gather cherry snails. Right now, fish is affected by chemicals. Chemicals in the field kill everything” (FCR5). A farmer from Loei recalls her grandfather’s description of the availability of food in the past as being abundant (FL2).

Satawat Yu-oon (1993) conducted a research on the transformation through technology and its impacts on farmers in Sansai Yao, Chiang Mai. According the results, Satawat Yu-oon found that the villagers’ life style has changed dramatically. Where once they lived in simplicity, now they compete in order to survive. Within the new economic system, they have to invest heavily. Economic gap and class system started to emerge. Religious activities related to rituals within the tradition of Buddhism, slowly disappear. In its place comes consumerism. The expectation for material gain generates conflicts within the family and community. These changes were closely related to the National Economic and Social Development Plans, the plans that focused primarily on economic growth resulting in transformation of farming methods through technologies(cited by Wachirawach Ngamlamom, 2013). These changes initiated by the process of modernity have significant impacts on access to resources, increased expense related to farming, income levels and day-to-day expenses.

2. Limited Access to Resources

Access to natural resources is one of the major contributing factors to farmers’ ability to provide for their families. Often, limits of access to natural resources are not within their control. Three of the main sources often mentioned in the interviews are land size, water and types of soil available.

2.1 Land. According to chief of village at Ku Ka Sing, Roi Et Province, farmers who can survive strictly from planting rice are those who have a large paddy field for rice cultivation. Land size matters when it comes to generating sufficient income to make provision for families. While complaining about the high investment cost, a farmer at Yasothon stated “For those with large land size, it is possible to survive” (FR1). This statement is a commonly expressed by farmers. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why some farmers rented many rai of land hoping to generate

sufficient income. A Ku Ka Sing farmer explains breakdowns of expenses for planting rice within the area of one rai: 600 – 700 baht for seeds, 500 baht for hiring of tractors to plow the land and sow seeds, 700 baht for chemical fertilizer, 200 baht for spraying insecticide, 500 baht for harvesting, 600 baht for pumping water into the rice field, 200 baht for transporting rice to rice mills. Total expense for planting rice per rai is approximately 3,300 baht. Income generated from selling rice differs by the type of rice and the quality of rice. Ideally a rai of land can yield 1,000 kilograms of rice. In 2015, Jasmine rice was sold for 10-12 baht per kilogram. Sticky rice is much lower. Then there are other factors such as: 1) humidity 2) broken rice (fetch lower prices) and 3) mixed rice (when rice is mixed with other types of rice the price decreases) (FR1, FR5, FR6). Farmers in Kampangpetch sold their rice for 5,500 baht per 1,000 kilograms (FK2) while farmers in Serm Ngam, Lampang, reported the on-going price of 4,000 per kilogram (FL1). When the margin is narrow, those with large piece of property stand a much better chance to generate sufficient income. The issue of the size of land for income generation takes on a significant proportion in view of the recent development in Thailand per land distributions and policies.

The issues of land size and land distribution that farmers discussed are directly affected by population growth. In 1954, there were 20.153 million people with average land size per person at 15.91 rai and agricultural land of 8.36 per rai per person. In 1960, there were 26.257 million people with the average land size of 12.21 rai per person and agricultural land of 6.42 rai per person. However by 2007, the population increased to 63 million. This decreased the land size per person to 5.08 rai and cultural land to 2.67 per rai per person. On top of this increment in population size, the redistribution of land has also reduced access for agricultural land. From 1987 to 1993,a large portion of agricultural land was converted to residential estates, resorts, golf courses and factories. It was estimated that during this period, approximately 18,000 rai of agricultural land in central region were converted to other forms. This shift is interesting in light of the impact on labor force for the country. While 38 percent of labor is concentrated in agricultural sector, it generates 8.98 percent of the GDP. The industrial sector with 14 percent of labor generated 39 percent (Sopon Chomchan, 2013). Income per farmer's family remains lower than income generated by population in other sectors. Phasuk Pongpaijit estimated that approximately 800,000 agricultural households or almost 20 percent of agricultural population are landless while one to one and a half million households rent their lands or having insufficient land for cultivation to provide for their families. Hence for poor families, income per month per person is at 1,443 baht (cited by Jamaree Kiengthong, 2013).

2.2 Water. Srisaket is known as a province with fertile soils and easy access to water making it possible to grow other types of crops during off-season. However not all farmers in Srisaket are as privileged. A Srisaket farmer in her mid 40s explained that the area where she plants rice, the soil is not as fertile and water is sparse. Life is

harder, she explained, because of the lack of irrigation and accessibility to water. If her village had access to water, they would be able to grow chili and garlic earning extra income for their families. Later in the conversation she explained that she was having a conversation with her friends about ways to earn supplemental income in order to sustain her family and there was nothing conclusive regarding alternatives at the moment (FSR47). A farmer in his 50s from Sermgam subdistrict, Lampang, explained how he survived on 6 rai of land planting rice during rainy season. For the rest of the year if water was made available he could plant other crops and earn extra income. However because of the lack of access to water this year, he contracted with Monsanto and grew corns instead. Some farmers in certain regions depend largely on rain. Hence they face lots of limitations in their agricultural output. They usually plant rice once a year and for the rest generate income through labors. Those who have access to water, whether it be the location or irrigation, have more options. They may be able to plant rice two or three times a year or otherwise plant other crops such as garlic, sugar cane, chili, coriander, cassava, corn etc (FL2).

Thailand occupies the area of 320 million rai of which 60 million have the potential for becoming agriculture irrigated lands. However the irrigation system is made available for 29.6 million rai. One hundred and nine millions rai are rain-based agricultural lands. Of this, 9.1 million rai have the potential for irrigation systems. Currently 70 percent of lands for cultivating rice are not irrigated lands. There are 149 million rai of agriculture lands in Thailand and of this 70 million rai are allocated for rice planting. Of all the rice fields, three quarters are strictly rain-dependent and generated yields 50 percent less than the irrigated lands (**Daily News**, March 27, 2014). Water therefore is one of the main variables when it comes to income generation. Access to water implies the ability to plant rice two to three times per year and thus the ability to increase income two folds or the potential to grow other crops that can yield other products in-between rice planting season.

2.3 Types of soil. Soil salinity is another common soil condition that restricts the use of the land for rice planting, explained a farmer from Khon Kaen (FKK2). The salt content in the soil inhibits the level of productivity. During the process of data collection, a farming family described how they shifted from rice planting to crops, cassava and sugar cane. One of the main reasons is the condition of the soil inhibiting sufficient yields for income generation to sustain the family (FL2). Other farmers in various provinces explain the choice of crops and the possibility to plant variations of crops depending on the type of soil.

A study on soil taxonomy in Thailand divides the types of soil into 5 categories: 1) soil very well suited 2) soil well suited 3) soil moderately suited 4) soil poorly suited and 5) soil unsuited. The taxonomy is based on the quality of the soil, the level of nutrients, the ability to absorb water, the ability to restrain moisture, and the level of productivity (Thasanee Attanant, 2007).

Table 18: Soil Types in Thailand (by rai)

Types of Soil	North No. of rai	Northeast No. of rai	Central No. of rai	Southeast No. of rai	South No. of rai	Total
Soil very well suited: maximum yield	5,905,724	6,680,300	8,012,560	1,860,844	1,305,457	24,164,903
Soil well suited: with some limitations	3,129,937	1,574,566	355,237	171,902	2,754,750	7,986,392
Soil mode-rarely suited: require special skills	441,075	21,421,283	4,878,583	2,737,233	1,020,385	30,488,559
Soil poorly suited: many limitations	131,041	1,746,642	74,994	66,612	1,016,530	3,036,819
Soil unsuited: severe limitations with minimum yields.	94,419,885	74,110,169	26,149,364	16,660,220	41,639,637	225,020,275

(Source: Thasanee Attanant, 2007)

Table 19: Soil Types in Thailand (by %)

Types of Soil	North	Northeast	Central	Southeast	South
Soil very well suited	5.57	6.33	20.30	8.66	3.54
Soil well suited	2.95	1.49	0.09	5.72	5.72
Soil moderately suited	0.42	20.3	12.36	12.69	2.12
Soil poorly suited	0.21	1.66	0.19	0.31	2.11
Soil unsuited	90.9	70.2	68.25	77.54	86.51

(Source: Thasanee Attanant, 2007)

The above figures point to the level of difficulties pertaining the quality of soil that Thai farmers generally face in planting rice. Farmers from Khon Kaen keep repeating the struggle with the quality of soil affecting their outputs per rai or their ability to grow other types of crops on their lands.

3. Increased Expense Related to Farming

Every participant complains of the rising cost related to rice farming. These increased in farming expenses include seeds, fertilizers, pesticide, labors, transportation and tractors. How much a farmer can make depends on how able they are at reducing cost through their own personal labor such as planting, fertilizing and

spraying pesticide. Some level of stability is sustained because a portion of harvested rice is set aside for their consumption enough to last the entire year. Rice provides the sense of security and stability. It is recognized as the primary source of sustenance. As long as they have rice to last the yearly cycle, they feel safe knowing that their family will not go hungry. Hence during severe drought, it is not uncommon under this circumstance for farmers to post-pone their loans and keep their rice. During this period, by the time they store rice for themselves, there is not much left in terms of profits.

3.1 Fertilizer. The chief village at Ku Ka Sing explains the reason for increased use of chemical fertilizer. “I used 15 bags of chemical fertilizer to cover 30 rai of rice field. However subsequent years the usage increased to 17-18 bags per rai. The increment does not stop even though the yields remain unchanged. This is due to the fact that chemical used destroy nutrients in the soil.” Most farmers interviewed spend 600 to 800 baht per bag (50 kilogram per bag) of fertilizer. A rai of cultivated land uses anywhere between half a bag and one bag of fertilizer. A farmer from Roi Et described a historical period when development (science and technology) came to his village and with it came the introduction and implementation of chemical fertilizer. A bag of fertilizer cost 50 baht then and all he needed was 1 kilogram of chemical fertilizer per rai (FR3).

Roland Poupon (2013) points out the fivefold increment of the utilization of chemical fertilizer in Thailand from 1950 to 1990. Farmers use approximately 16 kilograms of fertilizers per rai. In his assessment “it appears that the economic threshold for chemical utilization has been surpassed for many farmers” (2013: 45). According to a 2013 Agricultural Census by the National Statistical Office, the number of rai with chemical fertilizer in 1993, was 83,276,755. This number increased to 97, 283, 204 rai in 2003, and in 2013, 108,920,345 rai. The quantity of chemical fertilizer per 1,000 kilograms is at 2,825,809 in 1993, 4,066,325 in 2003, and 6,242,144 in 2013. Hence the increment per rai is at 33.9 kilograms per rai in 1993, 41.8 in 2003 and 57.3 in 2013. It is interesting to observe that the number of farmers using chemical fertilizer is highest in the northeast (92.4 percent).

Due to government’s land use restriction policy, farmers are indirectly forced to maximize production per available lands and thus the increased demand for chemical fertilizer. The Food and Agriculture Organization Statistics of 2007, reports exponential increased in the utilization of chemical fertilizer in Thailand in the 1970s. In 1961, Thailand used 18 thousand tons of chemical fertilizers. This number increased to 1700 thousand tons in 2003, a dramatic increment of 94 percent. But as most farmers are aware, there is a lack of correspondence between high rates of fertilizer utilization and increases in yields. The stagnant yields and dramatic increases in the use of chemical fertilizers add to the already tight financial situation farmers have to invest for their sustenance (Greenpeace, 2008).

Approximately 18 percent of expenses for rice production are spent on chemical fertilizers. In 2009, Thailand imported 3.8 million tons of chemical fertilizers worth 42 billion baht. In 2013, import of chemical fertilizers went up to 5.6 million tons worth 72 billion baht, an increase of 47 percent. This agrobusiness generating billions of bath is under the monopoly of 5 major companies in Thailand: 1) Chia Tai Company Limited (Charoen Pokphand Group) holding 28 percent of the market 2) Central Chemical Company Limited holding 25 percent 3) ICP Fertilizer with 15 percent share of the market4) Yara International with 12 percent and finally 5) Terragro Fertilizer, 10 percent. These major companies control 90 percent of the fertilizer market and play a significant role in determining prices. For example the price of imported chemical formula 21-0-0 in 2013, costs 6,021 baht per ton. By the time it goes to local farmers, the price has gone up to 8,780 baht per ton (Areewan Koosanteeya, 2015).

Hence government policies, low yields, high rate of fertilizer utilization and the monopoly of fertilizer productions by a few major distributors are factors contributing to increased expenses for local farmers.

3.2 Pesticide. Participants talk about increased use of pesticides, its costs, the cost related to labors and its effects on their health in general. A local farmer in Phitsanulok had his right leg amputated. When asked, he described how he went to his rice field to fertilize and to spray pesticides. Because of the size of his field and those of his friends he was helping, he stayed overnight at the field four nights in a role just to make sure he completed his jobs while helping his friends. While working the field, he was injured but did not seek medical help immediately because he wanting to complete his task. By the end of the fourth day, the wound turned black. It did not occur to him that this injury could cause great harm only to later realize the effect of pesticides on his wound. Amputation was unavoidable (FP1). A farmer from Roi Et recalls back in 1987, when development came to his village. The use of pesticides was one of those implemented by the government. “Changes started taking place and we began to witness its effect. Certain types of fish slowly disappeared from the fields. The same with frogs. Tadpoles were terminated by pesticides. Water from the field became toxic. By 1992, we could not drink water from the (ponds) field. Farmers had to bring their own drinking water” (FR3). The expenses involves in the spray of pesticides in a certain village include: “labors for spraying pesticides costs 4,000 baht per 10 rai. A bottle of pesticide is 500 baht or approximately 70 baht per rai. And then we had to buy herbicides. Approximately 70 baht per rai” (FR5).

The use of pesticides is reported by majority of the interviewees. Among the most prevalent type of pests complained by local farmers is the Golden Apple Snail with very rapid growth rate. They are voracious feeders and without proper management, they can easily ruin rice production. For farmers in Khon Kaen, Golden Apple Snails were not pests they had to deal with until middle of 1990s. Many farmers hire day laborers to spay pesticides while some, in an attempt to save money,

spray their own field. Field crab (ปูนา) is another type of pests common in the rice field. A local farmer from Ku Ka Sing described how crabs could consume 10 rai of rice field within one night. "If we successfully planted 10 rai of rice, the local crabs could easily consume 3 to 5 rai. Some farmers would catch these crabs while planting rice. Although they were destructive, we managed to survive. However around 1987, pesticides were made available, particularly *Poridon*. The struggles with crabs became more manageable" (FR3).

Field rat (หนูนา) is another type of pests that affects rice field. While crabs consume rice when the field is wet, field rats will consume rice once the ground is dry." The prevalence of *Paridon*use and its toxicity are common knowledge so much so that a country musician, Poyfai Malaiporn (n.d.), turned it into a comical song warning farmers to use it for insects but not a solution for a broken heart. "คั่นผู้สาวไปมีแฟนใหม่ห้ามกินยาโพลิดอน." "Crazy because your girl found a new lover. Do not take *Paridon*."

The use of pesticides was introduced in 1966, under the Green Revolution Policy as a part of the 1st National and Economic Development Plan. Most of the pesticides were imported with organophosphates as the most common type followed by carbonates. In 2000, Thailand imported 40,000 tons of pesticides worth 7 billion baht. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 54 percent of imported pesticides come under the category of 'extremely hazardous' and 'highly hazardous' (Greenpeace, 2008). According to the Office of Agricultural Economics, the use of pesticides increased four folds with more than 100,000 tons of active ingredients being imported to Thailand. For this reason, Thailand ranks fourth in the annual use of pesticides among 15 Asian countries and ranks third when it comes to pesticide use per unit area. There are a number of factors contributing to this increment such as "insect resistance and resurgence of pests, industrialization of crop production, and conversion of crop type from one season to another to satisfy market demand despite changes in environmental conditions" (Parinya Panuwet et al., 2012).

There is yet another indirect financial impact on farmers when it comes to pesticides. According to WHO, there are 3 million cases of pesticide poisoning each year with 220,000 deaths mostly in developing countries (Lah, 2011). A survey conducted in 2007, reveals 39 percent or approximately 6 million farmers have a significant level of toxicity from pesticides in their systems. The level of toxicity doubled since 1997. Farmers most affected by pesticides are those within the age range of 35 to 44. About 200,000 to 400,000 farmers are hospitalized every year. Fifty-six percent of farmers have experienced moderate level of pesticide poisoning (Witoon Liemchamroon, 2011). The effects on health of farmers have direct impact on their ability to work in the field and thus a decline in income level.

3.3 Labor and Mechanization. Almost all farmers interviewed hire labors to assist in farming or pay for services for the operation of machineries in plowing the land or harvesting rice. Very few work their own land from the beginning to the end.

Even then they usually have to pay for some types of assistance. Farmers themselves will offer their services for labor in others farms while working on their farms or during off seasons. For some, because of the type of soil and accessibility to water, can only plant rice once a year and therefore seasons during which they could not plant rice, they will provide labors in exchange for cash. The hiring of labors since the government increased minimum wage is 300 baht per day. On top of paying for this amount for labors, they have to feed them as well.

This is also true when it comes to paying for service operations of machineries. In Ku Ka Sing, almost all villagers own a tractor while some are in possession of harvester machines as well. After completing working on their land, they will provide services plowing fields using their tractors for farmers in nearby villages or nearby provinces in order to generate extra income. Farmers who own tractors are able to save up to 500 baht per rai. Time is the main justification for the mechanization of their fields. It takes 60 to 120 hours for buffalos to plow 6.5 rai of land, but 12 to 24 hours on a small tractor and 3 to 9 hours using a big tractor (Falvey, 2000: 214). From 1970 to 1995, the number of machines of various types for cultivation has increased from 0.51 to 7.2 units per 1,000 farmers which is approximately 10 percent annually (Poupon, 2013). According to Mark Rosegrant and Peter Hazell (2000), Thailand is the fourth–highest tractors-per-capital in Asia.

Increased expenses due to hiring of labors and mechanization of rice field is almost inevitable within the increasing competitive environment and the lack of mutual support (ลงแขก) which was an important part of an agrarian culture. Without such help, it becomes extremely difficult to plant and harvest in a timely manner while remaining competitive.

3.4 Seeds. Not too many farmers discussed buying of seeds since they have not quite felt the impact of the cost for seeds. However a few talked about the new development plan that came with increased expenses. These expenses include buying of seeds and a particular type of seeds that can generate better income. Buying of seeds is related to the shift from subsistent farming to the production of cash crops (FR1, FR2, FL1, FL2). Historically farmers set aside a portion of rice seeds for the following season. However this cultural practice began to shift in the 1960s with the establishment of the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre (CIMMYT) through the support of World Bank. Through these emerging institutions came research for the development of potential new seeds funded by and in close collaboration with international agricultural research institutes. The government believed that replacing indigenous seeds with new improved seeds could generate better returns for farmers and improve their standard of living while overlooking the high demands for increased fertilizers and chemical pesticides. The success of this new development led a number of major agribusiness and multinational corporations to enter seed market in Thailand. In less

than two decades, markets for maize seeds come under the control of six major corporations: Charoen Pokphand, Monsanto, Cargill, Pioneer, Pacific, and Syngenta. This successful monopoly takes place due to the corporation between government and private sectors in producing hybrid seeds that cannot be replanted in subsequent seasons. More recently the Thai government has encouraged support for Bayer and Charoen Pokphand to produce hybrid rice seeds. There has been a stream of pressure from multinational corporations, U.S. Government and World Trade Organization for Thailand to establish intellectual property law and promote genetically modified seeds due to the market size for rice seeds such as jasmine rice and the possible control of seed market worth 27 billion baht. However, the potential for gain could increase to 67 billion baht if, through patent law, they could monopolize rice seed market (Witoon Liemchamroon, 2011).Speaking of intellectual property law, a local farmer states:

> "Why should we give monopoly rights to a handful of plant breeders and nothing to the millions of farmers who developed and nurtured the materials these breeders rely on?" says Bamrung Kayotha, leader of Forum of the Poor (FOP), a huge mass movement of over 100 networks of people's organizations, farmers, laborers and other basic sectors throughout the country. Virtually all of Thailand's fruits, many of the dozens of rice varieties and most of the vegetables grown and appreciated today are farmers' selections. "We are absolutely opposed to patents on life. Breeders should not have seed monopolies. Farmers' rights must be recognized first. We are the original breeders," Mr. Kayotha says (Witoon Liemchamroon and Piengporn Panutampon, 1998: 17).

According to Office of Agriculture Economics (2012), the nation used 532,966 tons of seeds or an average of 29.44 kilograms per rai. The amount of seeds per rai depends on how farmers plant their seeds. Rice fields employing transplantation method of seedlings use on average 12.19 kilograms per rai whereas sown rice fields use up to 31.16 kilograms per rai. There are variations in the amount that depend on regions and the type of soil. Current price for seeds by the Bureau of Rice Seeds (2014) shows 25 baht per kilogram for jasmine rice and 22 baht per kilogram for sticky rice. Farmers spend anywhere between 300 to 700 baht per rai depending on their methods of seed planting and the season.

4. Poor returns on investment.

How much do farmers make after deducting expenses involved in the production of rice? There were no clear explanations from farmers on how much they invest in farming per rai. They usually give a rough figure for the cost mainly

because, in their calculation, their estimate is based on the entire plot of land they have. Most do not keep track of expenses but a rough estimation. One farmer (FR5) with over 50 rai of land offers the following figures:

Table 20: Rice Planting Expenses

Items	Cost
Seed	700
Tractor	500
Chemical Fertilizers	700
Pesticide	200
Harvesting	500
Water Pump	600
Transportation	200
Total	3,400

(Source: Bureau of Rice Seeds, 2014)

The figures reported by farmers interviewed range between 3,000 to 4,000baht per rai. In March of 2013, an individual posted a question pertaining the cost related to rice planting on Pantip.com. The answers range anywhere between 3,500 to 8,000 bahtper rai. The figure 8,000 baht, according to the explanation, reflects hiring of labors and paying for machineries at every step from the beginning to the end. Then there are other factors such as the size of land, the availability of equipment, accessibility to water source and the type of soil.

Consistently farmers interviewed report high expenses related to rice planting that by the time all deductions are done, their earnings are hardly sufficient to sustain their lives. What is the net profit after they sell their unhusked rice to rice mills? According to 2013 Agricultural Census by the National Statistics Office (2013, 32):

Table 21: Farmers' Income from 1993 to 2013

Item	No. in 1993	No. in 2003	No. in 2013	1993 (%)	2003 (%)	2013 (%)
Total holders (excluding corporation)	5,643,529	5,808,128	5,905,714	100.00	100.00	100.00
Not having agricultural product	124,353	141,025	160,863	2.2	2.4	2.7
Having agricultural product (baht)	5,519,176	5,667,103	5,744,851	97.8	97.6	97.3
5,001 and under	841,098	352,306	150,705	14.9	6.1	2.6
5,001 – 10,000	1,485,238	665,819	328,965	26.3	11.5	5.6
10,001 – 20,000	1,369,204	1,124,544	561,533	24.3	19.3	9.5
20,001 – 50,000	1,259,620	1,981,408	1,394,946	22.3	34.1	23.6
50,001 – 100,000	387,758	981,603	1,646,749	6.9	16.9	27.9
100,001 and over	176,258	561,423	1,661,953	3.1	9.7	28.1

(Source: Thai Agricultural Census, 2013)

These figures reflect agriculturists in general. Hence these may not be the most accurate representation for rice farmers' income level but the table offers an approximate that offers a broad picture of farmers' annual earnings. A Khon Kaen farmer's statement of off-season rice shows gross income of 32,513 baht and the expenditure of 24,400 baht on 15 rai of land (FKK4). A couple from Kalasin own 4 rai of land. They spend 4,000 Baht per rai and sell their rice for 5,000 per rai. They plow the land, transplant seeds and spray pesticides all by themselves. On average they spend 200 baht per day on food and other essentials (FK3). A 63 year-old farmer in Chiang Mai rents 19 rai and making 43,000 baht per year. He engages in other types of labor to provide for his family. While having to take loans in order to invest, he manages his debt well. Another farmer rented 10 rai of land in a nearby vicinity. During off rice season, he plants tomatoes, soy beans, and corn. It was difficult for him to make ends meet. Net income is reinvested into farming while trying to support a son in high school (FCR5).

Thai ***Publica*** website (2014) offers a breakdown of income and expense for rice farming.

Table 22: Figure: Cost for rice planting per rai

Item	Cost (Baht)
Preparation of the soil	500-600
Labors for sowing seeds	650-780
Chemical fertilizers (25 kg per rai)	700-1,000
Labors for applying fertilizers	100-300
Pesticides	180-200
Labors for spraying pesticides	200
Harvest	580
Gasoline	750
Rent of paddy fields	1,000-1,200

(Source: ***Publica***, 2014)

The items above suggest the approximate range of 4,710 to 5,710 baht per rai. Farmers who own their land can reduce the cost to the range between 3,710 to 4,510 baht. A farmer from Ku Ka Sing bemoaned the price of rice that hardly increases in comparison to other crops. "The price of rice never hit 50 baht even once. But this is not so with other fruits and vegetable. At the age of 56 I hardly witness significant increase in price for rice. It has been stable at 7 to 10 baht. It started from 1.50, 3, 5 7 and 10 baht. The highest it ever went was 17-18 baht but farmers only made 11-12 baht. This is not good investment because a bag of fertilizers costs 700-800 baht. Everything is expensive"(FR3). When it comes to income generated from selling rice, as of February 2011, unhusked rice with 15 percent humidity was sold for 8,300 baht per ton (1,000 kilograms). Most farmers produce between 700 to 800 kilograms per rai. A Khon Kaen farmer is adamant that in Isan, 900 kilograms of rice are the maximum a single rai of land could produce. Assuming a rai of paddy field producing 800 kilograms of rice, a farmer earns gross income of 6,640. After deducting cost of 4,500 a farmer makes 2,140 per rai or 21,400 per 10 rai. Most of the participants own between 5 to 10 rai per household. Further, often rice mills payments are usually below stated value. There were farmers who reported receiving as low as five to six baht per kilogram upon sending their harvested rice to rice mills. The reasons given were because of the level of humidity, the grains are broken or there were other types of grain in the mix. And because farmers already spent close to 200 baht per ton for transportation, they decide to sell their rice at the price quoted. One farmer complained, "You can sell rice from the same field and for some reason, the price

differs." Theerapon Klaiklin, a farmer from Ayuthaya province, reported that in February of 2014, after the rice scheme program was terminated, he had to sell his rice directly to a rice mill that set the price for rice at 6,300 baht per ton. He sold his for 5,500 per ton after deductions (humidity, broken grains, mixed types etc). Some of his fellow farmers sold theirs for as low as 3,700 baht per ton (Isranews, 2014). Nuthawat Chun-intrangam, consultant for Thai farmer network reported on the 28th of February of 2014 the price of unhusked rice was set at 4,000 to 5,000 baht per ton by rice mills even though at the beginning of the year farmers were able to sell their rice at 7,000 baht per ton (Thairath, 2014). These figures capture well the plight of farmers interviewed and the difficulty they constantly face as rice farmers trying to make ends meet while supporting their families.

5. Increased Living Expenses.

A female farmer laments the rising cost of living. "There is no such thing as decrease in expenses. Prices of things just keep going up. The price of food keeps increasing but income does not. An egg now costs 5 baht. But income stays stagnant. There is just no way to bring down monthly expenses. Electric, funerals and numerous activities organized by the community" (FL1). "Because rice price dropped" complained a farmer who bought a car while the market price for rice was high, "I was not able to pay for my car so the finance company came and took it from me"(FSR4). When asked about monthly expenses a farmer from Buri Ram estimated 4,000 to 5,000 baht per month minimum. "In this generation," a farmer from Kampangpetch explains "farmers do not get rich. Rice is cheap. And expenses keep rising. We used to spend money when the market price for rice was at its highest. But now it is no longer possible. To farm costs a lot of money because we have to pay for labors. We used to build houses and buy cars when things were looking good" (FK3). A farmer from Lampang described expenses that she has to cover on a regular basis such as food, mobile phone, allowances for her children when they go to school, transportation, electricity, social expenses including funerals, merit making ceremonies, and the price that comes with socializing (FL1). An elderly farmer from Isan expressed his frustration stating how "everything involves money. In the past living was not so connected to cash. But that is no longer the case. You cannot do anything without money" (FKK4).

From local farmers' perspectives there are a number of factors that impact living expenses such as greater dependency on cash, rising cost of living and changing life-style that gravitates toward consumerism and materialism. A lady in her mid 40s believes that materialism has become a part of her life making simple living unachievable. "I want to have a flat screen TV, a mobile phone, a car and life-insurance for my grandparents. I want to visit big cities and eat good food. I need money to pay for electricity, air-conditioners and a laundry machine. It is a new social value that makes it hard to return to former ways of farming and living. We have been

moving in this direction and returning to the old way becomes impossible. Where will I get money to pay for my debt? Without money I can't live the way I do now because the world has changed. When I was a child I walked 10 kilometers to visit my parents. Now that's not possible"(FR2).

The struggle is not merely due to the rising cost of living that farmers have to deal with. It is a lot more subtle. It is the slow permeation of a new economic system forcing farmers to adapt to a different way of living. Barnaud, Trebuil, Duffumier and Nongluck Suphanchaimart (2006) observe:

> The integration into the market economy and the availability of electric power led to the increasing use of cash for exchanges and the creation of new basic needs regarding household equipment and consumer goods (bicycles, radio sets, refrigerators, etc.). Their purchase provoked indebtedness and the impoverishment of some facilities. Cash incomes were not yet invested in farming to maintain production costs at a low level and to better manage risk, except for the payment of wages of more frequent hired labourers replacing the traditional system of mutual help among the village households (p. 64).

This rapid emerging way of living implies dependency on numerous multiple sources beyond the normal reach of farmers from within their own local contexts. In this new reality, survival is connected to these multiple factors beyond their contextual reach and can only be acquired through exchange of monetary values. Hence an indirect way of forcing farmers to depend on cash instead of crops for their sustenance. The world of progress and the new material comfort with increased quality of life has been forced upon farmers who reluctantly adapt in order to survive. Poupon (2013) writes:

> There is no indication that the relative opulence and additional rights being offered to Thai farmers are preferred to the security of traditional communal life, now vanished, sacrificed on the altar of modernity. The more that agriculture and the rural workforce advance in modern developments, the more progress they make toward independence and wealth, the less influence a farmer has over his own environment. This loss of genuine influence is surely not a conscious goal, nor is it satisfactory. It might well be that the rural population has not solicited this evolution and would have been content with their more traditional and community-minded world (p. 49).

In this new reality, sustenance is beyond their reach. The control is in the hands of major corporations deciding the direction of the market. And the market exploits where it can and the people, in the words of Wendell Berry (1976), has become "the hysterical self-dissatisfaction of consumers that is indigenous to an exploitive economy" (p. 11). Hence, within this new economic system, increased expense is inevitable.

Reflections on the Current Situations of Farmers

After 60 years of intensive *pattana* with educational system involved in agricultural research and biotechnology, building human capitals for a modern society, putting in place infra-structure for better access, current farmers' condition seems worse in comparison to their historical past. The promise of a better and more developed communities seem limited to certain geographical and sociological locations. How does one come to understand this discrepancy?

In describing farmers, Wendell Berry writes:

> A competent farmer is his own boss. He has learned the disciplines necessary to go ahead on his own, as required by economic obligation, loyalty to his place, pride in his work. His workdays require the use of long experience and practiced judgment, for the failures of which he knows that he will suffer. His days do not begin and end by rule, but in response to necessity, interest, and obligation. They are not measured by the clock, but by the task and his endurance; they last as long as necessary or as long as he can work. He has mastered intricate formal patterns in ordering his work within the overlapping cycles-human and natural, controllable and uncontrollable-of the life of a farm (1977: 44).

The characterization of farmers' profile as described by Wendell Berry is fast disappearing. And new faces or rather, a replacement of older dignified farmers, are occupying farm lands across the globe. The dependency on new technology by the new generation of policy makers, according to Berry, is forcing a deft ear on Biblical warning to avoid filling new wine into the old wineskin. Raj Patel, in **Stuffed & Starved: The Hidden Battle for the World Food System** (2007) raised rhetorical questions in the face of a grim reality faced by farmers.

> Who, for example, is the central character in our story of food-the farmer? What is her life like? What can she afford to eat? If only we asked, we'd know: the majority of the world's farmers are suffering. Some are selling off their lands to become labourers on their family plots. Some migrate to the cities, or even overseas. A few, too many, resort to suicide (pp. 6-7).

Farming is now closely connected to everything that once was not a part of their everyday reality in the life of farmers. For now the choice of crops are controlled by the market and all devices in its mechanism. Crops are no longer regional. The yields are now monitored by a system from a far distance. Working in the field now extends way beyond what it was historically since every decision made and energy invested in agricultural production is connected to patrols, transportation, credits, loans, currency exchange, outlets, advertising, packaging, chemical factories, legal contracts, and the market system. And all these factors impose restraining limitations on the work of farmers. Patel said it well when he writes, "The business of farming is, at the end of the day, constrained by the playing-field of the market. What this language hides, though, is that the terrain of the market isn't so much a playing-field

as a razor's edge" (2007:7). Farmers are reduced to providers of raw labors and often on their very own land. "Yet farmers are willing to subject themselves to these new farming arrangements because they have so little choice. With banks wielding the threat of foreclosure, any kind of farming, even the kind of farming that asset-strips the soil, is preferable to no farming at all" (2007:7).

According to the Gullup World Poll survey (Tortora, 2014) of 29 countries in sub-Saharan Africa conducted in 2012, 58 percent of farmers who produce food as a way of living indicate that they, at times, did not have sufficient money to buy food needed to provide for their families. They also report greater health problems that inhibit their agricultural productivity. On average 26 percent report having significant health issues in comparison to the 19 percent in the non-farm category. In October 2012, tens of thousands of landless farmers marched over 320 kilometers from their villages to New Delhi to demand the right to the use of land for shelter and food which had been eroded for the benefits of private sectors. In the past 20 years, due to rapid urbanization, around 50,000 villages in India near urban areas have disappeared. Contract and corporate farms are replacing family farms. Farmers are now laborers in their own land (Mahr, 2012). It is of no surprise to read the story of farmers such as Kistaiah who took his life by drinking pesticide 'phorate' because of his inability to deal with debt and the income level he was earning (12,000 rupees per year or USD 0.75 per day). The rate of farmers' suicide in Andhra Pradesh and Mumbai is increasing. The rate of suicide is rising even in Punjab which is "the epicenter of the country's high-tech agricultural 'Green Revolution'… According to the most recent figures, suicide rates in Punjab are soaring" (Patel, 2007: 24-5).

Thailand is no exception. As reflected in the emerging themes from lived experiences of Thai farmers, their lives are getting harder 60 plus years after a major initiation along the path toward national development. They struggle with limited access to natural resources, increased expenses on farming, poor returns on investment, and rising cost of living. More farmers are getting into debt and many have lost their farms. They no longer can survive on farm produce and have to resort to other forms of available employments or being more entrepreneurial in order to survive. With a rapid expansion of institutions of higher education, on average, their educational level remains at Prathom six. Concluding his research on community economy, Suwit Therasaswat (2016) points out the dramatic shift in taking place since the pro-capitalist policies by the government were initiated. The sustainable communal life that flourished for over a hundred years in the northern region of Isan, has been systematically deconstructed successfully. Cash crops came with dramatic increased in expenditure. Debts became a common reality among peasants in this region. The availability of natural resources that used to offer sustenance is no longer utilizable due to toxicity. Migration and urbanization are common practices. Rice farming has become non-sustainable. This shift is the immediate result of development and modernization.

The knowledge rooted in modernity and distributed through the building of infra-structure, designing of policies and expansion of Thai educational system has not delivered what were promised to farmers. How can we come to understand this discrepancy between implementations of development ideology that promise eradication of poverty by closing the gap between the rich and the poor and the current reality of farmers in their daily struggle?

As Raj Patel stated, knowledge is key to understand this transition in the lives of farmers. Through the lens of modern industrial world, subsistent farming makes no sense. Poverty reduction happens through maximization of production in conjunction with the principle of market economy. From the perspective of development ideology, production is key to solving the problem of inequality and promoting mobility. This is to be achieved through utilization of science and technology to maximize production within the context of neo-liberal economic policies. The deregulation is done through reducing tariff, privatization, opening Thai market for imports and removing governmental subsidies in accord with the economic elitist policies. The implementation of this development ideology resulted in greater specialization in agriculture because specialization is believed to promote efficiency by focusing on one task and depends on others' specialization to fill in on other areas. Through specialization, farmers need to only invest in certain equipment and skills. Through the practice of monoculture, production becomes more dependent on outside sources such as fertilizers, seeds, and pesticides. The industrialization and mechanization in agriculture that increase efficiency imply at the same time greater challenges for small farm-holders and their ability to compete. Thus they become dependent on the available market that is completely out of their control. Their lives are at the mercy of big corporations determining the value of agricultural products. This concentration of productions has immediate impact on farmers. In recounting the history of food system and the movement toward industrialization, A Project of the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future (n.d.) offers the following explanation:

> Concentration in the food system can lead to greater efficiency, reduced costs and, in some cases, lower prices for consumers. With fewer competitors in the market, however, dominant corporations gain greater control over setting food prices. Concentration can also leave farmers and other citizens with less autonomy over how food is produced, processed, shipped and sold. For example, farmers may be pressured into following the practices dictated by dominant agricultural and food processing corporations. Individual livestock producers, under contracts with vertically integrated corporations, have limited control over how to raise animals. Many dominant corporations in the food system have a strong presence in the federal agencies responsible for oversight of agriculture and related activities, where they can influence policies in their favor (p. 6).

The promotion of Green Revolution in Thailand is a fine example of the promotion of this development ideology. In 1987, Surichai Wun'gaeo conducted a review of the socio-economic impact of Green Revolution on rural communities. The study traced the use of high yield rice varieties in the late 1969, and early 1970, on irrigated areas in western and northern parts of Chao Phraya Delta and in parts of Chiang Mai. Slight increase in the production volume was noticed within the 20 years period and so was the increased utilization of fertilizers, insecticides, and herbicides. However the increment in volume has to take into consideration the expansion of the land use for cultivation during this period as well. The use of chemical fertilizers increased by 15 percent per year from 1962 to 1975. From 1975 to 1980, there was a 156 percent increment in the use of two-wheel walking tractors, 114 percent for a wheel tractor, and 150 percent for big tractors.

Table 23: Changes in the Use of Farm Equipment by Farmers

Item	1975/76	1979/80	%
2-wheel walking tractor	90,001	230,591	+156.21
4-wheel tractor	14,575	31,158	+113.78
Big tractor	13,338	33,285	+149.55
Motor roller	9,882	8,000	-19.04
Sprayer	1,310,464	1,604,884	+22.47
Water wheel engine	56,891	107,730	+89.36
Water pump	251,288	473,975	+88.62
Cleaning machine	42,342	66,806	+57.78
Corn threshing machine	5,721	9,000	+57.32
Rice threshing machine	3,955	6,224	+57.37
Feed mixing machine	374	588	+57.22
Wind mill	1,937	3,047	+57.31
Sugar cane cutter	-	5	
Rice mill	24,658	25,682	+4.15

(Source: Agricultural Statistics in Brief Crop Year 1980/81)

The increased use of insecticides, pesticides and herbicides was drastic during the period from 1973 to 1980: insecticides increased by 200 percent, pesticides by 34 percent and herbicides by 360 percent. The challenge in adopting high yield varieties are 1) the inadequate control of irrigation, 2) government price policy that maintain high cost for fertilizers and agrochemical while maintaining low price for rice, 3) farmers' reluctant to invest on a large piece of land due to high investment in seeds, fertilizers, insecticides and the unpredictability of the price of rice and 4) government's land reform policy that tend to be biased toward urban, industrial sectors. Concluding his review of the Green Revolution in Thailand, Surichai Wun'gaeo points to the socio-economic impacts on rural communities. The new varieties have shorter-life span and therefore implies that harvest has to be completed in a very timely manner. As such the use of mechanization was connected with harvest and volumes of productivity. This in turn changes the pattern of labor from cooperative to hired labors. Land utilization requires using more variety of crops. Further, to be successful with this new rice technology requires dependency on outside sources such as fertilization etc. This requires capitals and therefore the demand for credits. And because mass production requires dependency on market both domestic and international, farmers' lives become intertwined with external markets for their survival and livelihood.

Speaking of the outcomes of Green Revolution Raj Patel (2013) writes:

> Indeed, the Green Revolution varieties were trialed in far better conditions than experienced by the majority of smallholder farmers, leading to a persistent 'yield gap', a gulf between conditions that might be achieved with access to capital and high quality land, and that observed in the real world of poorer farmers. In practice, the best agricultural land was most likely to be controlled by richer peasants, entrenching unequal land ownership and increasing social differentiation. Griffin concludes that 'the new technology is discriminatory…it is neutral neither as regards geographical area nor as regards social class' (pp. 19-20).

While Green Revolution represents implementation of knowledge based on science and technology applied to the field of agriculture, another constraining factor remains with even greater impact on farmers in Thailand and around the world. From the perspective of Friedmann whose claim is based on opinions of economic elitists, subsidies make no sense. In September of 2013, more than 100 farmers from the Assembly of the Poor (AOP) gathered in Chiang Mai and issued a public statement against the ongoing Thai-EU free trade agreement. The report by *La Via Campesina* (2013) states:

> The attempt of EU to pressure Thai government to extend the intellectual property to cover genetic resources and bio resources will open the door for the corporates to monopolize seed and bio technology industries and grab natural resources from the poor. Farmers will have to buy seeds at high price while keeping seeds for next season, mutual exchange of seeds and protection

> of seeds and genetic resources become crimes. Free trade gives opportunity for transnational corporates and foreign investors to exploit the people's natural resources freely, especially in agricultural sector. Land, water and other resources will be grabbed away from the poor. This is the threat to our food sovereignty and peasants' rights. The negotiation will create injustice in accessibility of medicine or medicine monopoly as EU pressures Thai government on unfair issues including the extension of medicine patent protection duration, data exclusivity or the anti-counterfeiting trade agreement (para. 2, 3, and 4).

The promise of development based on modernity is the promise of mobility resulting from increased productivities. Thailand, as the recipient of this knowledge, has sought its implementation for the benefits of poor farmers through science and technology and their integration into the capital market system. Changes that occur as the result of these implementations are reported in the interviews of local farmers whose lives have been dramatically altered from subsistent farming to agro-business. The role of education in facilitating mobility reached a limited number of Thai nationals, mostly in the urban areas, leaving out majority of farmers in the countryside.

Conclusion

Around the world in this twenty-first century farmers struggle to make ends meet. The Gullup World Poll survey of 29 countries in sub-Saharan Africa conducted in 2012,shows 58 percent of farmers indicated not have enough money to buy food needed to provide for their families, while a quarter of farmers report having significant health issues. In India the rapid expansion of urbanization takes away agricultural land, the disappearance of over 50,000 villages in the past 20 years. More famers are getting into debt; many had to sell their lands. This is true with Thai farmers whose lives have been changed by the new development in ideology promoting maximization of production as means of mobility. Since the 1st National Economic Development Plan in the 60s, striving to survive is the current narrative of Thai farmers. The methods to increase productivity through industrialization and economic deregulation have an implicit bias leaning toward corporations and not local farmers.

In light of this, one might wonder about the role of higher education? According to UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2013), the number of students enrolled in tertiary education divided by income level (%) shows lower income countries enrollment at 7.68, 22.13 for lower middle income countries, 27.87 for middle income countries, 35.31 for upper middle income countries 35.31 and 73.76 for high income countries. Even with the rapid expansion of educational institutions around the world, the gap remains. A study by Fabian Pfeffer and Florian Hertel (2014) comparing graduates with post-secondary degree and social class shows a drop for those with

only high school certificate from 44.9 percent in 1951 to 10.5 percent in 2012, and the number of individuals with post-secondary degree increased from 12.9 in 1951, to 31.6 percent in 2012. However under the category of social class, there is a rapid growth among highly skilled white-collar workers, it is not true with non-skilled manual labor. There is no change in non-manual labors and for self-employed including farmers there was a reduction from 14.3 percent to 7.2 percent. This trend raises a question of the relationship between education and social mobility particularly among the lower class.

This trend is significant for this research since farmers, particularly those in Thailand, are among the lower category in income level. The current condition of Thai peasants raise questions regarding historical changes, public discourse, and factors contributing to the socio-economic state farmers find themselves in this twenty-first century in Thailand. This change resulting in the current state of Thai farmers is closely connected with shifting discourse from a particular episteme hence the need to take a close look at institutions of higher learning wherein reside the very foundation of knowledge and the location from which its dissemination takes place.

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CHAPTER 6

Thai Farmers, Higher Education and Social Mobility

Introduction

The previous chapter documents ways in which the production of new knowledge has significantly altered the socio-economic landscape of Thai peasants through implementations of infrastructure and promotions of scientific knowledge in the field of agriculture. Because of the centrality of knowledge, it is a reasonable assumption to recognize higher education as instrumental in the preservation and dissemination of knowledge. However the current socio-economic status of local farmers after decades of rapid expansion of higher education is declining. While social mobility was in the design as the natural outcome of education, reality seems otherwise. How do we come to understand the seeming non-alignment between the vision of national leaders as facilitated through higher education and the reality of local farmers?

This chapter addresses the second objective in answering the question how higher education has impacted social mobility of local Thai farmers. In answering this question, this chapter looks at the lives of participants and their socio-economic location while taking into consideration their perspectives on the role of higher education within their everyday experiences.

At the symposium celebrating 175th anniversary of the founding charter of the University of Toronto, Professor James J. Dudrstadt (2002), then president of the University of Michigan, gave a public address. His statement regarding knowledge-drive global economy was central.

> Today we are evolving rapidly into a post-industrial, knowledge-based society, a shift in culture and technology as profound as the shift that took place a century ago when our agrarian societies evolved into industrial nations. Industrial production is steadily shifting from material- and labor-intensive products and processes to knowledge-intensive products. A radically new system for creating wealth has evolved that depends upon the creation and application of new knowledge. In a very real sense, we are entering a new age, an age of knowledge, in which the key strategic resource necessary for prosperity has become knowledge itself—educated people and their ideas (Bloch, 1988). Unlike natural resources, such as iron and oil, that have driven earlier economic transformations, knowledge is inexhaustible. The more it is used, the more it multiplies and expands. As knowledge can be created, absorbed, and applied only by the educated mind, schools, in general, and universities in particular, will play increasingly important roles as our societies enter this new age. In a sense, knowledge is the medium of the university (pp. 2-3).

If knowledge played an important role in the process of industrializing Thailand in the early 1960s, its significance has become an inescapable tool for survival in the post-industrial world, where material production has been replaced by services acquired through production of ideas as the primary source of economy and thus, social mobility. As Dudrstadt stated, "As knowledge can be created, absorbed, and applied only by the educated mind… universities in particular, will play increasingly important roles." The importance of the educated minds is situated within the realm of higher education as institutions prepared for the training of the new generation. With knowledge as the source of economy disseminated through higher education, how has this knowledge, which has been channeled primarily through colleges and universities, impacted local farmers? What are their perceptions and responses to its role in the advancement of knowledge and in its possibility to enhance their mobility socially and economically?

One hundred years after the establishment of the first institution of higher education in Thailand, and now with rapid expansion of tertiary institutions across the country, majority of farmers' educational level (64.8 percent) is at the primary level. In terms of income, average farmers earn approximately 2,000 baht per rai. Average income per household is between 50,000 to 100,000 and about 47 percent of these farmers are in debt. With increased cost of living, increased expense on farming and stagnant income from rice, mobility does not seem to take place among rice farmers. How does one explain the gap between rapid expansion of higher education and the current social and economic condition of rice farmers in Thailand? Perhaps one of the keys to unlock this discrepancy is contained within farmers' experiences and their perspectives on the role of higher education itself. This chapter describes farmers' views and perspectives on education broadly in relation to social mobility. Following descriptions of their perspectives is farmers' expressed self-identification that has significant bearing on what they think of the process of development and social mobility.

According to Thailand Agriculture Census 2013, majority of farmers' educational attainment remains at primary level (64.8 percent) follows by high school level (16.4 percent). The gap between those with primary and secondary level among farmers is 48.4 percent. Of the total 5,905,714 farmers in Thailand, 4,633,815 farmers' educational attainment is at secondary level and below or approximately 80 percent with 5 percent of the population in tertiary level. These figures have greater significance when compared to the general population. According to the National Statistic Office, in 2010, there were 14,150,863 registered students in the entire country with 1.8 million students in pre-school, 5 millions in primary school, 4.8 millions in high school, 2.4 millions in tertiary education.

Table 24: Educational Level of Farmers

Level	Total	Percentage
Bachelor degree or higher	148,844	2.5
Associate degree	155,273	2.6
High School	967,782	16.4
Primary School	3,826,652	64.8
Less than Primary School	600,869	10.2
Others	10,238	0.2
Lack of Education	196,056	3.3

(Source: Thai Agricultural Census, 2013)

It is interesting to note close proximity of the above statistics with the population interviewed. Of the 67 participants, five earned their bachelor degrees and one an associate degree.

Participants and Higher Education in Thailand

This section offers a broad demographic observation of participants in relation to education broadly and higher education specifically providing point of reference for subsequent conversations on this topic. The data on educational statistics of participants is based on those with clear information on educational level, current status, and the number of children. The data is arranged by provinces and placed in an alphabetical order. The table omitted a few participants due to insufficient information pertaining the number of children and their educational levels.

Table 25: Farmer's Children, Number of Children, Current Status and Educational Levels

Participants/ Location	No. of Children	Stud y	Wor k	Othe r	MA	BA	Associate	HS/ Below
Buri Ram#50	2		2					2
Buri Ram#51	2	2						2
Buri Ram#52	2	2						2
Buri Ram#53	1	1						1
Chiang Mai#15	2		1	1		1		1
Chiang Mai#16	2	1	1			1		1
Chiang Mai#22	1	1				1		
Kalasin#12	3	3			1	2		
Kalasin#13	2	1	1				1	1
Kalasin#14	2	1	1				2	
Kampangpet#36	2		1	1		1	1	
Kampangpet#37	2		2				1	1
KhonKaen#66	2		2			1	1	

Participants/ Location	No. of Children	Study	Work	Other	MA	BA	Associate	HS/ Below
KhonKaen#67	1	1						
KhonKaen#68	4		4					4
KhonKaen#69	2		2			2		
Ku Ka Sing#2	2	2						2
Ku Ka Sing#3	1	1				1		
Ku Ka sing#4	5		5			4		1
Ku Ka sing#5	2	2				2		
Ku Ka Sing#7	2	2				1		1
Loei#59	2		2			1		1
Loei#60	2	1	1					2
Loei#61	2		2			2		
Phichit#32	3	1	1	1				3
Phichit#33	3	1	2			1		2
Phichit#34	6		6					6
Phitsanulok#27	2		2				1	1
Phitsanulok#28	2		2					2
Phitsanulok#29	3		3			1		2
Phitsanulok#31	1			1				1
Srisaket#45	3	2	1			1		2
Srisaket#46	2		2			2		
Srisaket#47	3	1	2					3
Srisaket#48	4		4			2		2
Sukhothai#38	1	1						1
Sukhothai#39	2	1	1					2
Sukhothai#40	2		1	1				2
Surin#8	3	1	2			1		2
Lampang#24	1	1						1
Lampang#25	1	1						1
Lampang#26	2	2						2
Ubon#41	2	2						2
Ubon#42	2	2						2
Ubon#43	2	2						2
Ubon#44	4		4			1	1	2
Udon#54	1	1				1		
Udon#56	3	3				1		2
Chiang Raig#17	2		2				2	
Chaing Rai #18	2		2					2
Chiang Rai #19	2	2						2
Chiang Rai#20	2		2			2		
Chiang Rai#21	2	2				1		1
Yasothorn#11	3	3						3
Total	121	50	66	5	1	34	10	76

The above table is based on 54 participants. Of the 121 children of farmers interviewed, 50 are currently studying at different levels of education from primary school to a graduate level, while 66 are working. There are five that do not quite belong to any category (one completed a bachelor degree but is now living in Sweden exploring a nursing degree, one is a 16 year-old high school drop-out, one in prison, one serves as a housewife, and one is in a monastery).When it comes to educational

level, 35are either working on or completed their undergraduate degrees. Twenty six completed programs in higher education. One of the 26 who completed her undergraduate degree is living overseas and is exploring other options, while another is currently working on a Masters degree. Among those with Associate degrees, eight are working while two are currently studying. Of the total 121, 76either completed up to high school level or are currently in within the range of primary and high school levels. Of this number, 37 are within the age range of 18 and below.

Table 26: Farmers' Children Currently in Higher Education

No.	Gender	Region	Institution	Major
1.	F	Nong Bua Lampu	Rajabhat Loei	Math
2.	F	Nakhon Phanom	Rajabhat Loei	Law
3	M	Khon Kaen	Rajabhat Loei	Thai Language
4.	F	Ubon	Asia Pacific International University	Nursing
5.	F	Khon Kaen	Asia Pacific International University	Nursing
6.	M	Mahasarakham	Asia Pacific International University	Nursing

Supplemental information regarding farmers' perspectives on higher education is drawn from experiences of these farmers' children, who are currently pursuing higher education. There is a significant difference in the level of difficulties for admission between public and private universities. Another interesting observation is the availability of employment. It seems easier to find employment with a nursing degree and a decent return on investment, even though it may initially cost more.

Table 27: Farmers' Children who have Earned Degrees

No.	Gender	Location	Major	Profession	Degree
1.	F	Roiet	Education	Educator	BA
2.	M	Roiet	Political Science	City Manager	MA
3.	F	Roiet	Management	Local Tourism	MA
4.	M	Roiet	Thai Studies	Educator	PhD
5.	F	Chiang Mai	Economics and Management	Bank Manager	MA/MBA
6.	F	Bangkok	Education	Educator	MA

Regarding children of farmers who have completed their programs through higher education, most participants in this category have graduate degrees except for one, who currently works as a guidance counselor for a local public school. The second and third participants are a married couple. Both traveled weekly to Khon Kaen to pursue their graduate degrees at Khon Kaen University. Participant number four is school teacher in his district and an activist in his village, promoting local wisdom, culture, and sustainable farming. He is a well-respected voice for his community on various issues. The fifth participant works as a bank manager for a local bank in Chiang Mai. She earned her MA in economics from Mae Jo University, Chiang Mai and MBA from Ramkhamhaeng University. The last participant works as a teacher in a private school in Bangkok. She was originally from Ubon Ratchathani Province. Her graduate degree is in education. With the exception of the last participant, all interviewees returned to their regions for employment.

Thai Farmers, Higher Education and Social Mobility: Participants

Looking at the participants and their children, the question is, has higher education facilitated social mobility for this population? And what type of social mobility has higher education facilitated? There are three categories of mobility to be discussed in this section. These are horizontal vs vertical, intergenerational vs intra-generational and absolute vs. relative mobility. In vertical mobility, a person changes social and economic status through changing professions (e.g. when a taxi driver becomes a school teacher). Where as in horizontal mobility, one may change one's career but remains within the same social hierarchy (e.g. when a farmer becomes a factory worker). In intergenerational mobility, children of a particular demographic change their socio-economic status, while intra-generational changes take place within the same generation. Absolute vs. relative mobility is a measure of economic status. In absolute mobility there is an economic change in measurable terms when income level increases over a period of time, and when the children's income exceeds that of their parents. Relative mobility is an economic measure that takes into consideration ranking in comparison to their generation and peers. According to Pew Economic Mobility Project, 40 percent of children in the lowest quintile remains the same in their adulthood while 30 percent moves up two quintiles in their life time (Pew Charitable Trust Economic Project, 2012).

The analysis of social mobility will focus on three populations among participants: 67 farmers interviewed, children of these 67 farmers and children of farmers interviewed who have completed academic degrees.

1. Participants: Farmers. Of the 67 participants in this category, six went through higher education with five of six earning their bachelor degrees and one, an associate degree. As for intra-generational mobility, all continue to work on their farms at various degrees.

Table 28: Participants

Location	Career	Education
Khon Kaen	School teacher/farmer	Bachelor
Loei	NGO/farmer	Bachelor
Srisaket	Military/farmer	Associate
Roi Et	Farmer	Bachelor
Phitsanulok	Farmer	Bachelor
Ubon	Farmer	Bachelor

Three of the six participants only work as farmers. Another three have other employments. Hence there is a certain level of horizontal mobility even though all remain farmers in their identity. In terms of relative mobility, every one employed indicated higher level of income and a certain level of economic security. Among those who were not employed, only one indicated a higher level of income as a direct result of knowledge gained through education. Income levels remained the same for two participants who did not gain employment in another field. Hence among these six participants, higher education facilitated economic relative and vertical mobility for four of the six participants. It is important to note that without career change, higher education only impacted one participant when it came to vertical mobility. Hence it seems, within intra-generational mobility, higher education positively impacted relative and vertical mobility for four of the six participants primarily through career change.

2. Children of farmers. This section looks at intergeneration mobility based on children of participants. Of the 67 participants, 54 have complete information on their children's educational level. Of these 54 participants, there are 121 children. Fifty among this group are studying, while 66 are currently working. Five of these do not fit into either studying or working categories. When it comes to educational level, 76 are at a high school level or below, 10 at the associate level, 34 are at the bachelor level, and 1 at the Masters' level. Of the 66 who are working, 21 earned their bachelor degrees and 7, associate degrees.

Table 29: Number of Farmers' Children by Educational Level and Current Status

Total Number of Farmers' Children at Tertiary Level	N=46
BA/Studying	14
BA/Working	21
BA/Not working	1
Associate/Studying	2
Associate/Working	7
MA/Studying	1
Total Studying	17
Total Working	28

Of these 46, 15 are currently studying at different level (BA=12, Associate=2, MA=1) and 28 are currently working. Of these 28 that are working, 21 completed their undergraduate degrees and 7 completed their associate degrees. Hence 28 who are currently working completed tertiary education. Thirty eight of the 66 farmers' children currently working earned a high school diploma or less. Hence approximately 56 percent of this population is working without a college degree, 12.1 percent obtained an associate degree and 22 percent completed their bachelor degrees. Of the total number of those working on their undergraduate degrees, it appears as if very few have been admitted into high-ranking universities. Only two of the participants indicated that their children have been admitted into Chiang Mai and Khon Kaen Universities. The rest either mentioned Rajabhat University or did not mention the name of the colleges or universities at all. Majority of those with undergraduate degrees are working in various capacities such as teaching in public schools, working for the police department, working as government officials for the local districts, working as nurses, or in some forms of white collar capacities. Those who did not complete their education at the tertiary level work in blue collar capacities such as becoming factory workers, day laborers, truck drivers or they returned home to help their parents with rice farming. There is a significant difference in income level between those with and without tertiary education. As reported by farmers, those returning to rice farming are those who could not make it through higher education. They either work in their parents' farms or search for a minimum wage type of labors on a daily basis. This has a significant implication for the future generation of farmers and the role of higher education in creating public policies that can better facilitate for the future generation of rice farmers. Hence, when considering social mobility, there seems to be a strong correspondence intergenerationally between changing careers (employment) and vertical mobility. Higher education is closely linked with employment resulting in vertical and relative economic mobility as well. Those who gain employment after completing tertiary education no longer work in the rice field. Their social status changes and their income level seems to be

significantly greater than their parents' income level both in absolute and relative terms.

Another interesting observation has to do with distance and approximation. It appears that, for those whose residences were further from provincial districts, the opportunity for higher education decreases by the degree of proximity. In relation to age, fewer children of older farmers completed higher education in comparison to the younger generation farmers. Based on interviews, older farmers in general tend to be less concerned with educational levels of their children, but this is not the case with the younger generation who are committed and determined to send their children to pursue higher education.

3. Participants: Farmers' children with academic degrees. Among this group there are six participants (one has a bachelor's degree, one earned a PhD, and the rest have Master's degrees). Two of the participants work for a local school district. Two work for the government. One is a banker and the last participant is a school teacher in Bangkok. When it comes to social mobility, none of these participants returned to farming. Through higher education, they found employment in various capacities that would not have been possible without earned degrees. Their status in their community has changed and so has their income level and sense of security. Vertical mobility as facilitated by higher education is not achieved within the context of rice farming but through its departure.

Looking at these three groups in light of social mobility, it is safe to say that those who have earned their academic degrees have increased chances of both vertical and relative mobility. They have increased opportunities for employment. Almost all farmers' children with tertiary education found themselves employment outside of rice farming with stable income. Among those who remain farmers, only one of six experience vertical mobility. While higher education plays an important role in improving the lives of those who gain employment, the question remains pertaining the 61 farmers without academic degrees and 38 of 66 working age children of farmers without higher education. This question is significant because it raises the issue of access to education and thus the possibility of social mobility. Why is it that only 6 of 61 farmers earned their degrees?

Obstacles toward Achieving Mobility: Farmers' Perspectives

1. The Context. A farmer from Ubon recalled how, in the past, many children implied prosperity. However, through development and modernization children are required to go to school instead of helping in the fields. Farmers started having fewer children due to increased financial burden. Even with fewer children, the type of help that was available hardly exists in the current context. Instead, farmers have to work harder without the help of their children in order to finance their children's education. This implies increased expenditure for food, fees, transportation, uniforms, books, and other activities. On top of all these, there exists a labor law preventing children under

the age of 15 from entering any compensatory type of labor. Therefore, not only are they required to spend money on education, but no longer can they depend on their children for additional income to support the family due to labor laws in the name of modernization. The struggle of this farmer is telling, especially when it comes to higher education, because farmers see tertiary education as the gatekeeper for employment in the industrial society.

Changes in the lives of farmers necessitate the pursuit of higher education among the younger generation. Most farmers interviewed with college age children sent their children to colleges and universities. This is true among those with children in primary and high school levels as well, when asked if they plan to send their children to pursue education at the tertiary level. The younger the generation, the more committed they are to making sure their children earn a college degree. The commonly cited rationale is that rice farming is hard and it is only going to get tougher. Future in rice farming seems rather dim and therefore higher education, in their estimate, holds the promise of a better future. From their perspective, the difficulties embedded in farming will become more and more insurmountable within the new global economy. Their forecasting predicts slow incapacitation of the profession. "This year many farmers had to sell their land," stated a farmer from Surin. "The future is going to be very difficult. The debt will incur, income decreased, interests accumulated. If the price of rice continues this way I may have to sell my land" (FS1). A farmer in Khon Kaen kept repeating the obscene level of dependency. "Everything we do requires money," he grieved a sense of loss for the community that once was. It is this "becoming a part of the global economy that makes the transition into the industrial world a necessity for farmers as they envision the future of their children. It is no longer subsistence and the communal support no longer exists. It is about generating income and one of the most viable ways is through employment. And for the most part when it comes to employment, tertiary education is a basic requirement" (FKK4).

At the very same time they do not think that their children have what it takes to do rice farming because to them the younger generation does not have the toughness to endure hardship the way they have been able to themselves. When asked whether they see their children returning to rice farming, they responded in the negative. The common aspirations for their children are for them to work as teachers in a public system, for the police department, the military, or as nurses due to benefits as bases for security.

For a number of farmers, one additional reason they do not think their children could handle the toughness of rice farming has to do with the educational process. The mandatory educational requirement implies limited amount of time their children can learn from them regarding rice farming. More time is spent completing school assignments that have little to do with agrarian lifestyle. They do not have the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to live the lifestyle of rice

farmers, the type of home education that requires of them to rise early checking out the rice field, and a constant overseeing of the process making sure that nature takes its course watching insects, waiting for rain, and observing the field. The children rise early getting ready to go to school and by the time they return home, there are assignments to be completed. Hence, by the time they are done with Mathayom 6, they have been schooled to pursue the promise of the life of mobility and security through tertiary education (FR2, FR3, FK2).

A farmer in his mid-50s supported his daughter until she completed her undergraduate degrees. He expressed the importance of higher education for his daughter because he did not want her to have a hard life. Higher education, for him, is an important solution for the newer generation of farmers' children. It is a way out of the difficult life of rice farming. In his view, the new generation no longer has the capacity and the endurance to work the farm like the older generation, where a father of 10 would take his children to the farm and teach them how to survive. With a fourth grade education, his father was able to teach him and his siblings how to work the field and provide for the family. Within the current context, this is no longer a viable option (FR7).

The changing landscape in farming ushered in through modernity has cast a dim vision of the future for farmers and their children. Located within this reality came the realization among many farmers of the necessity of higher education as the most viable method of transitioning from agrarian ways of living to the capitalist economy. However, this costly investment comes with many challenges as well. While they wish to assist their children in the pursuit of higher education, they face uphill challenges of financing the education, getting admitted into quality institutions, and subsequently finding employment that will provide good returns.

2. Challenges in pursuing higher education

A number of challenges stated by farmers are: expenses, admissions and future employments.

2.1 Expenses. Farmers' children struggle with costs related to higher education such as tuition, room, board and other related expenses. Financial challenge is more prominent among the younger generation. Older generation of farmers did not spend as much sending their children to colleges and universities. However, entering the global economy means rising costs related to education and as such, post a steep challenge for farmers' children trying to earn a university degree.

In fact, education is one of the most expensive expenditures for farmers, particularly expenses related to higher education. Most farmers interviewed are committed to making sure their children acquire tertiary education. Most farmers take extra loans from various sources to support their children aside from the government educational loan. Some sell a portion of their farmlands to finance their children's education. The extent they would go to for their children's education is admirable.

However, they keep facing an upward financial battle. A couple living in Viengchairoong, Chiang Rai explained how they left their farm to work in the city in order to earn enough to support their children's education. "If we remained farmers, we would not be able to earn enough to help them earn a university degree" (FCR1). An elderly farmer in Khon Kaen explained that none of his four children pursue higher education. In his own words, "education was too expensive." He did not have the means to support them (FKK3). Another elderly farmer in Phitsanulok took out a loan of 100,000 baht to support his daughter pursuing higher education. "A hundred thousand baht in those days was a lot of money" (FP3).

Mr. Sombat from Sermngam District in Lampang Province left for Hawaii with a contract to work in a farm only to fall prey to a human trafficking scheme (Heller, 2014). Prior to the incident, drought was hitting hard and rice farming did not yield sufficient income. His daughter was bright with a very promising future. Both him and his wife concluded that only by earning income through hard labor in the US could they save enough to support their daughter and help her get admitted to a competitive institution.

Passing through Nongkam Village in Buri Ram Province, I met a group of ladies gathered in a corner store that functions as the village cooperative selling daily essentials and some local products. They were hanging out while some of them were working on handicraft projects for sale in the local market. Many of them have children studying in a high school in a nearby district. Speaking of related educational expenses they explained that their children spend, on average, 50 baht per day on food and about 700 baht monthly on transportation. Considering their annual income of 50,000 baht per family from rice production, 17,000 to 20,000 baht per year is a very heavy responsibility to carry especially since most women in this group have two children on average (FB2, FB3, FB4).

Along High Way 214 from Kalasin Province to Roi Et Province were pockets of paddy fields. Pulling to the side of the narrow street, I parked my car and walked through the rice field toward a couple hoeing the field creating a small dyke while preparing their land for seeding. The wife kept repeating that rice farming works only when the price is right. And for them, it is not at the moment. They invest 4,000 baht per rai and make a profit of 1,000 per rai. They hardly pay for any labor because they plow their own field, plant the seeds, spray pesticides and harvest all by themselves. And yet they have to borrow money to survive. Because their earning is enough just for interest, they are intentional when it comes to spending. Money did not play such an important role three decades prior, but this is no longer the case. They spend 200 baht per day on average. They do not know how the future will unfold, but they will most likely continue farming knowing that rice farming alone is not sufficient to make a living and supplementary income is needed in order to survive

Because there appears to be no future in rice farming, and because they do not think that the younger generation has what it takes to be rice farmers, they try their

best to send their two children to college. The oldest completed an associate degree while the second daughter is still in the process. They took out loans for educational expenses. Life is hard enough without higher education related expenses and yet an unavoidable costly investment. They would like their children to have a good education in order to land themselves good and stable jobs. Yet uncertainty remains regardless of the heavy investment because most of their neighbors' children could not gain employment with the college degrees they earned (FK3).

Once accepted into the academic program, the financial struggle continues as well. A second year college student pursuing higher education at Rajabhat University, Nan Province, grew up helping her parents with rice farming. Because their rice field depends primarily on the monsoon rain, during off-season her parents would go to Bangkok and work as construction workers. Upon being accepted by Rajabhat University, she applied for a financial loan. However, the fund was not sufficient even though she spends her money very carefully. During her summer breaks she follows her parents to Bangkok and joins her parents as a construction worker trying to earn her way to pay for education. She reports needing an additional 2,000 baht per month to cover all expenses. These are typical stories among farmers interviewed and their experiences with education (FCCR1).

2.2 Admissions and Quality Education

A young mother lamented the fact that good jobs only come with entrance to competitive universities. Describing her daughter as a bright and promising student limited by opportunities due to the quality of education in her district, she and her husband were committed to try every mean possible for such a provision. Soon after, her husband found a job overseas earning a minimal wage in the US. She is not alone in her concern (FL1). Distance does affect the quality of education. A number of parents described how their children earned their undergraduate degrees and had to return home because they could not find decent jobs. A number of first generation children of farmers pursuing higher education explained the difficulties competing to get to reputable universities, and ended up within Rajabhat University system due to distance, the lack of financial support, insufficient guidance from their parents and the quality of education they received upon completion of Mathayom 6 (FCCR 1, FCCR2, FCCR 3).

Describing typical struggles farmers' children have to face, Supaporn Naebood (interviewed, August 14, 2016), public health nursing instructor at Naresuan University in Phisanulok explained the difference between poor children in urban areas and those from far distant villages. Students whose close proximity provides access to a good public educational system in urban areas have better chance of making it, while students in rural areas have a much harder time due to limited access to available resources. There is a great deal of statistical information indicating the disadvantages of students from rural areas in contrast to urban, particularly Bangkok area. The followings are experiences of three Rajabhat University students describing

the number of students in their rural regions and the rate of admissions to higher education. According to one male student, out of 17 high school students from his village, only two are currently studying at the undergraduate level. Many of his high school friends did not even complete high school. According to a female student, out of 15 students from her village, she is the only one studying at the university level. The third student reports that she is the only one out of 10 making it to the university. They all described the process of admission as very competitive. The current university they are enrolled in is not their top choice, but one that they were admitted to. While in high school the distance they traveled in order to get to a better school was anywhere between 10 to 30 kilometers (FCCR1, FCCR2, FCCR3). It is interesting to note that even in the US, the highly selective university admission process is a recent phenomenon existing only in the last 50 years or so in the history of education (Pusser, 20115: 65).

A teacher in a private school in Bangkok was told by her dad not to pursue higher education. Her village is located at a distance from the closest public high school. She had to cycle over 10 kilometers to attend school. After school she cycled to the rice field and helped her parents. During rainy seasons, they continued working in the rain and endured the heat in subsequent seasons. When she informed her parents of her desire to work toward an undergraduate degree the immediate response was, "go fund yourself." She went to Ubon living with her aunty helping with raising cattle. During weekends and summers she attended a local teachers college until she completed her program. Many of her friends in the village never completed high school. Distance and accessibility are crucial issues in the pursuit of higher education (FCCP6).

The following statistical data confirm experiences of participants when it comes to unequal distribution between rural and urban students, access to higher education, after school tutoring and quality of academicians in regional vs. urban universities.

Table 30: Children, Teenagers and Young Adults Ages 6 – 24: In School Vs. Not In School

Region	Ages 6 – 24	In School	Not in School
Bangkok	1,448,439	1,064,305	384,134
Central	4,310,279	2,854,420	1,455,859
North	3,431,143	2,322,026	1.109,117
Northeast	7,133,918	4,835,326	2,298,592
South	2,973,130	1942,725	1,030,405
Total	19,296,909	13,018,802	6,278,107

(Source: National Statistics Office, 2011)

According to National Statistics Office (2011), as of 2009 the number of school age Thai students between 6 to 24 years old is lowest in Bangkok (1,448,439), while the highest is located in the northeastern region (7,133,918). The number of school age Thais not current pursuing any form of education is also lowest in Bangkok at 26.5 percent while in most regions the number of school age Thais not attending is around 32 to 34 percent. In the northeastern region, as many as 2,298,592 Thais within this age ranges, are not registered within any type of educational systems.

Table 31: Young Adults Ages 18 – 24: In School Vs. Not In School

Region	Ages 18 – 24	In School	Not in School	Not in School %
Bangkok	524,033	212,077	311,956	59.52
Central	1,693,745	438,379	1,255,366	74.11
North	1,342,068	370,038	972,030	72.42
Northeast	2,655,091	636,505	2,018,586	76.02
South	1,140,838	264,440	876,398	76.82
Total	7,356,776	1,921,369	5,435,407	73.88

(Source: National Statistics Office, 2011)

At tertiary level, the number of students not attending colleges and universities is even more alarming. While 59.52 percent of those in Bangkok are not attending colleges or universities, the number goes up as high as 76 percent in other regions. One of the factors pointed out by Paitoon Sinlarat (2014) has to do with the extra support students in urban areas receive in contrast to students in a more rural area.
Two Rajabhat University students acknowledged the lack of after school guidance and support due to the lack of financial resources and the need to help their parents (FCCR1, FCCR2). The difference between students from Mathayom 3 – 6 receiving extra after school tutoring divided by urban and rural settings is significant. With limited choices, farmers' children often end up in regional colleges and universities. Because of the quality of education in these regional universities in general, students remain less competitive.

Hence farmers' children from rural locations in Thailand have to struggle much harder in order to get admitted into colleges and universities due to distance, availability of quality education, parental support and extra after-school help. Farmers' children travel longer distances to go to school, attend schools that are less competitive, help their parents with farming after school, lack good academic advice in terms of educational choices and have a less access to after-school tutoring due to a lack of financial support and availability of time. In their pursuit of higher education, they have a much lower chance of getting into competitive universities.

2.3 Employment

Even after investing heavily in education for their children, there is no assurance that things will turn out the way they had planned. While some do really well and create a comfortable future for themselves as a result of tertiary education, others struggle for a number of reasons. Among farmers' children there are those who dropped out because they could not make it academically, those without sufficient preparations and those who just are not interested in pursuing nor have the aptitude for it. Many of these students return homes and live with their parents. "There are many farmers' children with university degrees. But at the same time there are many who are unemployed" (FK2). Another farmer observes, education has become a trend among the younger generation but it may not be worth the investment. The return (from education) may not generate sufficient income" (FR2). "I could not recall any graduates I know who are able secure employment as civil servants" (FK3). Another farmer explained how hard he worked to support one of his daughters for an undergraduate degree. It was a very expensive investment and upon graduation, she was not able to sustain her employment as a teacher. She returned to the village and started a small hair salon" (FP3). The 1st of February, 2015, **Manager Magazine** reports the tension among universities being ranked by Siam Commercial Bank into three categories. These categories have implicit implications toward employments with the low-ranking institutions having the least chance (**Manager**, February 1, 2015). According to statistics posted on **Unigang** (2010), the average unemployed among graduates is at 25 percent. Public and reputable institutions have lower average while public universities without limit admissions (such as Ramkhamhaeng University with 50 percent unemployed) have a much higher rate of unemployment.

Farmers' perspectives on higher education and social mobility

This section is based primarily on 67 farmers and explores their views on social mobility in light of the role of higher education. When probed regarding their concept of social mobility in relation to higher education, farmers' consistent responses did not equate success with education. A farmer in his late 50s living in Ku Ka Sing stated that it did not matter how others perceived him. He is proud of his identity as a farmer. Success is learning to live with simplicity, learning to live sufficiently. Success is the ability to sustain his family even in the midst of such hardship due to the changing economic system. He made clear that for him wealth does not define success and its accumulation does not imply higher status. Success is one's ability to take care of one's family, to provide for them. One might incur debts and that to him is almost unavoidable within the modern context but one is able to manage one's debt. Failure is perceived as the inability to provide for the family, to be overwhelmed by debt. He points out how some farmers get caught up in debt because of their desire to accumulate wealth and become rich. Failure is allowing oneself to be caught up in consumerism and being drown by debts to the extent that one has to sell

pieces of land, their inheritance that has been passed on to them through generations (FR3). This concept of success is consistent among the majority of participants whereas within our modern society the term mobility is discussed primarily in relation to monetary gain leaving out other essential aspects. This concept of success intertwines with a certain core belief among farmers. Toward the end of the interviews, after traveling through 19 provinces listening to over 67 Thai farmers plus children of farmers, one unexpected theme emerged. This theme is based on common key words being repeated throughout the interviews. The key words and phrases connected to farmers' understanding of success are: independence, freedom, resourcefulness, simplicity, thriftiness, hard work, endurance, attachment to their lands and respect for nature. Farmers rank freedom highly. Working in the field offers them the ability to remain fully independent. There is no one to dictate things they need to do or how they should go about doing it. How much they reap depends on how hard they are willing to work and how vigilant they are in taking care of their fields. It requires learning everything possible about the fields, soils, weather and various ways of planting rice to make it work. They become their own destiny. They do not clock in and clock out. They are not employed. They are fully responsible for their outcomes and their survival. The implications are numerous. For many farmers, to survive and remain independent requires the ability to not get caught up in consumerism. The phrase "*por piang* (self-sufficiency)" was commonly expressed by farmers as a way of living and dealing with economic challenges. They learn to live simply and this simplicity implies not being defined by external factors or society. Many talked about the importance of not getting caught up in consumerism, or otherwise it would not be possible for them to survive as farmers, because to allow oneself to be defined externally is to slide slowly into the world of capitalist consumerism.

"Success is the ability to support my family. Be kind. Be generous. Learn to give. Learn to live with what we have. Do not incur too much debt until it becomes unmanageable. Live sufficiently. Do not take advantage of others" (FR7). A farmer in Chiang Rai explains, "I consider it a success to be able to live debt free. Hence now I take it easy. It requires learning to live sufficiently. It is not about becoming wealthy but living without debt" (FCR1). "Life is hard and we work hard," states another farmer from Chiang Rai, "but we do not live beyond our means. We live with what we have" (FCR5). "There is freedom that comes with being simple," reflects a farmer, "You can be true to yourself and to others. There is no need to pretend to be something else. I'm poor and that's ok. I do not have to hide. It is freedom" (FP5). "Success," explained a school teacher, "is finding happiness in what we have, in who we are." She further recalled, "I am where I am (as a school teacher in a small village) because I refuse to compete. I spent 10 years in Bangkok. I witnessed intense competition" (FCCR1).

On a very narrow piece of land sits a very simple wooden shack with a small garden. The farmer interviewed was 47 years of age living in Srisaket Province. He completed Mathayom 3 and only had eight rai of land. While the expense for rice farming is expensive, he labors the field himself from the start to the end without hiring additional help. He has three children. His oldest daughter only completed high school while his youngest is in grade 2. His second son will soon complete his bachelor degree in education from a nearby university. He sells his rice in order to support his sons through school and keep some for their family consumption. He does not borrow money and lives off the sale of rice and vegetable from his vegetable garden. Simplicity is 'key' for his survival. For him, in order to survive there is no other possible mean but to embrace simplicity (FSR3).

It is interesting to observe that their approaches to life and the ability of their generation to hold on to their farms and resist cultural norms of upward mobility is rooted in a particular production of knowledge within their cultural worldview. This knowledge has been transmitted informally through generations through various means. This form of knowledge is substantive enough to enable farmers to live as farmers even within this changing economic environment that cuts to the core of their traditional practices of sufficiency. Although they are deeply skeptical that the reproduction of this knowledge can provide sustenance for the next generation, it has served as a sacred location offering them a sense of meaning in this changing world. It is from within this context that we can come to appreciate farmers' take on social mobility because from this perspective, to be free is not to be defined by social norms as implied by modern industrial society. This act of resistance enables them to maintain themselves and live independently. In an ironic sense, it requires negating social mobility in order to live a meaningful agrarian lifestyle. These key words seem to suggest not so much a way of doing, but a perspective on life. A way of being in the world through the lens of farmers whose livelihood is derived from working the fields and aligning oneself with nature for sustenance. To the question why is it that they still engage in farming even though the revenue from rice planting is minuscule, their often reply was "We farm because we are farmers."

Farmers' general view of social mobility and disposition toward subsistent living seems counter intuitive and yet their perspective comes close to Chattip Nartsupha's concept of community culture (วัฒนธรรมชุมชน). During an interview in 1996 about his shift from seeing villages as an obstacle toward development to the potential for development, he states:

> I went into the villages to discover why villages are problematic. The Asiatic Mode of Production theory asserts that the village community is the obstacle to development towards capitalism. It explains why Asiatic society did not progress along the lines of capitalist Europe. I also found that there is a gap in the historical study on this question.

> I was looking for villages which had the social character to develop capitalism from within. I wanted to understand why Thai villages, which were famous for craftsmen who produced things like knives, did not develop into centres of manufacturing. I was concerned that there should be a capitalism developed from inside Thai society and not imported from outside.
>
> After I went into the villages I found the village community possessed its own goodness. I was impressed. I did not find that the village is the source of the problem. So I did not follow through with the Asiatic Mode of Production theory. I no longer saw the village community as an obstacle to change. I saw it as a potential force for change in parallel with the middle class. Earlier on, I saw the bourgeoisie as the only agent of change. After studying the villages I stressed village culture as a leading agent. I think both of them have roles (cited in Chattip Nartsupha, 1999: 119-200).

Chattip Nartsupha recounts how he started out visiting villages over the period of six years with many visits per year reaching over 200 villages all over Thailand, assisted by three graduate students. Each visit lasted at least a week in a village. It was during these visits that he began to derive an understanding of local communal culture of farmers and started to see farmers, not as a problem to be fixed, but as that genuine possibility for national transformation. He was looking for a problem to be fixed and found a source of solution among farmers. In **The Thai Village Economy of the Past** (1999), he writes "The ideological belief system of the villagers buttressed the strong internal bonds, self-rule, subsistence economy, and identity of the village" (p. 38). He connects this belief to ancestral spirits with close bonds within the community since they share similar connection to the ancestors. Besides, "this belief made the villagers peaceful and not determined to conquer nature" (p. 40) while orienting community toward subsistence. The desire for independence, according to Chattip Nartsupha, turns up in their attitude toward the state and politics as well. He writes, "Farmers still retained beliefs along the lines of the anarchic socialism of the primordial village, but these beliefs were not manifested clearly and strongly to the point they were a danger to the state…the villagers' opposition to the state mostly took the form of indifference" (1999, pp. 42-43). Chattip Nartsupha's community culture has raised numerous responses and provoked criticism from various scholars categorizing him as idealist or romanticist. Some critiqued his research methodology while others, his ideological approach to social issues. Anan Ganjanaphan and Katherine Bowie reject his idea of subsistence economy in changing time. Jeremy Kemp and Atsui Kitahara questioned the possibility of the ability for village communities to maintain these cultural practices within the imposed structure of the state. Others see him as over romanticizing old traditions instead of acknowledging progress and scientific developments (Baker and Phasuk Phongpaichit, 1999). Phasuk Phongpaichit's (2001) response to critiques by arguing that the fundamental core of most arguments rests on their inability to understand or accept his approach to social issues by turning away

from his earlier pro-Marxist model of resistance toward returning to the culture of subsistence that lies at the core of Thai village communities. It is interesting to note that his work does not stand alone in affirming the culture of farmers. The cultural approach to farming is also found in the writings of Wendell Berry. In **The Unsettling of America** (1996) he describes the culture of farming:

> A culture is not a collection of relics or ornaments, but a practical necessity, and its corruption invokes calamity. A healthy culture is a communal order of memory, insight, value, work, conviviality, reverence, aspiration. It reveals the human necessities and the human limits. It clarifies our inescapable bonds to the earth and to each other. It assures that the necessary restraints are observed, that the necessary work is done. And that it is done well. A health farm culture can be based only upon familiarity and can grow only among a people soundly established upon the land; it nourishes and safeguards a human intelligence of the earth that no amount of technology can satisfactorily replace (p. 43).

For this culture to thrive and maintain itself requires certain qualities that can be identified in the life of farmers. It is through working in the field and depending on its yields within the cycle of seasons and natural phenomena that a culture is formed.

> A competent farmer is his own boss. He has learned the disciplines necessary to go ahead on his own, as required by economic obligation, loyalty to his place, pride in his work. His workdays require the use of long experience and practiced judgment, for the failures of which he knows that he will suffer. His days do not begin and end by rule, but in response to necessity, interest, and obligation. They are measured by the clock, but by the task and his endurance; they last as long as necessary or as long as he can work. He has mastered intricate formal patterns in ordering his work within the overlapping cycles-human and natural, controllable and uncontrollable-of the life of a farm.
>
> A good farmer…is a cultural product; he is made by a sort of training, certainly, in what his time imposes or demands, but he is also made by generations of experience. This essential experience can only be accumulated, tested, preserved, handed down in settled households, friendships, and communities that are deliberately and carefully native to their own ground, in which the past has prepared the present and the present safeguards the future (pp. 44-45).

Besides the work of Berry, there are other researchers who lean toward the communal understanding of village life and the practice of subsistence among farmers. David Greenwood in **The Political Economy of Peasant Family Farming** (1973) discusses the distinction between Western approach to farming and those being practiced in non-Western culture focusing on family relations in the process of production and not market accessibility. Melisssa Walker's (2006) qualitative research of southern farmers, based on 475 interviews, points out certain special qualities of local farmers.

> From the time of early American republic, the yeoman farmer has represented independence, sobriety, and a commitment to hard work, and special ties to nature and to nature's God. To Jefferson, the yeoman farmer was the superior citizen because he had a vested interest in the health of the republic and because his seeming economic independence freed him from political or economic subservience to less virtuous men (p. 78).

Walker went on to list characteristics that echo a number of points made by Chattip Nartsupha, and key words that have been identified by the interviewees from this study. The characteristics identified are: self-sufficiency, work ethic, mutual aid, love for the land and relative economic equality.

As stated earlier, there are certain distinctive characteristics about farmers, particularly among the older generation, that align with other studies on the cultural dimensions of farming. These characteristics are enduring qualities that, as articulated by Chattip Nartsupha, have the potential to offer solutions to local communities struggling with economic issues. Or from Thomas Jefferson's perspective, they are the superior citizen because of their economic independence. And the possibility of this economic independence rested on the practice of subsistence farming, the fundamental core of local village economy.

Farmers' discursive practice as resistance

While farmers express resistance toward competitive social norms, there is a certain production of knowledge that sustains them within this economic context. Even within the constraint of this economic hardship there exist types of practices that enable them to survive. In this midst of hardship there is a common expression mostly among older farmers that keeps emerging. "Life is difficult. But it's manageable." This ability to manage regardless of hardship seems to be located within a particular production of knowledge among farmers rooted in the way they see life and reality that is constantly being translated into everyday reality. An elderly farmer describes the life of farmers and how gratifying it has been for him raising five children who are successful professionals. There were no identifying sign of struggles although he admitted to the difficulties of farming (FR4). A farmer farming on a rented land in Chiang Mai was not earning much from his rice, but he was building his second home next to his wooden shack on the same property, and his daughter serves as a teacher in a public school. Life was hard, he admitted, yet there was a certain easiness about him and a sense of contentment in his expression (FCM1). A farmer from Yasothorn farmed on a small piece of property. He complained about low price for rice and how it was better under Yinluck Shinawatra's government. But after the complaint, he paused and said, "It is manageable."

The term manageable seems to be related to their diverse entrepreneurial engagements and life skills. While interviewing a young farmer in Ubon Province, she

took me around her plot of land showing fish in her pond, snails around the pond, coconuts and buffalos while explaining that these are her varied sources of income for her family. Besides, farmers learn to reduce living expenses by tapping into natural resources such as growing their own vegetables, raising chickens, fishing, catching crabs, frogs and snails in their rice field as food sources. However it is a common complaint that due to chemicals in the field, the natural sources for food have become less available to them and thus increased their needs to purchase food products in the market place. An elderly lady in Nongkhai owns two rai of land where she grows rice. The harvest is primarily for her own consumption. Within the fence of her residence she grows various crops and sells them in the market making 200 to 300 baht per day. She expressed her contentment since her children are all grown up and are able to support themselves. The above stated resourceful activities are often reasons why, even though life of rice farmers is difficult, they somehow find ways to manage.

It is interesting to note the description of characteristics of traditional farmers in the United States according to Gene Logsdon as well since there are many close similarities with Thai farmers. In describing some of the characteristics of traditional farmers Logsdon (1994) writes:

> He (farmer) can build barns and houses and knows how to grow the wood to build them with. He is a fair veterinarian, an expert mechanic and welder, can wire, paint, and plum a house, pour concrete, ditch a field, butcher a hog, and fix almost anything with baling wire and a pair of pliers (p. 87).

Another interesting quality according to Logsdon is the engagement in diverse enterprises. In order to spread the labor and income over the entire year, farmers engage in various forms of small enterprises. He then cited the life of Elmer Lapp "who farms in Pennsylvania, sells horses, cows, milk, hogs, honey, eggs, guineas, pigeons, chickens, fruit, ice cream, flowers, collie puppies, cats, and tours of his farm. There are even fish in his horses' water tank. With this variety of enterprises, Lapp's work involves a marvelous synergy" (p. 87).

Life skill is another common feature among farmers. In contrast to the propensity toward specialization as present in our system of higher education, it was interesting to observe that farmers are taught a variety of skills needed to cope with life within an agrarian system. Most farmers are able to perform basic mechanical repairs, constructions and handicrafts. Knowledge of life skills seems an essential aspect of life as farmers. And the acquisition of knowledge is through apprenticeship. They are knowledgeable when it comes to raising cattle. They build their own homes. Hence the phrase manageable refers to their resourcefulness in making use of available natural and human resources in order to survive. This is true with all farmers interviewed. During off rice season, if their lands are fertile enough, they usually plant other types of crops such as onions, tomatoes, leafy vegetable, corns, sugar cane etc. If the soil is not sufficiently fertile, they will seek day labor within the community such as agricultural related work or construction work where available. They may also

work for a factory nearby. Women may engage in handicrafts to supplement their income. An elderly lady raising her grandchildren sells charcoals to earn extra income. Some raised cattle such as cows or buffalos. Most ladies in Phasook sub-district, Udon province, sell sweetened sticky rice in bamboo shells by the main highway during off-season. A group of Buri Ram women gathered in a convenient store in their village working on decorative sticky rice containers. An elderly farmer from Roi Et sells fish in the market beside many other entrepreneurial activities. They always find ways to survive using multiple skills they acquired as farmers.

Farmer's community culture, as articulated by Chattip Nartsupha and others,is preserved through a particular discursive practice, the discursive practice that makes it possible for them to maintain their identity as much as they possibly can within the current context of global economy. Simplicity and sufficiency as resistance to social mobility are achieved through the practice of diversification and thus they are able to maintain their sense of independence. The production of knowledge among farmers that has been transmitted through generations within the agrarian society is rooted in generations and generations of ways of living that are deeply connected with their land, the production of food, their religious worldview, the ecological system, and these connections enable them to sustain themselves and live sufficiently. The acquisition of knowledge by farmers, according to one participant known for sustainable farming, is "through working the fields. They do not need to cite Aristotle for validation. The outcomes of their work are proofs of the validity and generalizability of their knowledge" (ACM3).

Growing up as children of farmers, a bank manager shares the values of simplicity, sufficiency, hard work, her attachment to the rice field and the gratefulness for the land that yields food to provide for her sustenance (FCCP5). It seems as if there is a certain production of knowledge among farmers that schooled them into a certain belief about reality and how to conduct their lives. In contrast to knowledge gained through higher education that prepares students to enter the industrial world, these discursive practices seem to suggest a type of knowledge that enables farmers to maintain their agrarian life style. Perhaps it is a type education in a broader sense and a reminder of Paulo Freire's (1985) statement "Education is that terrain where power and politics are given a fundamental expression, since it is where meaning, desire, language, and values engage and respond to the deeper beliefs about the very nature of what it means to be human, to dream, and to name and struggle for a particular future and way of life (p. xiii)."

Conclusion

As stated earlier, higher education has been designated as the institution through which a certain acquisition of knowledge transmitted has the potential to facilitate social mobility. At some level this discourse is present among Thai peasants in various regions. "Go to university. Get a degree so you can get a job." Based on

participants' experiences with higher education, vertical mobility takes place among farmers and farmers' children who have completed their studies at the tertiary level. There is a consistent change in their social and economic status. They become respected members within their community. They achieve relative social mobility economically. However these changes take place through changing careers. Both vertical and relative mobility are results of their departure from the life of farmers with an exception of one among 79 total participants. Higher education facilitates social mobility for local farmers, not through affirming, but through modifying their career path.

There is a particular subtlety within the concept of social mobility suggestive of the need to yield to a particular unavoidable but necessary transition. This subtle implication toward yielding seems to imply a hegemonic ideology distinctive from the one embraced by farmers. Farmers strive to provide education for their children. From their perspective, it is not because education can positively transform their lives as farmers. On the contrary, education is viewed as the primary venue for employment without which it will be difficult to transition toward the industrial society. They grieve the loss of the world they grew up with, the reminiscence of the historical agrarian society. Their bodies have become witnesses of a relentless transformation by a forceful presence of a dominant economic system. And they turn to the promise of higher education for the survival of the future generation, trading independence for dependency, monetary values for subsistent living, generality for specialization and sacredness of the land for science and modernization. Even then the promise of higher education toward social mobility is not always forthcoming for them. The lack of social and cultural capitals, the distance, the level of quality of regional schools all play significant roles in limiting their choices for quality education. Thus within their experiences is the reality of limited realization of the promise of higher education.

According to the **Thai Agricultural Census** (2013), 2.5 percent of farmers earned their undergraduate degrees while another 2.5 percent, associate degrees. Majority of farmers' educational level is at primary level. Regarding farmers' perspectives on higher education, based on interviews the emerging themes indicate that farmers want their children to pursue higher education as the most viable solution for their future, a way out of the difficult life of Thai farmers. However higher education is also one of the most expensive expenditures of all their expenses. Farmers' financial burden is greatly relieved upon their childrens' completion of tertiary education. Completing higher education is not a promise of employment and thus a high-risk investment due to the lack of certainty in regards to employment. Beside the high cost for attending universities, access to higher education is an upward battle due to distance, the quality of education among rural public schools, the lack of extra after-school support and the inability of their parents to provide sound academic advice. Further, due to the quality of education in rural areas, it becomes harder to compete for entrance into reputable universities.

However, it is interesting to observe that even in the midst of this limited constraint there exist certain characteristics among farmers that enable them to survive, to manage their life and make provisions for their families. These enduring characteristics corresponding to Chattip Nartsupha's community culture are the strong desire to be independent, the sheer level of hard work and determination, simplicity (พอเพียง), the inclination toward subsistence living, the love for the land and their reliance on nature. These characteristics do not merely represent the cultural practices of Thai farmers alone. Speaking of the economy of farmers in relation to mobility Wendell Berry (2003) writes, "An agrarian is always a subsistence economy…the function of the household economy is to assure that the farm family lives as far as possible from the farm. It is the subsistence part of the agrarian economy that assures its stability and its survival" (p. 239). This emerging theme adds a level of complexity to the question of the role of higher education in facilitating social mobility and traditional farmers' cultural practices that may appear to negate the meaning of social mobility itself because the struggle for mobility in itself makes it almost impossible for them to live with their identity as farmers.

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CHAPTER 7

Analysis

Introduction

While higher education helps facilitate both vertical and absolute mobility for farmers and their children, the demographic analysis shows very limited accessibility. Very few among this population make it through the system and thrive in upward mobility. Further, this relative mobility seems relatively less in comparison to the urban middle class and the elites. Besides, there appears to exist, through conversations with local farmers, a discourse and discursive practices that negate the industrial concept of social mobility which focuses on high productivity and high yields; an economic philosophy in operation through local cultural practices that struggles for its legitimacy. This rich source of qualitative data begs for a thorough investigation into the complex relationship between knowledge (as facilitated by higher education) and the lives of local farmers. Hence this chapter addresses the third objective aiming at analyzing experiences of local farmers in relation to the role of higher education and social mobility through the lens of Bourdieu's symbolic violence and Foucault's genealogy.

On the 4th of December2013 President Barak Obama remarked on economic mobility making an appeal. During that speech he states:

> The idea that so many children are born into poverty in the wealthiest nation on Earth is heartbreaking enough. But the idea that a child may never be able to escape that poverty because she lacks a decent education or health care, or a community that views her future as their own, that should offend all of us and it should compel us to action. We are a better country than this.
>
> So let me repeat: The combined trends of increased inequality and decreasing mobility pose a fundamental threat to the American Dream, our way of life, and what we stand for around the globe. And it is not simply a moral claim that I'm making here. There are practical consequences to rising inequality and reduced mobility (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2013).

The speech highlights the importance of mobility in bridging the economic gap and raising the living standards of the American middle class. As for the solution to inequality, this speech suggests upward mobility as that which is mandatory if ever the community is to succeed. The term social mobility is assumed to carry with it, as implied in its ideology, that positive connotation of success, growth and development. It is a desired state of being at the individual and communal level. It is a way of life within the global world that we live in. It validates itself since its opposite seems to suggest undesirability. It is the antonym of failure. It is the social location of which

we want to find ourselves or fail. It dictates economic reforms. It legitimizes development policies (Heckman, 2012). It facilitates programs and drives nations in a focused direction. It is a term that has been given that legitimacy and power to navigate communities, cultures and nations (Ferreira et al, 2013). It is 'goodness' defined in economic stratification. It is deeply embedded in the human psyche as the non-negotiable path toward linear progression. It is our generation's genealogy rooted in our collective consciousness. It defines the path that lies ahead of us, or rather it directs. And higher education, as research indicates, remains one of the highest correlational variables within the mechanism of social mobility (Hirsch, 1977; Recchi, 2007; Breen et al., 2010; Triventi et al., 2016), because as Van Der Berg (2013) observes, "always and everywhere, more education is on average associated with higher income." The reality of our current economic and educational system, on the other hand, shows the opposite effects. In reality social mobility among the underprivileged is in the decline.

On the 30th of January 2016 Jon Jandai gave a speech on education at TedX Chiang Mai. "I used to believe that education could make my life better. Education was the path to success," said Jon Jandai. "But what I witnessed was the opposite. Parents sold a herd of buffalos and lands as investments for education. But a college degree did not equip my friends from reclaiming the rice field."At the end of the process was debt they could hardly pay for. "Educational system has caused great harm to the people. Many experienced lost opportunities…walking into a school is like walking into a factory. [We] get transformed into industrial products" (Jon Jandai, TedX Chiang Mai, January 30, 2016).

This research, from the outset, sought an understanding of how higher education facilitated social mobility for Thai peasants. Historical documents were researched, statistical and demographic data were sorted, interviews conducted and texts were coded and analyzed. The results based on texts and subtexts raised interesting questions pertaining the assumption that underlies Thai educational system, and the impact it plays out in the lived experiences of Thai farmers.

The rapid expansion of higher education in Thailand since the early 1960s was heavily influenced by development ideology, the same ideology that set the agenda for the 1st National Economic and Social Development Plans. Sixty years subsequent to the initiation of the major drive for development through education, there are 78 public universities, 31 private universities and 32 private colleges serving 2.4 million students. Out of these 2.4 million students, 1.3 million students are from provinces outside of Bangkok and the central region. The government invested on average 20 percent of the national budget or 4 percent of national GDP in education. Comparing this to other nearby Asian countries, Thailand's investment in education is on the higher end. The World Bank (2013) reports on the expenditure for public education in relation to GDP the following percentages by countries: Burma=0.8, Laos People Democratic Republic=3.3, Vietnam=6.6, Philippines=2.7, Indonesia=2.8, Japan=3.8,

Hong Kong=3.4, Korea=5. Interestingly enough in 2012, Thailand invested up to 5.3 of GDP on education. Student loan programs together with a number of scholarship funds are available for needy students. Yet in the midst of this rapid expansion and high economic investment, 60 years later the average household income of farmers is between 50,000 to 100,000 per baht per year. The average household member per family is at 3.8 persons per household with the highest number at 4.1 in the northeast region and lowest of 3.6 in the south. The national average for Thais from 2014 to 2016 is approximately 13,300 baht per person per month (Trading Economics, 2016). In 2011 the World Bank places Thailand at the rank of upper middle-income economy with income ranging from USD 3,976 to USD 12,275 in terms of Gross National Income (GNI) per capita (World Bank, 2011). In comparison, farmers' earning power remains at 2,200 baht per person per month. Farmers struggle with limited access to resources, increased agriculture-related expenditures and increased living expenses.

On average farmers' level of education remains at the primary level with five percent at the tertiary level (approximately 2.5 obtaining bachelor degrees and 2.5 at the associate level). This figure representing educational level of farmers is consistent with the participants of this study. For farmers, educational expenses rank highest in comparison to other expenses. The economic constraint most farmers experience, and the unpredictability of market price for rice, paint vivid imageries for the future generation in ways that make other choices besides the path of higher education undesirable, and even perhaps conceivable as irresponsible parenting. Limited access to quality education, to resources that can help them succeed, to quality supports needed to navigate through higher education, to financial sources place them in a much less competitive position and hence less competitive in a labor market. The possibility of unemployment implies educational debts adding to the already existing financial burden.

The current condition of local Thai farmers seems incongruent with the early vision cast by leaders in the early 1960s, and their vision for the country through development ideology. They envisioned a flourishing countryside with thriving economy well integrated into the world economy through the process of modernization with education playing a significant role in facilitating social mobility among the less privileged. However this reality, for the majority of farmers, seems unrealized as indicated through experiences of participants and statistical figures from national agricultural census.

How do we come to understand the heavy investment in development, the rapid expansion of higher education and the current status of Thai farmers taking seriously the role of knowledge and the reconfiguration of their socio-economic landscape? What has led us to embrace the language of social mobility as universally valid a methodology for decreasing inequality and utilize universities as tools for mobility? In the midst of substantive investments in development and proliferation of educational institutions in order to enhance social mobility, particularly for those on

the margin, the everyday struggle of farmers, as reported by participants, becomes increasingly harder in comparison to their prior traditional practices of subsistence farming. What has transpired that placed farmers historically, socially and economically where they are? How can we account for the current situation of local Thai farmers within the context of higher education? To answer these questions, the analysis commences with Bourdieu's social capital followed by Foucault's genealogy in unpacking the lived experience of Thai farmers within the wider discourse permeating Thai society. Perspectives from Thai academics and reputable farmers are taken into consideration adding a local dimension to the discussion. The last section explores the traditional Thai educational system (community culture) as a potential form of alternative.

Case Studies on Social Mobility

This section seeks an understanding of factors that contribute, either positively or negatively, to social mobility among participants in relation to the role of higher education. The lives of six participants who have completed tertiary education will be explored with the underlying question of what contributes or negates their process toward social mobility.

Case no. 1: A third generation 61 year old farmer earned his bachelor's degree in multi-disciplinary approach to local development. At the time of the interview he served as head of the village in Koo Ka Sing, Roi Et. He has 50 rai of land and is an owner of a couple of tractors and a harvesting machine. There is a large storage space at the back of his house. He only recently completed his undergraduate degree. The reason, he explained, is because he is the oldest in the family and hence he had to help support all his younger siblings. However, because of his love for learning, when opportunity arose, he went for it. When asked what contribution education made in his life he responded, "Education gave me an analytical tool." He learned how to collect, assess and analyze data. Prior to his education, all he wanted was to see growth in his rice field. "The taller the better," he thought. Then he learned that there is no correlation between the height of rice in the field and outputs."Before I did not know how to collect and analyze data (regarding farming resources). But this skill has helped me become a more efficient farmer. I even share this knowledge with my neighbors" (FR1).

His is an obvious case of vertical mobility. On a 27 rai rice field plot, he used to produce 19 tons of rice. At the moment he is able to produce up to 21 tons. It is interesting to note that the shift in the production of rice has primarily to do with his trips to various old-school organic farmers in the northeast. Changes in the production results from shifting from chemical fertilizer to organic fertilizer. He increased his yields while saving production costs. Another important factor to consider is his inheritance of 50 rai of land. Owning a large piece of land makes a big difference in terms of economic capital.

Case no. 2: A 55 year old female farmer in Loei earned her bachelor's degree in sustainable agriculture. She has been working in an agriculture related field for many years as an employee for a Japanese non-profit organization in Loei Province that seeks to better the lives of young children. The organization teaches children the basics of sustainable agriculture while supporting them through schools up to the university level. It houses 30 students from disadvantaged families. The organization teaches students to grow their own rice and the yield provides sufficiently for almost the entire year except for two months. The organization just terminated its program and she is now retired. She lives in a very simple wooden house with no walls. Students come and visit her occasionally. She seems very contented with the seven rai of land she uses to grow rice, vegetable and raise cows. She attributes the contentment to her education, the type that taught her the significance of sustainable agriculture. While education contributed to a certain level of mobility through her employment, her retirement at a young age does not seem to reflect vertical mobility. Strangely it was her education that afforded her the ability to live a simple life on a small piece of rice field.

Case no. 3: A 51 year old female farmer in Phitsanulok earned her undergraduate degree in sustainable agriculture and development. She left her home town at a younger age heading to Bangkok where she went to school and finally earned her academic degree. Not being able to find employment after her graduation, she became entrepreneurial selling fried banana by the roadside for a couple of years. During this period, because of her ability to live simply, she was able to save a few hundred thousand baht. The interest from this saving has helped her as she returned to Phisanulok to live as a rice farmer. She is married with one son and lives on a plot of land, 11 rai in size, where she practices integrated farming, growing rice and other vegetables. She reports a very decent living and feeling contented. She practices the principle of sufficient economy. In her case, higher education did not contribute to any form of vertical mobility. She could not find any employment through her degree and selling fried banana gave her the savings she needs to live her lifestyle. The significant contribution through higher education was the principle of sufficiency she learned. It was instrumental in her decision to return to live as a local farmer managing her organic integrated farm. One other important factor that she mentioned was the fact that her son chooses to enter the monastery. This, in her opinion, makes it manageable because higher education implies incurring significant expenses. To have to come up with this amount means landing herself in some type of employment that could provide for his education. Thus, most likely, a very different lifestyle than what she currently practices.

Case no. 4: A 30 year old single parent raising two sons and managing her own farm in a small village located approximately 30 kilometers north of Ubon Ratchatani Province. She earned her degree in business administration from Ubon Ratchatani University. Her parents passed on to her 12 rai of rice field.The yields

from this piece of land make it possible for her to raise her two young children, one in pre-school and another in primary school. She seems contented with her life as a farmer and kept referencing sufficient economy. Contentment and simplicity were two concepts that were prominent in our conversation. When asked about the role of higher education, she explicitly stated that it contributed nothing to her personally, be it economic or personal. Higher education did not facilitate vertical mobility for her.

Case no. 5: A 62 year old retired school teacher who earned his bachelor's degree in education. He worked for the local school district for many years raising two children till his retirement. One of his children is now an instructor in a local university. While serving as a school teacher he remained active in managing his rice field. He has 17 rai of land and the yields became the source of food for his family. He sells the rest for extra income as a means to support his family. He reports witnessing a slow decline in the lives of farmers and a heightened level of competition in the community due to the decline in yields and economy. Farmers' incomes decrease while the cost of production keeps rising together with living expense in general. Farmers have to be entrepreneurial and acquire various skills to survive. They learn to work in the factory while raising buffalos and cows. They learn handicrafts and every other means they could possibly acquire in order to make ends meet. The economic belt is tightened with days. The future seems dim. On education, he describes how farmers have their own source of knowledge for food production. It differs from the traditional formal education in that farmers' education focuses on hands-on practices that teach diversified skills. They have acquired life-skill knowledge for their everyday living. In his opinion, higher education has not positively impacted the lives of farmers. The knowledge acquired leads to employments other than farming. Education does not make farmers' life better. It just diverts farmers' children from returning to the life of farming. While, in his case, social mobility occurred for him since he was employed by a local school district, he recognizes that higher education plays a very limited role in enhancing the life of local farmers.

Case no 6: A Srisaket farmer in his 50s owning 8 rai of farm land. He has three children who have already completed their education. Because he had an associate degree, he was able to find employment with the military. After a couple of years in the military, he transferred back to Srisaket where he was working at the time of the interview. He manages his own farm growing rice mainly for consumption, and the rest for extra income. He reports completing most of the farm work by himself without spending too much on labor and machinery during planting or harvesting seasons. The main benefit of higher education for this participant was employment and hence vertical mobility while maintaining his rice field at the same time.

Perhaps to enrich our understanding of social mobility based on the above six cases, it is beneficial to listen to voices of farmers' children, those who have completed and those who are currently pursuing higher education.

From the perspective of children of farmers who have completed higher education, every participant acknowledges positive contributions of higher education in their lives to varying degrees. A school teacher in Bangkok with a graduate degree explained how she came from a very poor family. Seeing better quality of life among civil servants, she had the aspiration to become one so that she could better provide for her family (FCCP6). A school teacher in Roi Et uses the term social capital to refer to the role of higher education in her life. She acknowledges that a university affects her social status within the community (FCCP1). The last two express a similar sentiment. However with the last two participants who both earned graduate degrees, higher education is viewed positively only among villagers who manage their finances successfully. The ability to succeed financially overrides educational attainment. They both acknowledge the shift in social status within the community upon acquiring academic degrees (FCCP2, FCCP3).

Regardless of the positive acknowledgements of the role of higher education and knowledge acquired, two participants are of the opinion that higher education has not played any significant role in enhancing qualities of life for farmers. The knowledge acquired has, for the most part, shifted the focus from agriculture to industries, from being independent farmers to seeking employment. A school teacher with a major in Thai studies connects higher education with development ideology. For him, development according to government's policies promotes capitalism. "It destroys culture and the traditional sustainable methods of farming. It replaces the traditional method with cash crops focusing on profits. Individualism is emphasized and money becomes the driving force within the society. The concept of community gradually dissipates" (FCCP4). A local bank manager is of the opinion that if we were to ask older farmers whether knowledge acquired through higher education can enhance the lives of local farmers, their responses would have been a negative. According to this participant, there is much to be learned from local wisdom, and the sad reality is that the new generation will not have access to this wealth of wisdom. This wisdom, according to this participant, has sustained farmers for generations. Knowledge, as she observed her parents, often acquired through actual hands-on practices. If farming is important, why isn't there a course in our curriculum that teaches about the life of farmers or a place whereby agricultural theories can be put to practice" (FCCP5).For this group of participants, while positive influence of higher education is acknowledged as tools in changing social status and a path toward employment but the acquisition of this knowledge has not served as a tool to enhance the practice of farming, nor support the life-style of farmers.

From the perspectives of children of farmers who are currently pursuing higher education, all participants in this category believe in the promise of a better future through higher education. A student from Khon Kaen stated "(Higher education) is a matter of survival" (FCCR3). Their parents expressed concerns regarding the future of farming and encouraged them to pursue academic degrees as

the most viable alternative. A student from Nakhon Phanom recalls how her mom reminds her that life is hard. “Therefore one must struggle. Work hard and excel in your study” (FCCR2).

While believing in the promise of higher education, they are not pursuing without a sense of reservation. “Higher education is not a promise of a successful life. Just because one earns a degree does not mean one will surely survive” (FCCR2). “Some with a college degree still could not land themselves any employment” (FCCR3). This group believes higher education holds the promise of a better future, but not without a cautionary reminder of its limits. There exists a strong sense of identity as farmers’ children among this population as well. They were able to articulate values of simplicity, hard work and sufficiency together with their deep connection with the family land that has nurtured and provided for them.

Among participants who earned academic degrees or are in the process of acquiring one, there is a distinction between personal benefits and benefits for farmers. A number of them stated clearly that when it comes to the contribution of higher education to the lives of farmers, there is a significant deficit. All farmers’ children who earned their degrees are employed in various capacities. None of them actively work in the field, although some assist their parents occasionally, while others rent out their rice field. One common theme embraced by almost every participant in all three categories is that regardless of where education has landed them or what possibilities it created for their future, there are certain values rooted within the psyche of these participants that hold true to them. There exists a certain bond with their land. They work hard and live sufficiently. This term “พอเพียง” (sufficient) is stated again and again by the majority of the participants. Families and communities take priority over individual needs. The identity as farmers has a deep cultural root. A daughter of a farmer who overheard the interview interjected, “Once a farmer’s daughter, always a farmer” (FR4). A bank manager speaks of a life of a farmer, “‘No matter how hard you work as a farmer, you will never get rich. But there is a certain contentment and happiness.’ These are phrases that I keep hearing from my parents. There is a strong commitment to community, to being good neighbors. My parents kept teaching me to not be greedy but practice sufficiency” (FCCP5).

From the above cases and from the perspectives of farmers’ children, how can we make sense of social mobility in the context of higher education? What factors contribute to or hinder their social mobility?

1. Education increases the opportunity for employment and hence economic possibility. This is true with all children of farmers who have completed higher education.
2. Education enhances one’s critical thinking skills and permits one to better evaluate and assess one’s resources for greater productivity.
3. Education improves one’s social status within the community and thus one’s opinions and perspectives are more likely to be appraised positively.

4. Access to higher education is not readily available for children of farmers.
5. Education distances one from returning to farming.
6. Education does not enhance the lives of local farmers and their methods of making a living.

It is interesting to observe that higher education increases vertical mobility for four of the six participants. Three of the five increased mobility through employments and one through increased productivity. Among those whose career remains in farming, only one experiences vertical mobility. This particular farmer inherited 50 rai of land which is the largest among all participants. The size of land matters when it comes to economic growth among farmers. The inherited capital makes a significant difference per productivity. Another interesting observation is that the type of education received can impact one's perspective in life and choice of life-style. Two of the participants stated that they learned the principle of sufficient economy through tertiary education. This knowledge helped them transition to their current way of living practicing the principle of sufficiency. This goes to show that vertical and relative economic mobility do not necessarily translate into satisfaction and contentment.

There are two primary factors to consider from these cases. One is access to higher education. Of the 67 participants, only six completed higher education. This demographic information represents Thai farmers in general whereby the majority earned primary education and only a fraction a college degree. Among children of farmers currently pursuing higher education, many of their friends did not make it. They were among a handful being admitted. The second important factor is the inability to enhance the life of local farmers. Those who earned academic degrees move on to other careers instead of remaining as farmers. Only a minority remains farmers and even then, they did not acknowledge the role of education in enhancing the livelihood of local farmers. Hence the questions are: What prevents the majority of farmers from gaining access to higher education, and what inhibits higher education from contributing positively to the lived experiences of local farmers? The first question will be explored through the lens of Bourdieu's symbolic capital and the second question, Foucault's genealogy.

What Prevents Higher Education from Providing Appropriate Access to Local Farmers: Bourdieu's Social Capital

In **Distinction: A Social Critique of a Judgment of Taste** (1979) Bourdieu suggests that the idea of meritocracy, whereby power should be based primarily and exclusively on people's ability and nothing else, lacks a complex understanding of the common problems in our society. Social mobility has a significant relationship with cultural, social, and symbolic capitals. These factors influence social mobility and often the poor and underprivileged, although bright and able, lack cultural, social and

symbolic capitals. Bourdieu helps us understands the problem of the complexity related to social mobility within our current society.

Bourdieu believes that there exists what he terms social space. Within each social space there is a 'field,' a place where people function. There is a family field, political field, work place field, business field etc. Within each field there are many people with various capitals. Capitals are used in order to move toward greater domination and mobility. People with capitals always have a much better chance to move forward. Bourdieu suggests that there are social, cultural and symbolic capitals within each field. Those on the margin, because of their lack of capitals, have less access to resources. And this is obvious within the field of education. According to participants, higher education is one of the costliest expenditures for farmers. While many are committed to sending their children to pursue higher education, accessibility is not readily available. For the most part it is not their lack of ability but because they do not have social, cultural and symbolic capitals at their disposal.

One of the reasons rural students lack sufficient capital, according to Paitoon Sinlarat (2014), has to do with the extra support students in urban areas receive in contrast to students in a more rural area.

Table 32: After School Tutoring Mathayom 3 – 6 (รายงานการวิจัยเรื่องการกวดวิชาในประเทศ๒๕๔๕สำนักงานกรรมการการศึกษาแห่งชาติสำนักงานนายกรัฐมนตรี)

Region	Tuitor	Non-tuitor
Khon kaen Urban %	78.81	21.19
Khon Kaen Rural %	30.1	69.9
Chiang Mai Urban %	74.5	25.5
Chiang Mai Rural %	18.5	81.5
Bangkok City %	74.2	25.8

(Source: Report on After School Tutoring, Ministry of Education, n.d.)

In Khon Kaen 78.81 percent of students in urban area received extra tutoring in contrast to 30.1 in rural areas. This is true with Chiang Mai as well with 74.5 percent in the urban areas taking tutoring and 18.5 in the rural areas. According to Paitoon Sinlarat (2014, 182), children living in cities have a much better chance with greater supports and resources. At the same time, students from families working for the government or running their own private business have a higher chance of receiving extra preparation in contrast to students from parents in manual labors or in agriculture sectors. It is interesting to note that for students whose parents work for the government, work as employees for private companies or own business, there is a 69 to 77 percent chance that they will receive extra academic support. However for students whose parents are in the agriculture sector, the chance drops to 28 percent.

Extra after school academic support plays an important role in academic performance and thus affects rural students' ability to remain competitive.

Further, once admitted to a regional university, they remain less competitive because of the distribution of qualified professors. This has a direct impact on their social capital and ability to secure well-paid jobs.

Table 33: Academic Qualification by Regions

Region	Doctoral Degree	Master's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Certificate	Total
Bangkok No.	7,487	6,729	1,244	121	15,581
Bangkok %	61.30	49.12	48.21	70.76	
Central No.	25	106	18	1	150
Central %	0.20	0.77	0.63	0.68	
North No.	1,691	2,750	612	0	4,943
North %	13.76	20.08	17.78	0	
Northeast No.	1,620	2,032	660	29	4,241
Northeast %	19.26	14.99	19.46	16.96	
South No.	1,104	1,605	446	13	3,067
South %	9.04	10.99	15.46	7.60	
West No.	297	576	100	7	980
West %	2.43	4.20	3.47	4.09	
Total No.	12,214	13,698	2,879	171	28,962

(Source: Higher Education Information, 2010)

When it comes to the qualification of instructors, unequal distribution is another clear indicator of higher concentration of well-qualified academics in Bangkok in contrast to other regions. The number of doctorates in Bangkok is at 61.30 percent while the highest percentage in other regions is only at 19.26 percent. For master's degree level, 49.12 percent is concentrated in Bangkok. Of the total 28,962 academic instructors in the entire country, 15,518 are serving in Bangkok. More than half of academic human capital is located in one city. And the rest are distributed for the entire country.

Table 34: Academic Ranking by Regions

Region	Professor	Associate Professor	Assistant Professor	Instructor	Total
Bangkok No.	406	4,142	5,863	17,333	27,744
Bangkok %	73.29	66.63	52.24	52.21	
North No.	54	669	1,175	3,677	5,575
North %	9.75	10.76	10.47	11.08	
Northeast No.	42	747	1,866	5,421	8,076
Northeast %	7.58	12.02	16.63	16.33	
Central No.	14	193	693	2,858	3,758

Region	Professor	Associate Professor	Assistant Professor	Instructor	Total
Central %	2.53	3.10	6.17	8.61	
East No.	7	97	403	1,035	1,542
East %	1.26	1.56	3.59	3.12	
West No.	2	23	142	277	444
West %	.36	.37	1.27	.83	
South No.	29	345	1,082	2,598	4,054
South %	5.23	5.55	9.64	7.83	
Total	554	6,216	11,224	33,199	51,193

(Source: Higher Education Information, 2012)

When it comes to academic ranking, Bangkok has 73.29 percent full professors, 66.63 percent associate professors and 52.21 percent at the rank of assistant professor. Of the total 51,193 academic instructors in the country, 27,744 are located in Bangkok. The region with the second highest number of full professors is in the north with 54 individuals at this rank or 9.75 percent of the total number of full professors. There is a 60 plus percent gap between full professors in Bangkok and the second highest number of full professors in the entire country. Of the total 6,216 associate professors, 4,142 (66.63 percent) are serving in Bangkok with 669 (10.76 percent) associate professors in the north and 747 (12.02 percent) in the northeast. The lack of equal distribution in academic ranking is another significant factor differentiating between Bangkok and regional universities.

According to Bank Ngamarunchat and Therapab Fukthong (2014), disparity in access to education is affected by the amount of wealth within the family. The difference between the poor and the wealthy is approximately three years. Wealthy individuals on average have three more years of education. When it comes to distance, those living within municipal district have on average one year more than those living outside the municipality. And on average farmers have three to four years less education in comparison to other groups (business professionals, government officials and other white collar workers). In explaining the limited access to education and higher education in rural areas Carnoy (1990) writes:

> Even with educational expansion, however, conditioned capitalist economies have had difficulty incorporating the educated into jobs requiring additional education. Expansion reaches into rural and marginal urban areas last, ensuring that the mass of youth in these countries will have lower levels of schooling and education of much poorer quality than do their urban middle- and working-class counterparts (p. 67).

Thus social, cultural and symbolic capitals have significant impacts on farmers' children, both in terms of accessibility to reputable universities and well-paid employment subsequent to the completion of their academic training.Back to the

cases of these six farmers as mentioned above, even though they have earned undergraduate degrees, their mobility remains limited in scope. While their income increased in comparison to most farmers with an average farm size, it remains minimal in comparison to students with economic and social capitals in the central region who would most likely be seeking careers in medicine, engineering, law, information technology etc. This is in line with a study by Greenstone, Looney, Patashnik and Yu (2013) whereby a child born into the lowest quintile has a 45 percent chance of remaining in the same social location and a five percent chance of moving on to a higher quintile. Those from the lowest quintile who earn a college degree have a 16 percent chance of remaining within the same quintile and a 19 percent chance of moving to the top quintile. Without a college degree a person from the lowest income bracket will most likely remain in the same socio-economic level. Educational system, argues Bourdieu (1977), reproduces and maintains social class. The system is designed to maintain power-relations and perpetuate social classification. Education creates knowledge that maintains hierarchical social relations. This insight helps to explain why only 6 out of 67 participants completed high education. And while a certain level of vertical mobility takes place among farmers, the gap could hardly be closed in comparison to urban elites and those in middle class. For Bourdieu, the educational system is designed to reproduce social class necessary to maintain through symbolic capital. In **Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction** (1973) Bourdieu writes:

> The sociology of educational institutions and, in particular, of higher educational institutions, may make a decisive contribution to the frequently neglected aspect of the sociology of power which consists in the science of the dynamics of class relations. Indeed, among all the solutions provided, throughout the course of history, to the problem of the transmission of power and privileges, probably none have been better dissimulated and, consequently, better adapted to societies which tend to reject the most patent forms of hereditary transmission of power and privileges, then that provided by the educational system in contributing to the reproduction of the structure of class relations and in dissimulating the fact that fulfils this function under the appearance of neutrality (11-12).

Our current capitalist economic system, particularly the neo-liberal policy, is designed for the accumulation of capital and maximization of productions. Because higher education plays an important role in globalization, the system therefore is designed to maximize capital through knowledge acquisition aiming at economic growth. And because capital begets capital, investing in urban development becomes central since the metropolis is essential to the economic growth. Hence urban investments result in unequal distributions. Public higher educational institutions in Bangkok received greater funding, with higher ratio of professors with doctoral degrees, with higher ratio of higher academic ranking and greater support for infra-structure. The number of students attending universities in Bangkok is seven times

higher than the next highest province in terms of student population. Further, education is cultural in nature. Using the term symbolic violence, Bourdieu (1990) describes it as the imposition of systems of symbol and meaning on others in a way that legitimizes them. Violence takes place when the recipients of these systems accept its legitimacy and thus internalize its values through cultural practices. Culture has a way of reproducing itself. In this case the legitimacy of imposed systems of symbol and meaning. Those who embrace this similar culture have an increased chance of moving up within the social hierarchy, while those who do not are lagging behind.

This is true as seen among these participants whereby only a minority earned academic degrees, while among children of farmers, the drive to earn academic degrees seems inevitable. Because of their income level and their educational expenses, many parents sold their land. One participant worked as a construction worker in the summer in order to pay for her tuition. Poor families do not possess the educational culture whereby parents could speak the language and understand the logistics of university admissions. As such they are not able to nurture their children into the culture of education. Many poor students have to work and help their parents thus having less time after school for their personal study, while the lack of funding makes them less competitive because they do not have resources for private after school tutoring. Distance and proximity impact the quality of education as well. The further the school, the lower the quality of education due to many factors such as funding whereby, due to the lack of sufficient number of teachers, many have to cover more subjects and design examinations in areas they are not acquainted with. These factors have significant impacts on access to higher education. To further complicate the lives of farmers' children, neoliberal policies narrow down the possibilities of admission. The focus on privatization, on public universities becoming more independent, puts pressure on these universities to generate income. Income is generated among those who have higher income than among poor farmers' children. To become competitive, universities aim at graduating top students, and to admit top students, selectivity becomes their priority. Hence the struggle of farmers' children intensifies. According to Piyanuch Wuttison (2014), the net enrollment rate for tertiary education was 39.5 percent in urban in comparison to 18 percent in rural areas. This implies that those in urban areas have 2.2 times higher chances of admission into university in contrast to those in rural areas. Tidhima Plubplung, Suwimol Hengphatana and Direk Puthamasiriwat (2015) shows that students in rural areas have a 71 percent chance of not moving beyond high school in comparison to 51 percent among those in major cities. When it comes to 4 year undergraduate programs, those in rural areas have a 19 percent chance of completing their programs in contrast to 39 percent in urban areas. According to Witayakorn Chiangkul (2009), speaking of national examination, Bangkok ranks first on high scores followed by provinces that have high economic output. Lowest performances are in provinces with

a moderate to high level of poverty. These figures seem to affirm Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence showing ways in which education is among the most important tools in the reproduction of social class.

However there seems to exist a deeper and more complex layer to the idea of social mobility itself. What if we discover that this term is loaded with a certain cultural assumption rooted in a particular episteme, and yet the system transforms this assumption into an instrument for development of universal human prosperity and growth? What if it is an episteme driven discourse believing that it is performing the task of epistemology? What if the people whose mobility we seek to enhance remind us that this very concept is more about social, economic and philosophical relocation then transformation? In **Mental Illness and Psychology** (1962) Foucault observes "Psychology can never tell the truth about madness because it is madness that holds the truth of psychology" (p. 74). Translating this into the context of Thai peasants, is it possible that the lives, practices and beliefs of Thai farmers evoke in us the awareness that our educational system operates under a particular cultural assumption but functions on the basis of linear progression that dictates societal directions? Perhaps this awareness is an invitation to excavate the assumption underlying the discourse that drives our approach to education and development.

What Prevents Higher Education from Speaking Meaningfully to the Life of Local Farmers: Foucault's Genealogy

This section outlines how Thai higher education has been significantly influenced by the dominant discourse of modernity, a discourse that aligns with the industrial model of economy which stands at the opposite end of the long tradition of community culture as practiced by farmers. It is this strong alignment with modernity, and the movement toward industrialization/globalization, that seems to prevent higher education from seeking to be informed by local farmers in order to find meaningful ways to address their needs. Or perhaps there exists a more subtle assumption from which higher education is operating that differs qualitatively from the agrarian worldview, and thus this gap is an outcome of the lack of awareness of one's operating assumption. To delve into this subtle assumption, Foucault's genealogy as method is utilized for the purpose of excavating the operating worldview of higher education and tracing possible genealogies of two different competing discourses, that of modernity and community culture. In **Discipline and Punish** (1977), reflecting on the history of prison, Foucault writes:

> I would like to write the history of this prison, with all the political investments of the body that it gathers together in its closed architecture. Why? Simply because I am interested in the past? No, if one means by that writing a history of the past in terms of the present. Yes, if one means writing the history of the present (pp. 30-31).

It is with the eye of the history of the present (Sembu, 2011), that I would like to evoke Foucault's genealogy in order to better understand how local farmers arrived at their current socio-economic location in light of changes in public discourse.

Seeing knowledge as ' key' to the understanding of changes through development ideology, Foucault's genealogy seems appropriate taking into consideration the place of episteme and ways in which it generates discourse that results in changing societal values. Genealogy seeks an understanding of the origin of a particular knowledge and practices in order to answer the question why we are where we are within a particular historical period. It is built on Foucault's archeology of knowledge whereby one comes to understand that the claim to truth remains purely interpretive and non-exegetical. History is not a linear progression of greater discoveries of truth but rather ways in which a particular knowledge gains domination and thus exerts its power to control through disciplinary methods. While archeology seeks to identify changing patterns through changing discourse, genealogy seeks to unearth ways in which knowledge and power come to dominate and dictate societal norms and standards. Evangelia Sembu (2011) reflects on the term genealogy in her statement:

> Genealogy shows, therefore, that interpretations are dependent on specific configurations of power. And the more the genealogist-interpreter uncovers an interpretation the more she/he finds not a fixed meaning but only another interpretation. In this way the arbitrariness of all interpretation is revealed. Since there is non 'original' essence, there is nothing to interprete; and, if there is nothing to interpret, everything is open to interpretation. This is the insight we gain by practicing genealogy (p. 10).

Discipline and Punish (1977), a study of the history of punishment, contains one of the most explicit forms of Foucault's approach to genealogy as a methodology. In extracting changes in methods of punishment through various historical periods, Foucault points to *panopticon*. *Panopticon* within a penitentiary system is an architectural structure design primarily for the purpose of surveillance. "Hence the major effect of the *Panopticon*," writes Foucault (1977) is "to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (p. 201). As an architectural design, *panopticon* is meant to regulate and sustain power that comes from knowledge. To be observed is to be directed by the observer, is transitioning from subject to object. This transition takes place when objects internalize knowledge of the observer. Foucault (1977) explains:

> The efficiency of power, its constraining force has, in a sense, passed over to the other side – to the side of its surface of application. He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection (pp. 202-203).

This disciplinary process aiming at the preservation of power does not end at its implementation within the penitentiary system but extends to other disciplines such as medicine, psychology, education etc. It is a mechanism of objectification utilized as an instrument of subjection, and its growth has the potential to give rise to any branch of knowledge. It is "an epistemological 'thaw' through a refinement of power relations; a multiplication of the effects of power through the formation and accumulation of new forms of knowledge" (p. 224).

An important question to be raised is the ultimate aim of this disciplinary method. To which end does it serve? *Panopticon*'s aim "is to increase production, to develop the economy, spread education, raise the level of public morality; to increase and multiply" (p. 208). In other words, the techniques used are for the 'accumulation of men' and 'accumulation of wealth.' And the two complement one another (p. 221). Genealogy therefore is a method that explores the interplay of power and knowledge, the type of knowledge that aims at generating maximum efficiency and productivity. Genealogy as a method is achieved through questioning and analyzing. Foucault (2001) writes, "It is a question of analyzing a 'regime of practices' – practices being understood as places where what is said and what is done, rules imposed and reasons given, the planned and the taken-for-granted meet and interconnect" (p. 225).

Hence to further analyze the place of knowledge in the lives of those on the margin, genealogy will be utilized to identify, historically, the source of knowledge that has come to dominate public discourse on social mobility and the role of higher education; to explore the 'gaze' of the observer and subsequently the politics of the body; to identify norms and standards for normalization and the process of objectivization of the general public (the local farmers in particular).

1. Knowledge and Development

The rapid expansion of higher education in Thailand (Thak Chaloemtiarana, 2007) was a major component of the plan to bring about development of the nation, to modernize and civilize the country. The significant period when this took place, according to Thirayuth Boonmee (2015), was during Sarit Thanarat's premiership and his 1st National Economic and Development Plan in the early 1960s. While Sarit Thanarat's plan was to develop the entire country for its own sake, and to reach out to the majority of the population, mostly farmers, the political situations significantly modified the primary intention due to political unrest and the increasing need to depend on the United States for financial aid till the plan became implicit with the United States interest in the region. The construction of roads and irrigation system shifted from development for the sake of development toward security of the region in the interest of capitalism. Thak Chaloemtiarana (2007) observes, "Thus, as Sarit's National Development Plan called for more and more American aid and involvement, in the end, Thailand's national development became part and parcel of the execution of American Policy"(167). Sarit Thanarat's image as the rescuer for the ordinary

people was, in practice, a path for the privilege. His claim for the return to the tradition resulted in greater Westernization. Wyatt (2003) states:

> Economic development strengthened the middle class; educational expansion contributed to the Westernization of their values, or at least to doubts about some Thai values; and close association with American policy created burning political issues. In the end, short-term strength and stability were purchased at the price of longer term instability and even political crisis (p. 276).

The development ideology intended for the people has been transformed as the venue for industrialization, Westernization, modernization and the global economy, the endorsement of capitalism (Siriporn Sumethawat, 2013:140; Amornwich Nakornthap, 2014; Wyatt, 2003). Within this mix, education was one of the primary tools. Many senior officers received trainings in the US. Fulbright scholarships were granted to over a thousand Thais (Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, 2009). According to Amornwich Nakornthap (2014), during the early period of development, many Thais received their educational training in the US and returned to teach in Thailand in various disciplines. The development of science curriculum was through the assistance of the Rockefeller Foundation. Many teachers received upgrading during this period so they could return with a leaning toward the American educational system including American values and culture (pp. 69-70). Hence Western influence, particularly that of the US, on Thai's development plan and educational system was systemic and strategic with intended specific outcomes, the production of knowledge that would modernize the country through industry, technology and global economy. The question is, what is the mechanism that drives modernity?

2. Modernity: Episteme of an Emerging Genealogy

In order to better understand the emergence of development ideology and the expansion of modernity in Thailand, it is important to recapture the history of such an ideology. The sixteenth century marked a historic turn in the history of human growth and development, a movement toward singularity of life of sort governed by a particular knowledge. Before the 16th century, the world was polycentric sociologically, politically, economically and culturally with many co-existing civilizations. The Ming dynasty (1368 – 1644) was a center of trade alongside the Roman Empire. When the Islamic caliphate was dismembering, three sultanates emerged. The Ottoman Sultanate with its center in Constantinople; the Safavid Sultanate in Azerbaijan; and the Mughal Sultanate in Delhi and the empire extended till the 17th hundred. By 1526 the Moscovites declared Moscow the "Third Rome." In Africa the two largest kingdoms were the Benin and the Oyo kingdoms lasting till the end of the 19th century. Then there were the Incas in Tawantinsuyu and the Aztecs in Anahuac, the two sophisticated civilizations in South America (Mignolo, 2011: 3-4). Slowly, these civilizations were over taken by a new ideology, a new production of knowledge and methods in economy. Karen Armstrong noted that shifts and changes

toward these civilizations could be attributed to two factors: economy and epistemology (Armstrong, 2002). To Armstrong, the new economy was about reinvesting the surplus for maximization of production. In this way, argues Armstrong, the West can "reproduce its resources indefinitely." Concurrently there was the transformation of knowledge associated with the period of Renaissance whereby scientific revolution was able to exert control over the environment in ways no one had ever achieved before (Armstrong, 2002).

The production of knowledge that radically changed the course of history started with the movement toward humanism, the return to classical texts through empirical and rational processing. The five areas of studies in humanities were poetry, grammar, history, moral philosophy and rhetoric (Burk, 1990). The primary focus of humanism was human as subject and the potential to make a universal human being, intellectually superior, physically fit and adorned with moral virtues as reflected in Michael Angelo's David (Hause and Maltby, 2001). This focus on human and his intellectual property was a significant precursor to the development leading to Enlightenment whereby reason takes precedent over traditions. Modernity may be said to be post-medieval promise of progress through rationality. As Rene Descartes (1596-1650) successfully separated the body and the mind and reprioritized rationality over body, human understanding of nature shifted. The world was divided between the subject and the object. Objectification of nature was a necessary consequence. Nature is for the mind to grasp and hence to maneuver for the betterment of humanity. The era of rationality was also reinforced by the Newtonian physics and Galileo's cosmology. Science holds the utopian promise for human dilemma. The path has therefore been charted, guided by the development of the mind and resulting in industrialization for maximized productions that could cure hunger. Urbanization was the necessary outcome through migration following the concentration of capitals (Siwaruk Siwarom, 2008). Capitalism was conceived as the only viable solution to the world economy (Mignolo, 2011; Kivisto, 2003). Hence modernity, to Peter Kivisto (2003), is the optimism of the future possibility based on human capacity to acquire knowledge of the natural and the social world.

There are certain specific features of modernity that have direct implications on the educational system. These are rationalism, empiricism and skepticism. All these factors impacted political ideology and ethical perspectives as well. First the revolutionary scientific method of Descartes has placed the mind over the body and rationality over senses. The enlightened person is one who questions everything until the questioning stops upon the discovery of the objective reality. There is the mind which is superior and everything else falls under the category of objects to be known, and the natural world belongs to this realm. Leibniz (1646-1746) proposed the principle of sufficient reason whereby everything that exists exists with sufficient reason, and therefore it remains for us to discover. Empiricism was another salient concept in modernity. While Descartes and Leibniz raised the status of rationality,

Francis Bacon (1561-1626) grounded reasoning in empirical data. The new science was to be found upon three principles: 1) empirical observation and experimentation 2) derived at through the method of induction 3) aiming at practical applications of the discovery. The final element was skepticism as a means toward validity of knowledge. Skepticism was strictly an instrument in service of science (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2010). This philosophical shift has significant impact on the role of education because Enlightenment represented a decisive break with the traditional concept of truth. At the very core of humanity reside rationality and freedom. On this very basis, observes Alain Mounier (2010), "they elaborated a concept of knowledge based on reasoning, method and research that aimed to improve society and to empower people to act" (p. 127). He further elaborates on how humanity could apply their "rational minds to investigating and revealing this true nature by means of rational, systematic and logical queries. The discovery of natural laws demonstrated at the same time the efficiency of the method and the intrinsic rational nature of living beings and things" (p. 129).

The principles upon which emerged Enlightenment had significant political and ethical implications. Politically, without the Divine assumption, authority was brought into question. It was the Enlightenment that prompted three revolutions; the English (1688), the French (1775-83) and the American Revolutions (1789-1799). In place of Divine authority came the natural law promoting liberalism and freedom. Natural law, according to Locke (1632-1704), suggests the right of every human being to life, health, liberty and possessions. That all human beings are equal and harm inflicted on one another is not a part of the law of nature. In ethics, the question that emerged was the place of morality based on nature. By removing God from the equation, grounding morality became a challenge. Hobbes (1588-1679) believes that every person is guided by his or her own desire and appetite. However, according to Clarke's **Discourse concerning the Unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion** (1706), the ground for morality is the immediate evidence in relations to things that stand to each other in nature. Hence there exists a universal goodness whereby people should endeavor to promote welfare of others instead of contriving evils against others. These elements of the Enlightenment remain salient within the current discourse in education. However its applications have significant economic and political implications leading toward de-heterogenization of the world community.

Through modernity the polycentricism of the world philosophies, economic systems and cultures slowly merged into one primary system, which is modernity especially since its epistemology claims universality. In a sense modernity says, the truth can be achieved and we have it within our disposal.

2.1.1 Modernity, Epistemology and Monocentricism

In **The Darker Side of Western Modernity** (2011), Walter Mignolo shows the world of multiple cosmologies and languages co-existing prior to the 1500s, none more domineering than others. But through Enlightenment and the

rise of industrialization came a cosmology, legitimized through knowledge and rationality, claiming universality. Mignolo (2011) writes:

> After 1500 the world order entered into a process in which polycentrism began to be displaced by an emerging monocentric civilization. Western civilization emerged not just as another civilization in the planetary concert, but as the civilization destined to lead and save the rest of the world from the Devil, from barbarism and primitivism, from underdevelopment, from despotism, and to turn unhappiness into happiness for all and forever (p. 28).

In the emergence of this monocentric civilization, knowledge plays a very important role in marginalizing all other forms of cosmologies. In **The Missing Chapter of Empire**, Santiago Castro-Gomez (2007) writes:

> The co-existence of diverse ways of producing and transmitting knowledge is eliminated because now all forms of human knowledge are ordered on an epistemological scale from the traditional to the modern, from barbarism to civilization, from the community to the individual, from the orient to occident…By way of this strategy, scientific thought positions itself as the only valid form of producing knowledge, and Europe acquires an epistemological hegemony over all the other cultures of the world (p. 301).

According to Mignolo, the world of multiple cosmologies has been replaced by what Vandana Shiva called "monocultures of the mind" (cited by Mignolo, 2011: 140) resulting in one supreme universe while all else become inferior and hence we have developing versus developed, third world versus first world, primitive versus civilized nations.

> Western modernity, in all its diversity (from theological to secular frames, from the common code of all the disciplines in the social sciences and humanities, the professional schools, performance, art and visual studies), with all the implied consequences of imperial diversity, has been built since the sixteenth century, and increasingly it is being viewed as the only and best options for the entire planet. A set of key concepts has been advanced such as Christian God, *Humanitas*, Democracy, Socialism, Sciences, Reason, Beauty, Faith, Freedom, Progress, Development, and so on. While there have been internal debates on the politics of knowledge, within Western civilization around each of these concepts, the internal 'differences' and debates have been carried on under the presupposition that Western civilization has it and that the rest of the world, all coexisting civilizations, languages, and epistemologies had nothing to contribute (Mignolo, 2011: 296).

Mignolo offers examples of ways in which knowledge rooted in modernity turns hegemonic. In 1590 the Jesuit Father Jose de Acosta published **Historia Natural y Moral de las India** suggestive of nature as an object to be

graphed. This concept was foreign to the native Aymaras and Quechuas within their metaphysical system. For them there was no separation between themselves and nature. Nature to them is "*Pachamama*" or mother earth. Nature is organic. However in Western Christianity, nature exists contradistinct to culture and remains outside the human subject. For the Ayamaras and Quechuas they did not perceive themselves standing separate from nature. They were a part of this nature, this *Pachamama*. Western colonization implanted this Western concept of nature and eliminated*Pachamama* from their cosmology.

> Twenty years after Acosta, Sir Francis Bacon published his Novum Organum, in which he proposed a reorganization of knowledge and clearly stated that 'nature' was 'there' to be dominated by Man. During this period, before the Industrial Revolution, Western Christians asserted their control over knowledge about nature by disqualifying all coexisting and equally valid concepts of knowledge and by ignoring concepts that contradicted their own understanding of nature. At the same time, they engaged in an economy of brutal resource extraction (Mignolo, 2011: 11).

The binary thinking of the Western hemisphere divides the world into the first and the third world. Within this division is the subtle insinuation embedded within the development ideology, the first world as progressive and the third, backward/barbaric. This thinking process was instrumental within the binary conceptualization that maintains power. Through defining self as progress, others were forced, ideologically, to catch up in trades, economy and politics (Thirayut Boonmee, 2002: 19).

2.2 Modernity and Economy

Modernity, for Thirayut Boonmee (2002), results in a form of Cultural Revolution. At the core of this revolution is the transformation of arts, aesthetics, entertainment and life's qualities into commercial productions. Industry dictates cultural productions and thus, economy becomes the single factor that controls every aspects of human life. It is this monocentrism that generates *homo-economicus*.

Within this monocentric cosmology, there is a close relation between knowledge and economy that has dramatically reprioritized our value system. Once nature became domesticated, how people relate to nature changes as well, as does the concept of labor. Before the emergence of modernity people worked to live but the industrial world mutated this concept into enslavement and waged labor. "Enslaved and waged labor became naturalized in the process of creating an economy of accumulation that is today recognized as capitalist economic mentality" (Mignolo, 2011: 12). Then came Industrial Revolution. While industry needs to fuel its mechanism, Acosta and Bacon's concept of nature offered that viability by turning nature into natural recourses. "Nature became a repository of objectified, neutralized, and largely inert materiality that existed for the fulfillment of the economic goals of the 'masters' of the materials," writes Mignolo, and the "mutation of nature into

natural resources in the West was a sign of progress and modernization and at the same time a sign that other civilizations stagnated and were falling behind the West" (pp. 12-13). The hegemonic construction of knowledge based on modernity has significant implications in terms of classification of knowledge itself and the elimination of polycentricism. This movement toward monocentric cosmology is suggestive of a single supreme form of knowledge that acknowledges no other form as equal or valid. It turns the production of knowledge into something ontological. All other forms of knowledge were conceived as lacking behind. Western knowledge was modernity and thus "became a commodity of exportation for the modernization of the non-Western world" (p. 13). This knowledge significantly transformed the agrarian lifestyle and approach to farming. It forced methods of production from subsistent to maximization, from labors for living to labors in exchange for cash, from crops for food to crops for market consumptions and then further on to fuels.

In "The Birth of Bio-politics" social theorist Thomas Lemke shows how our social world was once divided into various domains such as education, religion, politics, family, social relations, economics etc. However the design of neo-liberal policies has collapsed all these domains into one, which is economics. Referencing Foucault, Lamke (2001) writes:

> Foucault suggests that the key element in the Chicago School's approach is their consistent expansion of the economic form to apply to the social sphere, thus eliding any difference between the economy and the social… Here, the economy is no longer one social domain among others with its own intrinsic rationality, laws, and instruments. Instead, the area covered by the economy embraces the entirety of human action (p. 197).

And now, argues Lamke, all domains of life are defined in terms of cost-effectiveness, productivity and maximization. The self comes to define itself by its entrepreneurial skills. How much can I produce? Values become quantifiable. While interviewing local farms in rural Thailand, one interesting observation was realizing that productivity was initially not a part of their value system. The values they embraced were simplicity, sufficiency, generosity and loyalty. They used to live simply and help one another. Now they compete, taking up loans hoping for big gains, getting into debts due to changes in the market price. Many lost their lands and migrated to the city to work as laborers. From freedom to bondage, from respectable members of society to the stereotype: poor and uneducated. In his research of the World Bank's approach to poverty reduction, Christopher Collins (2011) observes that a country is judged on how well it performs strictly by GDP regardless of the social dimensions. It is how much one earns and not how well one lives. Mignolo (2011) writes:

> In the era of neoliberal globalization it has become one of the main weapons to promote competition, thereby encouraging fast speed and success, consuming the energy of millions of people who live their lives

> constantly thinking of going faster and getting ahead, to being a winner and to avoiding the shame of being a loser(p. 178).

In retrospect we are witnessing how the early gravitation toward knowledge and rationality as a promise of a better future for humanity resulted in the construction of monocentric cosmology of Western civilization through which other forms of knowledge and civilizations have been pushed to the margin. This ideology claiming universality has implanted itself throughout the world as a natural consequence of its belief that there's only one way to improve humanity and science with its leaning toward technology holds the promise of salvation for human dilemma. The promise of the rational mind is also suggestive of development through industries and the process of mechanization for maximization of products. As a result there emerged the economic and political system that can regenerate itself through the exploitation of natural resources for greater "goods." It is within this context of the reproduction of a particular type of knowledge that the role of education is construed.

3. Modernity, Development and Education: *Panopticon*-The Observer

Since knowledge plays a primary role in development, the place of education becomes a fertile ground for the dispersion of this ideology. Make no mistake, warns Walter Mignolo, that development is a natural consequence of modernity. He writes, "Modernity cannot be separated from development." The need for development is contingent upon Western modernist ideology without which its existence becomes non-essential. Modernity's claim to truth results in bifurcation that necessitates development by transforming episteme into ontology. According to Leon Tikly "'Development' is thus a central organizing principle in the Western episteme (p. 30)." This unavoidable bifurcation results in classification of the world in binary opposites such as the developed and underdeveloped countries, the civilized and the primitive, the first and the third world (Tikly, 2009). Rist (1997) observes:

> From 1949 onwards, often without realizing it, more than two billion inhabitants of the planet found themselves changing their name, being 'officially' regarded as they appeared in the eyes of others, called upon to deepen their westernization by repudiating their own values. No longer African, Latin American or Asian (not to speak of Bambara, Shona, Berber, Quechua, Aymara, Balinese or Mongol), they were now simply 'underdeveloped (p. 79)."

This classification becomes the tool for self-affirmation as superior and legitimizes the need for interventions. Hence under the guise of philanthropic gestures as interventive for the underprivileged countries comes development. Within the discursive practice of this ideology, education becomes its tool. The goal is the production of *homo economicus*. By economic development, the modernist idea suggests human beings as economic agents with freedom to pursue economic interests

(Tikly, 2009). The mean by which this ideology takes root around the world is through global governmentality, the spreading of Western liberal values among the 'illiberal,' the underdeveloped global constituent and helping them become 'economically useful' for the service of global capitalism while on the other hand managing the risk posted to global market through social interventions (Tikly, 2009). In Lokapiwat Pratha Thongthin (2006), editorial comments recalls how in the end, local Thai farmers take all the brunt of the effects of globalization. Within this context education has been transformed into a commercial commodity. Education and development function as significant concepts in ways the Western world relates to low-income countries with the discourse focusing on poverty reduction. What are means by which maximum production can take place for the betterment of humanity?

4. World Bank, Education and Development: *Panopticon*-The Disciplinary Process

A report by the World Bank (2014) on the situation of Thailand concludes:

> Thailand has little choice but to improve its situation because its competitors in East Asia and other parts of the world are clearly accelerating their own efforts to become more innovative and to increase their technological capability. The stakes have been raised and to remain a vibrant economy Thailand must also climb the ladder of technological capability (p. 97).

From the World Bank perspective, what might be the most effective method to achieve poverty reduction around the world? One of the World Bank's ambitious goals is the world without poverty (Kamat, 2012: 33). Initially the Bank's main focus was the development of infra-structure such as hydroelectric dams, modernization of agricultural products, reducing maternal mortality, promoting family planning while education was neglected. However changes came in the mid-1980s when the bank started noticing the importance of education in relation to economic growth and production. Theories of human capital in relation to economic growth and poverty reduction became instrumental in shaping this understanding of the role of education. "Human capital theory remains a central tenet of World Bank thinking on education and proves to be a flexible and resilient discursive resource (Tikly, 2009: 37). The World Bank, states Verger and Bonal (2012) "has become one of the most influential international organizations in the field of education for development" (p. 126). According to the World Bank, education can "unleash the potential of the human mind" (World Bank, 2011: 6). However this potential is measured through economic outputs. In the mid-1980s through Washington Consensus and the emergence of neo-liberal policy, education was conceived as a significant contributing factor for growth and development. From the 1980s on the economic theory of the Chicago School of Economics under the leadership of Friedrich von Hayek and Milton Friedman came into domination replacing the old Keynesian theory. This economic theory was picked up by world leaders such as Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. Some of the key concepts in neo-liberalism include:

> The unpacking of the state's protectionist policies to enable the freer movement of finance, trade, and labor across national boundaries (referred to as deregulation); the implementation of competition policies across the public and private sectors aimed at creating efficiencies; the privatization of a range of former state activity; and the rescaling of state activity" (Robertson, 2012: 191).

Under the umbrella of neo-liberalism, education became an economic tool. Speaking of neo-liberal Kamat (2012) writes, "The World Bank and the IMF became leading global agents of neoliberal economics by enforcing a regime of policies and condition on developing countries" (p. 35). Human capital became a source for increment of capital and thus an effective way of reducing poverty in the developing world. Within the concept of human capital is the idea of knowledge bank. The World Bank reconceptualizes itself as the fundamental source of knowledge that can lead to economic growth and thus the source of human prosperity globally. Speaking of the role of the World Bank as the source of knowledge capital, Steiner-Khamsi (2012) states

> Although the World Bank has not decreased its role as a lender of money, it has acted increasingly, over the past decade, as a global policy advisor for national governments. Needless to state, the World Bank's use of baseline analysis, target setting, and benchmarking as policy tools to coerce national governments into adopting a particular reform package, designed and funded by the World Bank, has come under serious attack. It has been rightfully pointed out by many… that the World Bank has elevated itself into the role of the "super think tank" among the aid agencies that, based on its extensive analytical work, knows what is good for the recipient countries but also what other aid agencies should support. Its self-described role as a knowledge bank, combined with the expensive impact evaluations which, in some countries, cost more than the actual "intervention" whose effectiveness they are supposed to measure, epitomizes the "what works approach." Worse yet, by implication the super think tank also functions as a judge on what does not work and consequently does not receive external financial support even if national governments prove the contrary and request funding for reforms that they deem important for their country (p. 5).

The cultivation of human capital has become a salient factor seen through the lens of neo-liberal economic policy. The implementation of neo-liberalism during the early stage was through promoting technical knowledge and skills and later through the promotion of primary education, when they discovered the correlation between primary education and maximized production. This was done through World Bank's structural adjustment policies. The implementation of structural adjustment on third world countries resulted in limiting locals from creative initiatives and regional agenda. Structural adjustment policies focused primarily on GDP requiring countries to "liberalize trade barriers, eliminate subsidies, dismantle public services, privatize, deregulate, and promote markets as extensively as possible while 'shrinking' the

state" (Kamat, 2012: 35). But structural adjustment has proven to be a failed policy on the part of the World Bank. Several scholars documented the failure of structural adjustment policy, observes Kamat (Kamat, 2012; Samoff, 1994; Reimers, 1994). In Tanzania prior to structural adjustment, the rate for attendance of primary school was almost a hundred percent. A few years after structural adjustment, the rate dropped drastically. Due to the lack of funding, the government had started charging tuition and fees thus preventing almost half of the school age population from their rights to primary education. The World Bank's rationale was the demand for education should be tapped and thus generate revenues for the government (for debt repayment to the Bank) through tuitions and fees. For two decades subsequent to structural adjustment, "Tanzania spent a third of its budget for debt repayments, four times what it spent on primary education" (Kamat, 2012: 35).

Even though it has become apparent that the neo-liberal policy within the field of education has many negative outcomes, the World Bank, through the new initiative, the **World Bank Education Strategy 2020: Learning for All: Investing in People's Knowledge and Skills to Promote Development** (WBES) (World Bank 2011), has evoked neo-liberal theory in promoting the new agenda in educational development (Klees, 2012). The question faced by the World Bank was how to circumvent the common knowledge of the failure of the neo-liberal policy in educational reform. This was done through public-private partnerships (PPPs). The problem with prior neo-liberal policies, argues the World Bank, was the lack of partnership. The task of educating the world is too big for any single organization and thus partnership should be sought and promoted. Partnership implies correcting the earlier problem with privatization but not abandoning. Beside the argument for efficiency that exists in the private sector, it also encourages "opening up the education sector to global trading rules, and the promotion of trade in education (rather than aid) as the basis for capacity-building" (Robertson, 2012: 195). Authors of PPPs were individuals committed to the ideology of the Chicago School of Economics who received support from numerous US economists. The central assumption of PPPs is that "education is a consumer good, and that the student is the principal consumer through parents" (World Bank, 2001: 1). Thus it feeds to the mechanism of a free market.

> In order for parents (and students) to choose, the education sector needs to be organized so that it operates according to the logic of a free market. This includes information on the nature of the provider's education offer including its quality; a set of incentives to ensure the right kind of performance behavior; regulatory guarantees to protect the interests of private investors; competition among providers; and an evaluation system that is able to feed back into the information system, creating a virtuous circle (Robertson, 2012: 196-97).

The next important element in the regulatory process of the World Bank is to introduce stringent methods of assessment in order to measure productivity. To accomplish this, the Bank introduced System Assessment and Benchmarking for Education Results (SABER). There are 13 policy domains for measurement: early child development, education finance, education technology, engaging the private sector, equity and inclusion system, information systems for planning and policy dialogue, school autonomy and accountability, school feeding, school health and nutrition, school quality assurance, teacher policies, tertiary education, tracking learning, opportunities and workforce development (De Siqueira, 2012: 74). SABER's aim is to promote increased efficiency in providing quality education for all. The conceptual framework guiding the development of SABER is "the increase in scores on international assessments and GDP growth, as well as emphasizes the benefits of reduced costs and efficiency" (De Siqueira, 2012: 75). The outcome measure is achieved by the degree of alignment with the assessment tool. Countries that align themselves with these standards will be considered mature and the lack thereof will be classified as less matured countries (De Siquiera, 2012; Klees, 2012).

The importance of the role of the World Bank in educational policy for development is well documented and includes the Bank's ambitious claim of giving birth to a global education framework that consists of universal solutions to the problems humanity faces (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012; Kamat, 2012), an interesting claim according to Kamat (2012), after four decades of deemphasizing higher education. Klees observes, "The World Bank is a monopoly. There is no other institution like it. It is not too strong to argue that the World Bank is the architect of what has become a truly global education policy" (Klees, 2012: 49). However this architectural design is at the very same time a promotion of a particular worldview, an endeavor for the reproduction of monocentricism recreating a particular discourse for the purpose of building capital. Reflecting on the World Bank Educational Strategy 2020 Tikly (2012) writes:

> This new role for education serves to reinforce the new imperialism by further limiting the capacity of low-income countries to determine their educational agendas. Dependency and incapacity are reinforced through the disciplinary mechanism of poverty conditional lending, poverty reduction strategies and international target setting. The overemphasis on primary education at the expense of other levels of education removes the indigenous capacity for research and innovation, two important aspects if countries are to link education to indigenously determined priorities (p. 38).

It is from this vantage point that we come to understand World Bank's (2014: 96) recommendations for Thailand higher education and the significance of knowledge economy in the global world. The report by the World Bank Group strongly suggests heavy investment by the government on research and development while encouraging close connections between universities and industries as solutions for the economic stagnation with higher education playing the central role.

5. Modernity and Thai Educational System: *Panopticon*-The Observed

Speaking of the relationship between knowledge and modernity within Thai context Thirayuth Boomee (2004) states:

> Thais' thinking process has been dominated by Westernism. Not only in setting frame of thoughts but in drawing lines in order to keep things within a certain boundary such as being seen as underdeveloped, the need to progress in the material sense, the urgency to expand economically etc. But even deeper is the need to control knowledge itself such that knowledge has to be based on research with processes based on clear logic… Morality is based on Western individualism with preference to expressiveness. Brave enough to accept responsibilities. The self remains at the center. Hence how can we be certain that such modernity is universal, that this is the model to train children in every culture (p. 4)?

In **A Critical Study of Thailand's Higher Education Reforms** Rattana Lao (2015) confirms, "There exists a strong obsession to achieve modernity through active emulation of Western values and models" (p. 23). Relating this concept to education she further states "The foundation of the Thai higher education system must be understood in relation to the larger national attempt to 'modernize' and 'Westernize' the Thai nation – or Siam as it was called" (pp. 26-27). The very inception of formal education in Thailand since Rama V was motivated primarily by the goal of national development through modernization. As an important strategic plan, many individuals within the royal family and among the elites went abroad for further education while a number of training sites under Western influence were established in Thailand. This movement toward Westernizing education systems was engaged with the understanding that the acquisition of knowledge pertaining to modernity could withstand the force of colonization (Rattana Lao, 2015; Amornwich Nakornthap, 2014; Wyatt, 2003).

But the attempt to withstand has transformed itself into a preferred mode of operation within the field of education. The reemergence of Western influence on the Thai educational system is imprinted within the 1st National and Economic Development Plan. Under the pressure for national security and the geo-political agenda of the United States, the World Bank played a significant role in drafting the plan for the sake of expediting development in Thailand. Between 1966 and 1971, Thailand received loans and military assistance of approximately one-third of the total national expenditure. In two subsequent decades, it is estimated that Thailand received up to USD 2 billion (Rattana Lao, 2015; Witte, 2000). In the field of education, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) invested heavily in the expansion of higher education to various regions. Various US based philanthropic organizations such as the Ford, the Rockefeller, and the Fulbright Foundations also played a significant role in the design of educational policy and development. "Under the University Development Program (UDP) founded in 1961, the Rockefeller Foundation laid the foundations for three main universities, namely

Thammasat, Mahidol, and Kasetsart universities" (Rattana Lao, 2015: 31). Educational reform during this period, observes Paitoon Sinlarat (2004), was a response to the economic development under the guidance of the US. Rattana Lao laid out four important United States' legacy in Thailand's higher education reform. 1) Rerouting students educational upgrading from Europe to the US. Scholarships were granted to Thai students by USAID, Ford and Fulbright Foundations. "Not only have the majority of social scientists in Thailand been trained in the United States, but its educational system and social science model have permeated and dominated Thai academics (p. 31). 2) Regional expansion of higher education. Paitoon Sinlarat's interview with former rector of Khon Kaen University was recorded as suggesting that the rationale for the establishment of provincial universities came from the Americans (Paitoon Sinlarat, 2005: 62). The American agenda had much to do with the need to promote a certain political ideology in areas under the threat of communism. 3) The need to encourage privatization of higher education in Thailand in accord with the rule of the market economy. 4) The expansion of graduate studies. This expansion was in view of the need for high caliber students while the country was in the mode of rapid development.

Mounier (2012) observes "In most countries, in particular in Asia, modern education and current education reforms have been in great part influenced and sometimes underpinned by Western educational philosophies. This is a fact and perhaps a problem" (p. 110). Westernization and modernity are conceptual realities that have been guiding the development of the Thai educational system from its inception, and ever since, the force of its ideology is a continual presence within Thai society expressing itself through scholarship programs, academic trainings and educational policies. Speaking of the impact of the 1997 economic crisis on the education system in Thailand, Gerald Fry (2000) observes how its intensity resulted in the realization of the need for a major educational reform. The crisis was also an opportunity for the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) to stipulate certain policies.

> Another important feature of developments during the crisis period were the bail-out packages provided by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. These insisted on privatization of university services, more decentralization of the decision making processes in education, and institutional autonomy for universities and other institutions of higher education (cited by Ratana Lao, 2015: 64).

In granting USD 500 million for Social Sector Program (SSP), five broad policy priorities were stipulated: "(i) reduce the incidence of school dropouts, (ii) improve the quality of priority education programs, (iii) rationalize MOE's (Ministry of Education) staff size, (iv) decentralize to make all levels of education more responsive to societal and community needs, and (v) promote the private sector's provision of education" (ADB Loan-1611).The conditions pertaining privatization

and decentralization are among the fundamental agenda of the World Bank's global educational policy under a neo-liberal economic development plan (Roberston, 2012; Klees, 2012). During Rattana Lao's interview with a Thai policy maker, a comment regarding the role of the IMF was stated:

> After the 1997 crisis, the IMF has become influential in the thinking of Thai higher education reform. It is not about borrowing money, but it is about changing the entire system and shifting educational paradigm. It pushed for more systematic surveillance in the way Thailand conducted public policy (cited by Rattana Lao, 2015: 67).

In 2010 the World Bank released a report "Towards a Competitive Higher Education System in a Global Economy" assessing Thailand's educational system. Luis Benveniste, the educational expert of the World Bank, while recognizing rapid expansion of education in Thailand, noted with concern the gap between the quantity and quality of college graduates. According to the report the areas of concerns are 1) accessibility for low-income population since only five percent are enrolled in colleges and universities, 2) low productivity due to the lack of technical skills, 3) mismatch between academic training and the demands by industries, 4) oversupplies of social science graduates and a shortage in the fields of science, technology and health science (critical to knowledge economy) and 5) the lack of research on development because of the emphasis on heavy teaching load. Traces of modernity clearly formed parts of the World Bank's report regarding the status of Thailand's educational system and areas of concern. A report on the World Bank's assessment of Thai educational system by the Nation's editorial on the 5th of June, 2015 contains a statement by World Bank Southeast Asia director, Ulrich Zachau, "The single most important thing for Thailand is to improve its education and skills outside Bangkok." The report points out the economic decline due to eroding competitiveness and slow improvement in productivity. One of the primary reasons, as pointed out by the report, is the lack of quality education in rural areas. "It's wonderful that we can produce a few students who excel in international competitions but, if the majority of their contemporaries are 'functionally illiterate', it reflects poorly on Thailand as a nation. More significantly, this disparity will have a negative impact on the country's economic future, as the World Bank report notes." The World Bank's statement regarding Thailand educational system is revealing. It clearly shows where the intellectual power to determine quality of knowledge resides. And the judgment was clearly spelled, the vast rural population who are "functionally illiterate." "These illiterates reflect poorly on the nation." The editorial concludes "There are no easy decisions, but all constructive measures must be taken into consideration if we want genuine reform that improves education." The vast majority in rural Thailand consists of Thai farmers. The classification according to modernity is "functionally illiterate." It is in light of this observation by the World Bank that the disciplinary process is legitimized. The mechanism to discipline goes on since major players in Thai

educational system, those who have been playing significant roles in the Ministry of Education since the early 1970s, were graduates from United States educational institutions. The concepts of decentralization, privatization and institutional autonomy were key concepts in their approach to educational reform in Thailand. Two observations emerged, according to Rattana Lao (2015):

> First, the key policymakers in Thailand looked to the United States and referred to its educational experiences as a benchmark and a rationale to promote policies. In this case, privatization and decentralization of education were the major mantras of education policy in Thailand. Second, they mentioned selectively only the positive benefits of these reforms. Either by intent or coincidence, they did not mention how these reforms were resisted in the United States. The selected references to United States' policy created an image that educational administration there is stellar and must be emulated (p. 71).

It is important to note that while Western modernity is coded within Thai educational system, it is not strictly a one-way domination. Among Thai academics, Thai identity remains an important part of Thai educational system. In "Coming to Terms with the West: Intellectual Strategies of Bifurcation and Post-Westernism in Siam" (2010) Thongchai Winichakul argues that there is no such a thing as complete Westernization without localization. Thai's identity, through times, has become a type of hybridity, a dialogue between traditional Thai values and Western modernity. "While Thai economy may have been integrated into the Western-dominated global economy since the second half of the nineteenth century," writes Thongchai Winichakul, "the Western and Thai academies have never operated in unison in sustaining intellectual fashions, let alone been integrated" (p. 146). Rattana Lao, in **A Critical Study of Thailand's Higher Education Reforms: The Culture of Borrowing** (2015), presents the argument that selective borrowings have been a pattern within the relationship between Thailand and Western countries. This pattern of borrowing is present among Thai elitists who pick and choose that which has the potential to validate their agenda. The movement toward autonomous universities, in her assessment, while explicitly recommended by IMF and ADB, has traces of elitist preference legitimizing the expressed concern. While it is important to recognize local players in the educational reform, Rattana Lao's (2015) description of the culture of borrowing shows unequal power relation within the Thai-Western relationship.

> The culture of borrowing highlights the cultural supremacy and symbolic power of Western ideas and standards over non-Western others. Influenced by the postcolonial concept of ambivalence, the decision, of a non-Western country, to borrow education policy from the West is a function of a complex interplay between 'attraction' vis-à-vis 'repulsion.' On the one hand, non-Western countries look to the West with admiration and aspiration to assimilate Western culture, values, and lifestyles. Therefore, borrowing policy from the West represents a higher symbolic power for the non-Western countries. On the other hand, the non-Western countries also view the West

> with nationalistic rejections, associating anything Western with negative connotations and contempt (p. 7).

While it is important to acknowledge hybridity through the process of localization as argued Thongchai Winichakul, it remains true that without the dominant Western discourse on modernity, hybridity will most likely not come into existence. Second, the West is the main player in pushing the agenda for globalization through economic development with neo-liberalism as the primary guiding principle. A more recent example is the presence of free-trade agreement. In April of 2005, the Thai government resumed Thai-US trade agreement negotiation at a reclusive hotel in Pattaya. One of the main items on the agenda was intellectual property rights (IPR) that reinforced stringent regulatory control on drugs and seeds, thus negatively impacting local farmers. Thousands of demonstrators returned with disappointment when Mr. Nitya Pibulsongkram, former Thai ambassador to Washington DC, said to the demonstrators "finally, whatever we have to sacrifice must be sacrificed, if that helps get a better deal" (cited by Sajin Prachason, 2005). The conclusion of the third round of Thai-US trade agreement was only one among other agreements that has privileged a particular country over others and at the same time restricted the rights of the local people. During the past 37 years the US has been privileged over other countries through the Treaty of Amity and continues to demand greater privileges through liberalization (Sajin Prachason, 2005). The new economic treaty, the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), is the latest attempt at increasing trade liberalization in accord with the neo-liberal policy. The TPP has been questioned by numerous academics in terms of restrictions of governments to facilitate access for their citizen. TPP is one of the biggest trade agreements to be signed covering 40 percent of the world economy. Education International General Secretary Fred van Leeuwen warns, "The TPP partner governments are signing up to legally binding and enforceable trade rules that lock-in the level of liberalization and thereby prevent governments from bringing education back to the public sector in the future" (cited by Educational International, 2016). Through TPP, education will be exposed to the rule of privatization and commercialization over against the government's ability to offer quality education. It also contains an Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) mechanism whereby foreign investors are given the rights to challenge any domestic laws and regulations that do not appear favorable to their business venture. Leeuwen states:

> The corporatized court system of ISDS allows big multinationals to sue governments for quality, performance and accreditation requirements and standards that are crucial in ensuring high-quality education, on the basis that such standards constitute so-called 'disguised barriers to trade' or are 'more trade burdensome than necessary' (cited by Education International, 2016).

Concerns regarding General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and its impacts on the education were also expressed by the European Universities

Association raising the question of the agreement's power to monitor and limit the role of government in the field of education (Maslen, 2015). Writing for National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) of Australia, Jen Kwok states similar concern on the regulatory power of TPP in favor of commercialization and privatization in ways that private foreign corporations have the power to demand compensation from government when conditions are not in favor of their business (Kwok, 2015). The above examples show the regulatory power of Western countries on the educational system regardless of the formation of academic identity in Thai society.

Western countries, particularly the United States, the World Bank and its subsidiary institutions have been influencing Thai economic development and educational policy since the 1960s. Perhaps one possible explanation taking into consideration Thongchai Winichakul's argument regarding localization is to acknowledge the present of Thai identity and Thai's methods within the broader framework of global economy. But to acknowledge at the very same time that global economy as enforced through globalization is itself the project of modernity. According to Thirayuth Boonmee's (2002) observation, Western hegemony comes in both explicit forms and non-explicit but subtle methods such as the creation of knowledge that appears to be neutral and beneficial. The examples are textbooks on the subjects of history, science, medicine, art, literature, anthropology, and sociology. But many of these forms of knowledge are embed with subtle ideas biased toward Western domination. Chan Huang Kiat (2012) made a similar observation in his research exploring the quality of education in Thailand through the lens of modernity as disciplined through the process of internationalization of educational standards.

> In the case of Thailand, as it actively seeks to benchmark the quality of its education against others to rectify the education conundrum at home using international assessments, the country is inevitably subjecting itself to the politics of accountability determined by the international bodies that administer the assessments and who are steering Thailand's education policies from a distance by imposing their own quality of education, typically farmed around knowledge in mathematics, science and technology and which is already mirrored in Thailand's recent educational policies. In response and in taking up Pongwat and Rupavijetra's recommendations, the quality of Thai education could be reconsidered otherwise by locating it within its own socio-cultural context and to recognize that these international assessments are essentially Eurocentric in nature and contain a meta-narrative of universalism in knowledge and skills without consideration for contextualized particularity like the agrarian nature of Thailand nor the fact that Thailand's deeply rooted Buddhist culture has a social philosophy that contrasts with the one advocated by neo-liberalism to create an inherent tension that persisted and not reconciled within its policies (p. 8).

While acknowledging the strong presence of Westernism within Thai educational system, it is to be noted the reemergence of 'Thainess' after the economic crisis in 1997 (*Tom Yam Goong*) as presented in evoking of King Bhumiphon's

sustainable economy. This return was clearly stated in the 9th National Social and Economic Development Plan where the King's approach to sustainability is clearly felt as a solution to the economic crisis. The **Synopsis of the National Scheme of Education of B.E. 2545-2559 (2002-2016)** prepared by Office of the National Education Commission (2003) clearly states:

> The development of the Thai society with priority accorded to economic development with the sole intent on economic growth rate, based on awakened and unjust social structure, mainly dependent on other countries, has proved that the wrong path has been followed. There is thus a need to formulate a new vision, strategy and policy for developmental efforts. Such formulation must be guided by the principle of equal importance attached to all types of capital – economic, social, human and natural, with strong adherence to the Thai cultural way of life, deeply rooted in religious principles for maintaining our unique identity amidst the new economic order (p. 5).

Hence within the Thai educational system there remain aspects of resistance toward Westernization at some level and continue in some respect within educational philosophical outlook in Thailand.

Traditional Thai Educational System and Farmers: A Different Genealogy

The impact this development ideology based on modernity has on local Thai farmers is significant. In elevating and legitimizing one form of knowledge over against the other, the effects are not merely defined as progression through acquisition of new knowledge but more of a surgical intervention that dislodges a population, Thai peasants, from their cultural genealogy, proselytizing their belief system by changing their cultural heritage and worldview. Prior to the influence of Westernization, farmers' knowledge regarding reality and life was guided by the hybridity of Buddhist cosmology and the local understanding of the sacred, ancestors and otherwise. Practical knowledge was rooted in their understanding of nature and ways to make a living through gardening and rice planting. The method of education was apprenticeship. "Genealogy of Thai education," writes Srichai Pornprachatum (2004) "emerged from the locals themselves" (p. 116). He further points out that farmers learn about nature through cultivating their lands. Their knowledge of the metaphysics was based on rituals. Prosperity was achieved through relationships and trades. Knowledge was not fixed. Knowledge, to local Thais, was fluid. The primary ideology underlying Thais' understanding of reality was based on subsistent living. They worked the field just so they had enough to sustain their lives. And as they sought sustenance, their methods shifted and changed according to the geographical terrain and changes in their immediate natural environment. Knowledge of ways to sustain themselves were preserved, modified, and passed on to the younger generation. The method was simple. Through observation and practice, the younger generation acquired knowledge necessary to help them learn how to plant rice, grow

crops, raise cattle etc. This collective participation formed a shared history that informed collective memories of the community (Srichai Pornprachatum, 2004).
This type of educational method is still echoed among many participants who described growing up in the farm following their parents to the rice field. There they learn hands-on how to prepare a seedbed in their wet rice field by hoeing and weeding, breaking chunks of earth through the back of the blade. Through the cycle of rice farming they also learn how to plow or watched their parents plow the land. They take part in transplanting of seedlings, watching the rice grow, checking on soils, observing insects then helping with harvesting. Parents educate their children in the art of farming as means for making a living. Children learn by observing and direct participation. At the end of the day food is available for consumption. A female nursing student from Asia Pacific International University, described a process she learned from her parents. The seedlings are usually soaked in water before planting. Seeds that float to the top will not be used because they are not fully formed. She went on to explain how knowledge pertaining to rice farming has to be acquired through experience. Without experience, it would not be possible to figure out intricate ways of planting and growing rice. Another female student from Rajabhat University, talked about her grandfather who only completed primary education but owns a fertilizer plant located in his village and is a supplier for the entire sub-district.

> Most farmers are very knowledgeable about agriculture and related topics. In other professions, people tend to learn from textbooks. But for farmers, they learn from experience. When to add fertilizer. The textbook may suggest two to three months. But for them, they observe rice in the rice field and they will have a sense of when is an appropriate time to add fertilizer (FCCR2).

Farmers' knowledge of nature came through their intentional formation of relationships with nature itself, hence observing and aligning themselves with the rhythm and seasons of nature. In Sukhothai, farmers reported the importance of observation in the practice of agriculture. From the knowledge acquired they would modify their methods accordingly. Traditionally, farmers did not use fertilizer. After removing grass from the garden, they would posit them at the foot of the trees. During rainy season natural fertilizer that came with river current would gather at the foot of the tree. This type of knowledge was acquired through observing nature utilizing full benefits of the seasonal flood (Srichai Pornprachatum, 2004: 119).

The underlying principles that informed traditional Thai agrarian educational method were subsistent farming, sharing within the community, extending helping hands and creating harmony. Power was assigned to authoritative figures such as the chief of the village or the head of the abbot whose words had the potential to draw people together toward a common goal. Within this type of community cultivating sufficiently for the family to subsist became the mantra. Discursive practices pertaining everyday living consisted of activities such as agriculture, gardening, trading through canals, and

fishing. Farming shaped and formed how early Thais viewed nature and how to work with nature as a way of fulfilling basic needs. Wealth of knowledge, for traditional Thai educational system, was like treasure in the field. Hence the everyday emersion in the world of farming and crop growing could yield limitless possibilities for sustenance through agricultural practices (Srichai Pornprachatum, 2004, pp. 127-131). From the above description, the genealogy of Thai educational system has a deep root within an agrarian culture both in contents and methods. It was learning through observation and participation with the ultimate aim of living sufficiently in alignment with nature. The concept of nature-alignment itself informed the importance of subsistence since the drive toward maximum growth and productivity did not seem to be in accord with the cycle and the rhythm of nature itself.

However, knowledge within the context of modernity has a distinctively different genealogy. "Nature" is viewed as an object to be exploited for the benefit of humanity. Agriculture is one domain that has clearly witnessed the footprints of modernity. The industrialization of agriculture through modernization has resulted in long-term unsustainable ways of living.

> American agriculture will continue to prosper so long as hunger remains an international threat, so long as 'agribusiness' is not restrained, and so long as 'established farmers with large holdings' are left free to continue the pollution and soil erosion that are the inevitable by products of industrial agriculture…Bu this 'most logical' of developments, then, we have passed from a farm-based, family-based, independent agriculture to an agriculture abjectly dependent upon many kinds of industrial 'inputs' and firmly based upon several kinds of disaster. We are producing, at an incalculable waste of topsoil and of human life and energy, and at the cost of destroying communities and poisoning the land and the streams, food to be used against the hungry as a weapon (Berry, 1996: 167).

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Critical Assessment of Modernity/Development and the Role of Higher Education within the Context of Thai Farmers

The lack of awareness of cultural values as discourse results in the perpetuation of its system. The unconscious assumption of these values generates internalization of norms. "Over time, the meanings become accepted, reproduced, and standardized, thereby replicating structures of domination and suppression" (Martinez-Aleman, 2015: 8). Foucault invites us to become aware of assumptions in discourse that direct our path. Within the context of Thai educational system, it is becoming aware of two distinct genealogies with opposing outcomes by recapturing historical development.

Development aims at providing social mobility and higher educational institutions play an important role in facilitating mobility. The modern educational system is of a different episteme and genealogy in comparison to that of the agrarian's system. The attempt to facilitate social mobility in itself is based on a modernist assumption with

its economic implications. The witness of this assumption manifests itself through generational transitions among some participants. The dialogic movement between traditional and dominant discourses is seen among farmers who have been nurtured through a higher educational system who are caught in the ideology of mobility, and yet treasure values of community culture. While enjoying a certain level of economic stability and social mobility, this group nevertheless holds on to the culture of their parents while embracing the identity of farmers, but with an academic degree that places them a layer above non-academically informed farmers. In a sense, higher education is itself a form of mobility. However, it comes with significant limitations because the knowledge acquired does not return them to the life of rice farming or the appreciation of farmers. What holds them within their identity as farmers is an epistemology other than modernity. Hence the attempt to facilitate mobility is an attempt to shift their epistemological genealogy. It is patronizing without recognizing or acknowledging the richness of farmers' culture, traditions and ways of living. It turns farmers into objects for change. Farmers as subjects gradually disappear. The struggle by Thai farmers to maintain their ways of living despite the dominant discourse in the past few decades could be viewed as a form of resistance. However, their attempts to maintain their roots have been misrepresented and misinterpreted, being classified as ignorant, uneducated, poor and unworthy. Worthiness could be achieved, they were told, through formal education and greater acquisition of material wealth. Within the context of educational policies promoting mobility and development, De Siqueira (2012) asked, can we say that educated people are happier? Are there higher rates of suicide among the less educated?

> Who is more responsible and effective steward of the natural environment? It is not the better educated ones—those who have been defending and practicing environmental depletion with huge plantations, cattle farming, industrial fisheries, mining activities, nuclear power plants, polluting factories, bigger garbage production, and lavish consumption. Local and indigenous people, generally "less educated," often protect the natural environment because it is the environment that permits their survival, and it is not uncommon that these local people-while preserving their ancient land, knowledge, ways of doing, thinking and dealing with nature-continue to be frightened, banished, or even killed openly or by mandate by the better educated and the rich (p. 70).

Farmers, according to Berry (1996), are stickers, not boomers who 'pillage and run.' Speaking of mobility, he writes:

> Both the stratification and the mobility are based upon notions of prestige, which are in turn based upon these reliquary social fashions. Thus doctors are given higher status than farmers, not because they are more necessary, more useful, more able, more talented, or more virtuous, but because they are thought to be 'better'-one assumes because they talk a learned jargon, wear good clothes all the time, and make a lot of money. And this is true generally of 'office people' as opposed to those who work with their hands. Thus an

> industrial worker does not aspire to become a master craftsman, but rather a foreman or manager. Thus a farmer's son does not usually think to 'better' himself by becoming a better farmer than his father, but by becoming, professionally, a better kind of man than his father (p. 159).

In listening to voices of farmers one comes to realize that educational goals are not without assumptions. Education, reflects Jon Jandai, should equip us to be independent by offering skills in the production of food, shelters, clothing and healthcare. However, the current educational system creates a population of dependency. "The knowledge acquired should enable us to take care of ourselves. This is sustainable education" (Jon Jandain, TedX Chiang Mai, January 30, 2016). What Obama stated in his speech on the 4th of December 2013 regarding mobility is based on an assumption vastly different from the vision of Jon Jandai and of Thomas Jefferson who believed that farming, education and democratic liberty were indissolubly linked. And for democracy to thrive, people must be stable, economically independent and virtuous. Because farmers have the capacity to grow their own food, they have within their disposal the ability to sustain their lives without depending on outer sources. Dependency on industry for income in order to survive limits choices because now their survival is dependent on the type of capital they do not have at their disposal. Hence Jefferson saw, within agrarian communities, the qualities needed to promote true liberty. He writes, "Cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens. They are the most vigorous, the most independent, the most virtuous, and they are tied to their country, and wedded to its liberty and interests by the most lasting bonds" (cited by Berry 1996:143). By contrast he states, "I consider the class of artificers as the panders of vice, and the instruments by which the liberties of country are generally overturned" (cited by Berry 1996: 144). By artificers, according to Berry, Jefferson was referring to manufacturers whose interest were suspicious because their values were channeled toward "social mobility" and thus subject to self-interest (Berry 1996:144). Jefferson's assumption regarding democratic liberty and what it means to live in a healthy community is in opposition to Obama's conviction regarding social mobility as an instrument for the achievement of the American dreams. To Jefferson, the stickers are the ones who can create a better society while for Obama, the boomers hold promises. Hence both perceive the role of education very differently. Perhaps it is this knowledge derived from farmers that may enable self-awareness in modern education of its cultural assumption. When asked how they managed to survive in the midst of this economic challenge as rice farmers, most participants responded, "*por piang krub*" (live sufficiently). The *panoptic* maneuvering and '*por piang*' are rooted in two distinct genealogies. Perhaps through this awareness, the *panopticon* ceases its function.

Conclusion

The primary purpose in investigating the role of social mobility as facilitated by higher education is to seek an understanding of how institutions of higher learning have impacted the lives of Thai peasants and thus improved their economic and social status in Thai society. Based on the lived experiences of Thai farmers and related documents, researching the data revealed a declining demographic struggling to survive after many decades of development and rapid expansion of higher education institutions. The mobility as outcomes for this population exists among small pockets of the population while the vast majority has resigned themselves of hope for flourishing lives as farmers yielding to the pressure to invest in higher education for the future generation. The generations of agrarian culture, in their views, have been discriminated against in the name of development and progress. What has led Thai farmers to be where they currently are? The case studies point to two primary factors: access to higher education and the inability of higher education to meaningfully address the livelihood of local farmers. Bourdieu shows us how the lack of capital among this population has prevented them from increased access to higher education. In his perspective, higher education plays an important role in the reproduction of knowledge that feeds into the current structure, the disparity in our educational system. Symbolic violence, according to Bourdieu, perpetuates its own class system in order to maintain its power to dictate and to stratify. Arbitary knowledge holds that power for classification making mobility available for a minority of the population with sufficient capital who embrace the system of symbols and meanings imposed by the dominant culture. Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence opens another significant conversation about the lives of farmers pertaining to the dominant discourse. This leads to the second question of why higher education has played a limited role in addressing the needs of local farmers?

In answering this question the metaphor of *panopticon* is utilized. The emergence of the discourse on modernity sets the world in motion, that movement toward the glorification of the intellect and rationality as superior instruments with the potential to create a better world, a world with high yields, high productivity and hence, the promise of a better future. The episteme of modernity transformed itself into universal truth, establishing itself as the only viable authority toward how to live. This philosophical worldview sees other forms of knowledge and wisdom as invalid or inferior and thus emerged classifications of knowledge and culture. The primitives now have to catch up. The underdeveloped has to be modernized. Eurocentricism becomes metaphoric *panopticon* by seeing others regulating them into the path of modernity. Education is one of the primary tools in modernization. Education becomes a gatekeeper filtering the deserved from the non-deserved, the qualified from the non-qualified. Hence it has a disciplinary power to regulate. There is a close connection between education and economy, education and employment within the industrial context. It is interesting to note that in an agrarian society there is no such a

thing as unemployment. Employment or the lack thereof has the potential to affect one's sense of identity and social status. Education determines, to a large degree, qualifications for employment and therefore the means for livelihood. This is where the disciplinary power of education lies. The possibility for economic survival, for sustaining one's life, is in the hands of educational institutions in the context of our modern industrial society. The under-developed countries, in this case Thailand, with vast majority of farmers, are the observed, the regulated, and the disciplined. To frame it differently, here is where the transition from subjects to objects takes place through modernist interventions. Those with sufficient capitals (Bourdieu's social, cultural and economic capital) are disciplined into the modern society. The rest remains on the margin. In this process of delineation through modernity, the long history of knowledge within the agrarian culture has been systematically delegitimized.

Another very significant dimension to this *panoptic* exercise of Eurocentric modernity is the term social mobility itself. In an unexpected manner this research has observed explicit and implicit connections between the current situation of Thai farmers and attempts at facilitating social mobility by the government and higher educational institutions for the disadvantaged. Within the context of Thai peasants, mobility itself is problematic. Greenwood (1973) observes, the current economic system has little relevance for agrarian communities. Mobility may be seen as a form of discursive practice of modernity. Thai educational system, according to a senior Thai professor, "is modernity, is Eurocentric." Its ties to economics has preferential bias toward capitals and the monetary system. Thai farmers lack capitals. The modern form of educational system in Thailand is designed for the industrial society and not agrarian society. Unlike traditional Thai educational system, where knowledge was based on making a living through cultivating crops and growing rice, while learning took place through observations, examples and hands-on engagement in activities themselves. Social mobility as a discursive practice has displaced a demographic intellectually, economically and culturally because social mobility aims at integrating a population into a modern industrial world and in the process, delegitimizes farmers' sources of knowledge and their methods of learning. Based on his studies of farmers in Asia, Europe and Latin America, Greenwood (1973) suggests, the reason farmers remain poor is not due to their lack of ability or knowledge but primarily because they have been systematically exploited by capitalism. Perhaps it seems too ironic to use capitalism to fix a problem that would not have arisen without its (capitalism) existence in the very first place.

CHAPTER 8

Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations

Introduction

This final chapter provides conclusions of the study looking at issues regarding the struggles of local farmers and the role of higher education. It recaptures methods utilized to address objectives of these studies and states results such as ways in which higher education has facilitated social mobility. It restates the current status of Thai farmers, their views of higher education and the function of knowledge in general. The review is followed by a general discussion of the study. The chapter concludes with recommendations for ways in which higher education can better assist local Thai farmers.

The Issues

According to 2013 Agriculture Census, approximately a quarter of the population in Thailand works as farmers. According to the Agricultural Census, 28 percent of 5.9 million farmers' income level is at 100,001 baht while the rest has their income level below 50,000 per household. Average age of the head of the household is 54.47 years old. This average reflects national distribution for all farmers in Thailand. The figure for poor farmers with limited farmland shows a different picture all together. Poor farmers are categorized among the lowest 20 percent in income level. The average income per household is at 50,656 baht or 11,125 per person with average land size of 17.81. When it comes to loans, the National Statistics Service (2013) indicates 47.2 percent of farmers are in debt. Educational level of majority of farmers remains at the elementary level. Hence their income level is among the lowest in the country. Considering ways and means of facilitating social mobility for this population, it is a commonly held assumption that higher education can most effectively fulfill this task. With this as a backdrop, this study seeks the answer to the question, what role does higher education play in facilitating social mobility for Thai farmers?

The Method

To answer this question, this research utilizes information from historical texts, documents and qualitative data. Qualitative method (grounded theory) is the primary focus of this study. Snowball and convenient sampling methods were used to select participants. Qualitative data is based on four groups of participants. The first group consists of 67 farmers in 19 provinces in the north and the northeastern parts of

Thailand. In the second group there were six participants, children of farmers who have been through higher education. The third group has five participants. These were children of farmers who are currently pursuing higher education. The last group consists of eight participants. Two of these participants are reputable practitioners/farmers. One is an activist and the rest are academics. Historical and other related documents help to answer parts of the question regarding the role of higher education in facilitating social mobility. The primary source of data for this research is qualitative in nature. The questions the data seeks to answer are: 1) what is the current socio-economic condition of local Thai farmers, 2) how has higher education impacted social mobility of Thai farmers and 3) what do these data mean in terms of the role and function of education in the context of the lived experience of local farmers?

Results

1. What is the current condition of Thai farmers?

Qualitative data shows the following emerging themes: limited access to resources, increased expenses on farming, poor returns on investment and increased living expenses.

1.1 Limited access to resources: the size of the farmland, access to water and the type of soil impose limitations on the level of output for farmers. With expansion of family members among farmers the land size has generally been downsized. In 1954 the average agricultural land was 8.36 rai per person. In 1960 it decreased to 12.21 rai per person. By 2007 the average land size for agriculture was 2.67 per rai per person. Further from 1987 to 1993 approximately 18,000 rai of agriculture land were converted to residential estates, resorts, golf courses and factories. This shift is interesting in light of the impact on labor force for the country. Phasuk Phongpaijit estimated that approximately 800,000 agricultural households, or almost 20 percent of agricultural population are landless, while one to one and a half million households rent their lands or have insufficient land for cultivation to provide for their families. Hence for poor families, income per month per person is at 1,443 baht (cited by Jamaree Kiengthong, 2013).

1.2 Increased expenses on farming (fertilizer, pesticides, machinery, labor and seeds)

1.2.1 Increased use of chemical fertilizer. Local farmers report annual increase of the utilization of fertilizer. What was sufficient the year before is no longer sufficient for the current year. The quantity of chemical fertilizer per 1,000 kilograms is at 2,825,809 in 1993, 4,066,325 in 2003 and 6,242,144 in 2013. Hence the increment per rai is at 33.9 kilograms per rai in 1993, 41.8 in 2003 and 57.3 in 2013 (Greenpeace, 2008).Chemical fertilizers account for 18 percent of expenses related to rice production. In 2009 Thailand imported 3.8 million tons of chemical fertilizers worth 42 billion baht. In 2013 import of chemical fertilizers went up to 5.6

million tons worth 72 billion baht, an increase of 47 percent. Chemical fertilizers within the country fall under the monopoly of five major agrobusiness companies: 1) Chia Tai Company Limited (Charoen Pokphand Group) holding 28 percent of the market 2) Central Chemical Company Limited holding 25 percent 3) ICP Fertilizer 15 percent share of the market4) Yara International with 12 percent and finally 5) Terragro Fertilizer, 10 percent. These major companies control 90 percent of the fertilizer market and play a significant role in determining prices.

1.2.2 Increased use of pesticides. The use of pesticides was introduced in 1966. They were mostly imported from foreign countries. In 2000 Thailand imported 40,000 tons of pesticides worth 7 billion baht making Thailand fourth in the annual use of pesticides among 15 Asian countries and third when it comes to pesticides use per unit area. According to the Office of Agricultural Economics, the use of pesticides increased four-fold with more than 100,000 tons of active ingredients being imported to Thailand. According to Parinya Panuwet et al (2012), the explanation for the implementation of the use of pesticides are insect resistance, the resurgence of pests, the industrialization of crop production, the conversion of crop from one season to another to satisfy market demand despite changes in environmental conditions.

1.2.3 Increased use of machineries and hired labors. Almost all participants reported paying for tractors or labors at some level. Due to increasing competition, and the fact that the old tradition of assisting one another in planting and harvesting no longer exists, using heavy machineries to plow and harvest while paying for labors become inevitable. Local farmers report paying 300 baht per person per day for labors excluding lunches, an expected protocol.

1.2.4 Increased expenses on seeds. Buying seeds is a modern phenomenon among Thai farmers. This practice did not exist in the past where seeds were preserved by local farmers. However in the past two decades, markets for maize seeds come under the control of six major corporations: Charoen Pokphand, Monsanto, Cargill, Pioneer, Pacific, and Syngenta. The corporation between private sectors and the government has resulted in the production of hybrid seeds that cannot be replanted in subsequent seasons. Multinational corporations, the US government and the World Trade Organization have been pressuring Thailand to establish laws governing intellectual property in seed production while promoting genetically modified seeds. The market size for rice seeds has the potential to generate up to 67 billion baht if patent law could be established (Witoon Liemchamroon, 2011).

1.3 Poor returns on investment. Farmers consistently complain of high investment for the production of rice and poor returns. The average cost for the production per rai among participants is approximately 3,000 – 4,000 baht, while the gross income per rai is at 6,000 to 6,500 per rai. The returns, according to participants, were better under Yingluck's administration. Expenses include labors, seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, fuel, transportation and the use of machineries.

1.4 Rising cost of living. Farming is not what it used to be and changes to their lifestyle are significant. Crops are no longer regional, and farmers no longer have control over their products, because the outcomes of their labors are controlled by a market mechanism which is being regulated and perhaps manipulated from a far distance. Production mechanism is currently connected to patrols, transportation, credits, loans, currency exchange, outlets, advertising, packaging, chemical factories, legal contracts and market systems. These factors impose restraining limitations on farmers. Patel said it well when he writes, "The business of farming is, at the end of the day, constrained by the playing-field of the market. What this language hides, though, is that the terrain of the market isn't so much a playing-field as a razor's edge" (2007:7). Currently farmers have become mere providers of labors often on their very own land. "Yet farmers are willing to subject themselves to these new farming arrangements because they have so little choice. With banks wielding the threat of foreclosure, any kind of farming, even the kind of farming that asset-strips the soil, is preferable to no farming at all" (Patel, 2007:7).

2. What is the impact of higher education on farmers' social mobility?

Among the 67 farmers interviewed, six completed higher education. The rest of the participants were mostly at primary level. Of the six, four were socially mobile both in terms of vertical mobility and relative economic mobility. Of these four, three were employed in professions other than agriculture while continuing to take care of their rice fields. One of these four remains a rice farmer and is the only farmer without other form of employments who experiences vertical mobility. Hence even among this population, vertical mobility seems closely relate to employments.

Among farmers' children, 38 of 66 who are currently working have no college degrees. They mostly provide labors and return to help their parents with farming. The 28 who completed higher education were employed in various capacities. Vertical mobility takes place only among those who completed higher education. For participants who grew up in farmers' households and completed higher education, none of them are in agriculture. All of them experience different levels of vertical mobility. Hence higher education has increased possibilities of vertical mobility among these participants through employment with the exception of one who remains in agriculture.

Based on the above information, what do farmers think of higher education in relation to social mobility? To understand farmers' view presupposes a perspective on the context of the local farmers. Most farmers, especially those within the younger age group, are determined to send their children to pursue higher education. The primary reason has to do with their pessimism regarding the future of rice farming. In the past few decades life has become harder for farmers and hence, for the sake of the children, a college degree becomes a viable option for a more secure future through employments. Securing a job as civil servants implies at the same time benefits that

can further enhance family stability. However they do not see college degrees as means that have the potential to benefit the everyday life of farmers. A college degree often implies migrating out of the village and entering a career other than farming. Most farmers interviewed admit that higher education is one of the most expensive investments. A school teacher related how by the time she graduated from her undergraduate program, all the cows that her parents raised were gone. Some sell their lands while others take out loans. Families without children were having a much easier time. Life becomes very manageable when they do not have to send their children to college/universities. Besides expenses, getting admitted into good programs becomes a real challenge. Many students currently pursuing their undergraduate degrees relay how they were among very few students from their villages getting admitted to universities. Two major challenges were distance and time. For many students, the further their homes from the district, the lesser their chances of getting into good universities. Second is their need to help their parents with farming. They neither have the time or money for private tutoring like other students in the city. So while taking out loans, they end up in regional universities of lesser reputation whereby upon their graduation, their chance of getting a good job is significantly reduced. Further, education does not always translate to employment. In such a case they return home to do farming but with the obligation of having to pay for the student loan.

Children of farmers, those who have earned academic degrees and those currently pursuing higher education, acknowledge positive contributions of higher education when it comes to social status within the community and financial stability. However, this acknowledgement comes with cautionary reminders of possible limitations. While acknowledging these contributions, there is a deep respect for farmers' cultural practices and values that leads them to maintain their identity as farmers' children. "Once a farmer, always a farmer." Nevertheless, they point out that knowledge acquired through higher education does not contribute to the lives of farmers. These participants no longer engage in rice farming, although some still help their parents on occasions or employ others to plant and harvest them. When it comes to farmers themselves, not much in terms of opinions regarding higher education were expressed except that it is expensive, it is the most viable option for the future generation and that it is challenging for their children to get admitted into their desirable university/major. Three farmers with an undergraduate degree expressed their appreciation for what they learned. A leader within a village in Isan discussed how knowledge helps him better manage his rice production. Another farmer who earned a degree expressed her appreciation for the program focusing on sufficiency. Most others were not able to show positive contributions to their everyday lived experience. However, their emerged during the interviews a particular form of knowledge transmitted through non-formal means that provided their families with

the ability to sustain themselves from generation to generation. This knowledge is, in their opinion, slowly being replaced by modern science.

What do farmers think of the role of higher education in facilitating social mobility? Social mobility that higher education seeks to enhance focuses on vertical mobility. Within the context of Thai farmers (the 67 participants), higher education is a path toward a career other than farming, and this career path is a promise of a better future economically (vertical mobility) thus enhancing one's status within the society. However, most participants prefer the life of farmers if the economic system would work in their favor, allowing them to working in the fields and live a life of independence through the practice of sufficiency. They prefer to remain independent in terms of occupation. Hence if mobility implies success, how farmers define success becomes an ironic twist to the function of higher education in facilitating social mobility. For farmers, the term success is connected to being independent, hard work, sufficiency and the ability to take care of the family. Success is not defined through acquisition and accumulation of wealth. A college degree is helpful only to the extent that the person can care for his family. While social status may have some appeal to the younger generation of farmers, the concept of sufficiency remains because sufficiency implies freedom and the ability to be independent. As such, to be free is to disengage from social norms established by the industrial society. This act of resistance enables them to maintain themselves and live independently. In an ironic sense, it requires negating social mobility in order to live a meaningful agrarian lifestyle. Farming and living sufficiently are their ways of being in the world. Success is aligning themselves with the season of life and nature, living in simplicity.

Discussion

Based on participants' experiences and the six cases presented, higher education plays an important role in facilitating social mobility. While horizontal mobility takes place among farmers who did not complete tertiary education, those with university degrees gain employment and hence attain vertical mobility. It is clear from these participants that higher education does facilitate social mobility. However it is important to recognize that of the 67 participants, only six earned their academic degrees. Among children of farmers, even in the midst of mandatory 12 years of education, less than 50 percent earned their university degrees. Further, the mobility they experience is limited in scope due to access to quality education. Among children of farmers in higher education, only two were admitted into reputable institutions (Chiang Mai and Khon Kaen Universities). Most end up in Rajabhat University system. While quality is a relative term, the more reputable institutions often provide better advantages when it comes to employment. This limitation is reflected in the fields they get admitted into since none were studying engineering, medicine, veterinary, law etc. They mostly earned degrees in education, accounting, nursing, business administration etc. Hence access to quality education and the limited ability

to address the lives of local farmers meaningfully are questions that beg for further inquiries.

How do we come to understand the rapid expansion of higher education as the essential tool for national development and the current status of farmers with declining relative mobility, lower social status (being perceived as uneducated), average educational level at primary six? Sixty years after development, they struggle harder to make ends meet. Yet within this constraint, most invest heavily in their children's education (from primary to tertiary level). Even so, access to quality education is limited which impacts their employments. As Bourdieu pointed out, cultural and social capitals influence accessibility significantly. Local farmers in general lack sufficient cultural and social capitals and as such their children's opportunities for mobility are restricted. But what contributes to limited access to higher education? Bourdieu suggests that education, as a system, reproduces social class, and this reproduction is achieved through what he termed symbolic violence. A culture arbitrarily imposes certain values, with inherited symbols and meanings, on a population. Internalization of this imposition results in the drive toward its acquisition (in this case, higher education as a commodity that alters one's identity within a social structure). Once a cultural value, arbitrarily defined, is endorsed, those with capital achieve rapid mobility while those lacking, lag behind. Within the Thai educational system, farmers lack capital and hence only a limited number make it through the system. They lack time because they have to help their parents. They lack the culture of education whereby their parents could nurture and support them. They lack financial resources to invest in quality education. They lack money to get extra after school help so they can be more competitive. In approximation, they are at a distance that disadvantages them from access to available resources. On top of all these insufficiencies, the system leans toward those with capital. More funding is invested in universities in Bangkok. The urban area has more qualified school teachers, university professors with a higher number of PhDs and those with higher academic ranking. Standardized national examinations are designed with focuses that gravitate toward the industrial society. The symbolism of industrial success and high productivity through university degrees have a significant impact on farmers' population, hence the transition from agrarian society toward industrial identity. Hence the symbolism that induces and the lack of sufficient capital to attain consequently ends with minimal achievement in light of that vertical allures.

Besides limited access, there remains the question of limited ability of higher education to address the needs of local farmers meaningfully. Utilizing Foucault's genealogy as the tool for analysis, this study asks the question, how do farmers get to the place where they currently are? Genealogy as a tool explores changes over time, the guiding episteme of a particular time frame that guides the formation of the dominant discourse, the place of power, the identification of subject and object of socialization, the mechanism to generate norms, and finally, the disciplinary process.

Genealogical analysis shows the gradual shift from agrarian society to industrial through the process of modernization, guided by modernity as the episteme of the era. Modernity exerts itself to be the only viable form of reliable knowledge that has the potential to transform the world to the new utopia through science and technology within the new democratic society (modern society). Together with emerging economic theories of capitalism, exacerbated by neo-liberal economic policy, comes the drive toward maximum productivity, and subsequently, the unrestrained exploitation of natural resources. This method of quantifying success permeates modern society. It promotes greater accumulations and the general incline toward higher status within the society. Success implies better income and better standing within the society. It is within this context that higher education plays an important role in facilitating social mobility to enhance economic growth and social standing through career change. Here productivity has become the norm for success. University degrees become the venues through which this path becomes a possibility. Without higher education, employment promising competitive salaries become limited. Higher education plays a dual role in nurturing the dominant discourse. It endorses modernity as the primary viable option for a reliable source of knowledge. At the same time it becomes the primary gatekeeper for the attainment of this knowledge needed to acquire employments in the modern society. As such higher education becomes panoptic in exerting its disciplinary power. Within this dominant discourse, farmers' worldview and knowledge are delegitimized. The agrarian society operates on the principle of sufficiency. Farmers practice subsistence farming. Simplicity becomes the norm. It is within this cultural framework that success is defined for them. However, since the 1st National Economic and Social Development Plan, this development ideology based on modernity exerts its force seeking domination of knowledge leading to the culture of high productivity and high yields. Higher education seeks to facilitate social mobility for farmers within the conceptual framework of the global economy. Yet it is this global economy that removes farmers from the fundamental core of their community culture. Their labors and their yields are under the regulation of market mechanism from across the world they know nothing about. From the language of genealogy, they have been disciplined into the industrial world, into the global economy. And education is an important part of the disciplinary process.

At the very same time the random emergence of the pursuit of the principle of sufficient economy and community culture by various academic institutions, together with deep cultural values, still present among the younger generation of farmers. These are hopeful signs that remnants of farmers' identity and their discursive practices still remain a force of resistance against the mainstream trend of higher education.

What might be an appropriate response to this domination of knowledge? In **The History of Sexuality Volume 2** (1990b) Foucault introduces the concepts of

‘aesthetic existence’ and the ‘history of the present’ as the natural outcomes of genealogy. History of the present refers to the ability to come into the moment, living in the present. This happens because of one’s awareness of the history that has led one to this particular location, sociologically, economically, philosophically, ideologically etc. In other words, it is a historical information derived from genealogical understanding that helps one realizes reasons one is at this particular social location. It is the realization that the process leading to the slow disappearance of subjects is based on social constructions, and not based on linear progressive development of truth. Such a realization liberates one from the constraint imposed through the process of normalization. Aesthetic existence is now possible because in this place the self can return as subject making decisions that are not being constrained by the dominant discourse. Aesthetic existence, in Foucault’s words, refers to:

> An analysis that relates to what we are willing to accept in our world, to accept, to refuse, to change, both in ourselves and in our circumstances. In sum, it is a question of searching for another kind of critical philosophy. Not a critical philosophy that seeks to determine the conditions and the limits of our possible knowledge of the object, but a critical philosophy that seeks the conditions and the indefinite possibilities of transforming the subject, of transforming ourselves (Foucault, 1997: 179).

The genealogy of Thai higher education within the context of Thai farmers has revealed a history driven by particular philosophical and economic assumptions. Realizing modernity and the implemented modernization as constructs creates the possibility of aesthetic existence. These experiences of farmers, within the context of higher education, are reminiscent of Witayakorn Chiengkul’s (2012) Red Royal Poinciana readily available and in abundance that the intellectual communities often walk past. “Why not take in its beauty,” the author challenged, “instead of just walking by?”

> The bright red Royal Poinciana
> Beautifully decorating the blue sky
> People walking pass,
> What are they searching for?
>
> Is knowledge on sell in this place?
> What sacrifices are needed to gain?
> And in its most luxurious form, what is the cost
> So I can force my dad to sell his rice field in exchange.
>
> I came, I saw and I was defeated
> For repeatedly being described as a fool.
> The rhythm here isn't as comforting as our rice field.
> If you can't deal with their style they smile at you with contempt.

This grand institution,
Will I ever gain anything substantive?
If you have nothing to give,
Better that you refrain than complain.

I was young, ignorant and curious.
I thus came in search of meaning.
I hope to gather lots of things
But at the end I gained a piece of paper.

Darkness hovers over this expansive institution
And here I am, lost and alone
Searching for knowledge that keeps eluding
Days in and days out lost count of time.

The bright red Royal Poinciana
Beautifully decorating the blue sky,
It's in abundance and is enough for everyone.
Why not take in its beauty instead of just walking by?
(Witayakorn Chiengkul, 2012)

This poetry, "The Illegitimate Institutional Song," by Witayakorn Chiengkul seems an appropriate invitation for our educational system to create an alternative that could potentially result in Foucault's aesthetic living realizing the beauty of diversification beyond the legitimation of monocentricism.

The practical question at this junction is, what are ways by which Thai farmers as subjects could regain their place within the society? What role can higher education play in facilitating this transition for farmers' communities?

Thai Academics and Reputable Farmers' Perspectives on the Role of Higher Education and Local Farmers

This section takes into consideration voices of local academics and reputable farmers in analyzing the role of higher education in relation to Thai farmers. The contents are based on interviews with eight participants that fit this category. Their names and areas of expertise were identified through literature search and other referrals. Two of the practitioners were recommended based on many decades of experience working in the field. One of the interviewees currently serves as a professor in the department of sociology and anthropology. Two are retired professors. Two serve as instructors in provincial universities. Six of the eight participants are well known national figures as scholars, activists or agriculturists. Five of the eight interviews lasted two hours. The rest were shorter interviews that lasted approximately 30 minutes. With three of the participants, the interviews were conducted in three separate time frames.

To the question, what has higher education done for Thai peasants, all participants expressed significant inadequacy on the part of the institutions in general. For them, attempts have mostly been superficial. Increasing access has only reached a minority of those on the margin. The educational system as a whole has failed to address the needs of local farmers. The qualitative data based on interviews shows two emerging themes that help to explain why higher education has not been as effective. These two are: 1) The lack of understanding of the lived experiences of local farmers by institutions of higher learning and 2) the dominating discourse of Westernism/modernity permeating Thai higher education.

1. Thai higher education and the lack of understanding of the lived experiences of local farmers

One very consistent statement, regarding the problems of higher education in addressing the situation of local farmers, is the lack of understanding and attempts to engage the lived experiences of local farmers in order to be better equipped to address their needs. This concern is expressed by six of the eight participants. A retired economic professor described how our educational system teaches everything else but the everyday living of local Thais.

> We do not know how they live, how they earn their living. We know nothing about local community culture…This type of knowledge is slowly disappearing. There is no course on everyday life of local communities. It does not exist. One day I took a Japanese professor to observe a community culture in Sakon Nakhon. We asked villagers to describe to us their ways of living and we took part in a religious ritual (พิธีเรียกขวัญ). The Japanese professor asked if this type of course is being taught at Chulalongkorn University. I told him, I do not think so (ABK1).

An academician from Ubon Ratchathani who has been working closely with local farmers expressed her opinion:

> The world of higher education and the world of farmers are two very distinct worlds. Higher education has alienated itself from the communities and lived in a separate world. It is not as if the two worlds intersect. To what extend does higher education understand farmers, agriculturists, local communities? I dare say, very little. There might be some from the sociology department that does field works but very few. It is almost in extinction. On the other hand what can higher education offer farmers (pertaining to their livelihood)? Do we really know how to farm? Personally I think most of us know very little. We pretty much live in our own world. Farmers live in their world. Even regional colleges and universities do not serve the needs of local farmers (AU1).

Because of the lack of attempts to seek a thorough understanding of farmers' life and cultural practices, the solutions are not in alignment with their concerns. Not just the living conditions but the ability to see farmers as subjects that do contribute to the body of knowledge regarding farming, living, and life itself allowing local voices

to be a part of institutions of higher learning. However, at present, farmers are objects to be disciplined into the modern world and modern ways of being.

Agrarian worldview is a commonly held worldview among farmers. Within this worldview, nature is sacred. Community works together collectively helping one another. Labor is not measured through a monetary system. Competition is a foreign concept, but not cooperation. The world is viewed through seasonal rhythms and not a progressive linear path. Modernity has reset the mechanism of farming through machines and technology aiming for greatest yields within a competitive system. From this perspective, nature is to be exploited. Hence these are two very incompatible worldviews. But somehow modernity has become a dominant discourse claiming singularity of truth, and by so doing marginalizes all other forms of knowledge. Higher education, for the most part, has been on the side of modernity with the ultimate aim of modernization guided by the assumption that modern is not only better but it is the only possible way to move forward (ABK1; ABK2 and ACM2). Thus, farmers have been designated as poor and uneducated. "But farmers are not ignorant or lack the capacity to think for themselves. They are very smart," stated an academician from Isan (AU1). When government officers arrived with a plan to modernize farming methods, farmers do not always rigidly follow the designated steps. Farmers are very innovative. They are selective based on their experiences. They will observe and find what works best for them. Often it results in a more hybrid approach to agriculture, an integration between the modern and traditional methods. "We think that farmers are poor uneducated people who can be easily manipulated. But in reality they learn to integrate new knowledge and adapt" (AU1).

Because of the lack of understanding, a common solution by higher education is to educate the 'underprivileged' about the modern world and modern economy in order to help them cope with changes. According to an academician in a public university in Khon Kaen, the rapid expansion of institutions of higher education creates a place that produces graduates serving the interests of industries. Higher education is creating labors that feed the industrial system. As a result, the number of students in humanity and social science drop dramatically. "They do not see any value in learning how to become human" (AKK1). Most students within Rajabhat's system major in science, management, accounting and hotel management because these majors offer better promise for a better future than studying agriculture.

This observation implies ways in which higher education navigates their students from agriculture to industries. Higher education, while seeking to offer a better future for the less fortunate students, redirects them away from their roots as farmers and agriculturists. To be educated, is to be educated out of farming and educated into the world of industries, technologies and corporations. The promise of a better future by higher education steers them away from their ancestral cultural heritage and livelihood. Within the new world that is made possible by higher

education, individuals are taught to consume not just products, but signs, because signs differentiate them from others. Signs can set them apart or raise their social status. Products are no longer just merely for consumption but have been imputed with signs and symbols filled with meaning pertaining to social hierarchy and the sense of self-worth (ACM1). But this social construction of "better" is a classification based on modernity.

There are other academics in the field of education and otherwise who recognize the need to take the population seriously if education is to be a channel of transformation. Paulo Freire, in **Pedagogy of the Oppressed** (2003), constantly warns educators of the oppressive nature of the banking model in education. Speaking of the banking model he states: "Education as the exercise of domination stimulates the credulity of students, with the ideological intent of indoctrinating them to adapt to the world of oppression" (p. 62). Banking presumes that knowledge is a gift to be bestowed by the knowledgeable upon those who know nothing. It projects an absolute ignorance onto others. Their bodies and minds become the location where knowledge can be deposited and the deposited knowledge pacifies them into accepting the domination, depriving them from creativity and critical thinking. In exploring postcolonial challenges of education, Tikly (2009) speaks of the location of knowledge as a primary place of exploration. It starts with the recognition of the 'other' as producer of knowledge. "It means recognizing the silences, gaps, and omissions within and between hegemonic and counter hegemonic system of knowledge in order to unearth alternative ways of knowing the world" (p. 41). There are a multitude of voices that need to be heard, and education needs to construct "a hermeneutics that makes it possible for the needs, aspirations and practices of a community to be understood by another" (p. 41). Within the context of Thai peasants, Chattip Nartsupha (2014) points out how the dominant discourse has always placed them under the category of being ignorant and uneducated. He urges that in order to move forward, their voices need to be heard, their culture to be appreciated, their ways of living to be honored and their identity to be respected. The reason is that this often neglected population has rich resources and a wealth of wisdom that can offer significant contributions to our society (p. 178).

2. <u>The influence of modernity within Thai higher education</u>

One possible reason higher education has not attempted to reach a deeper understanding of local farmers might be because of modernity's claim as the only legitimate source of knowledge. The endorsement of this knowledge has been reproduced through higher education as a means toward the modernization of Thailand. A social activist (ACM2) points out that higher education often takes modernity as the objective truth instead of one of the many possible constructs of which an agrarian worldview remains another possibility. Every participant points to changes taking place within the economic system that significantly impact local

farmers negatively. Two of the participants specifically identified the 1960s as pivotal during the leadership of Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat and the 1st National Economic and Development Plan. Another significant date was the 1980s during the Green Revolution (ABK1, ABK2) whereby farmers were encouraged to plant eucalyptus trees and cash crops under the leadership of Prime Minister Kriengsak Chamanun (AKK1). The negative effects on farmers based on the 1st National Economic and Development Plans became very obvious in the lives of local farmers during the 1980s.

> Although capitalism came to Thailand as early as the reign of Rama V, but the impact was significantly felt during Sarit's era and the economic and development Plan. The United States and the World Bank exerted great influence during Sarit's premiership. The United States was behind Sarit's (administration) and the economy was greatly impacted focusing on production for capital accumulation (ABK1).

This major change had modernization as its impetus. "By embracing modernization we have come to identified ourselves as inferior, as an 'under' developed country" (ABK1). This development ideology formed a major part of the Thai educational system during this era as well. A retired sociology professor stated emphatically, "Thai educational system is modernity, it is Westernism" (ABK2).When asked the extent to which Thai's higher education has been influenced by modernity, his response was, "Higher education in Thailand is the immediate outcome of modernity." Modernity is not negative in itself except when it turns hegemonic, and that is exactly what has happened in Thailand.

Through legitimization of this modern knowledge by higher education, farming methods have been radically altered and thus, the ways of living of local farmers. This is another indirect impact of higher education on Thai farmers. Through modernization and the promotion of monoculture, subsistence farming was in decline (ACM1). The focus is now on maximization of production for the greatest possible profit. Farming is no longer for internal consumption but the primary source of economic gain exchanging crops for cash. "This has a devastating impact on the environment," stated a farmer (ACM2) who has been promoting sustainable living in Mae Tang. "Bio-diversification is the very foundation of nature and our environment. By promoting mono-culture, we are slowly destroying our earth and the very source of production of our nutrient." Within this context, life becomes very difficult for households with small pieces of land (AKK1). The idea of farmers working primarily in the rice field is no longer a reality. Due to the economic shift, farmers are forced to engage in various means to generate income such as providing labor, doing construction work, running a small grocery store, or plowing fields with their tractors (for wealthier farmers) for extra income. The definition of farming itself has changed due to capitalism (AU1). To add on to the current situation, free trade is rubbing salt to the wound. The neo-liberal economic policy turns agriculture to agro-industry, and

thus emerged the concept of contract farming whereby it appears as if farmers own lands and are in charge of their production but in reality, they are nothing but laborers in their own fields. "In contract farming, farmers do not invest financially. Investments and resources come from corporations. Farmers invest their labor and thensell the products to corporations, who then deduct all expenses until in the end what they receive in return is nothing more than daily wages" (ACM1). In a sense farmers are hired to work on their very own land (ACM1).

A well-known farmer moaned the loss of what once was:

> I grew up witnessing the beauty of biodiversity within our surrounding. This land used to be abundant with natural resources. But now nature is in declined. Twenty or so years of modernization and things are never the same. Things have changed 180 degree within the past 20-30 years…we accepted modernity indiscriminately without understanding the limits or the possible effects of 'modern understanding of agriculture.' Many changes came through the provincial district office promoting modern knowledge of farming, which is monoculture (AB1).

Another rich cultural loss is the slow disappearance of religious rituals relating to rice planting. Traditionally, before planting rice in April or May, farmers would participate in a religious ritual to honor the spirits of their ancestors. A certain piece of property called 'common property' is designated within every village. This sacred location belongs to ancestral spirits. However, changes in the economic system result in declined participation by younger generations who normally migrate to the cities for jobs. Further, because the cultivation of land now utilizes more advanced technologies, the concept of sacred is slowly being taken over by modernity. Nothing is sacred any more except efficiency and the ability to produce (AKK1). A well-known social activist in Chiang Mai makes a distinction between the two operating worldviews, farmers' and that of modernity. With emerging domination of modernity in Thailand, that which is sacred is slowly disappearing. The belief of sacredness in nature has a strong preservative function that protects the environment from being exploited. When nature is treated as 'thou' respect leads to preservation. This has been a strong tradition among farmers in an agrarian system. However modernity has systematically removed 'sacred' from nature, environment and everyday life. It has been classified as superstition. Anything that lacks scientific basis through scientific methods is not worth preserving. While in an agrarian system human beings are considered parts of nature itself, modernity results in bifurcation. Nature is now treated as an object to be exploited for maximum production. According to this social activist, Thai people used to call river "mae nam" (mother of water) and earth "mae thoranee" (mother of earth). However, without this anthropomorphic designation of the 'mother' prefix, water and earth can be bought and sold, abused and exploited (ACM2).

This is so because modernity has separated mind from matter, spirit from the material world, and thus the natural world is viewed primarily as objects. Citing

professor Tu Weiming, a senior fellow of Asia Center at Harvard, who observes that "modernity is not wrong in itself but wrong in its inability for human to experience in matter that which embodies the spirit" (ACM2). In modernity, materialism becomes the foundation for how one approaches the world deprived of the sacred. Transcendence has been exorcised from the natural world, and the world is primarily natural resources waiting to be taken and exploited for human consumption. The rate with which we destroy our natural environment is alarming, and perhaps eschatological moving toward the extinction of human species. "Modern science has no room for the sacred but this is not so with quantum physics" (ACM2). Modernity has been utilized in the name of development to change the world. Within development ideology traditional belief system is viewed as primitive and outdated. Modern education promotes this assumption by asserting modernity as the core worldview without realizing the unavoidable destructive force of modernity within our community. This is most obvious in the capitalist economy as the driving force of modern economy. Capitalism has significantly impacted the world of agriculture. First it was commercialization through the production of food. Then it became food that feeds cattle for market economy, and finally for fuel. The speed of destruction through deforestation is unprecedented. The economics of modernity that have dominated our entire social system are unsustainable (ACM2). The solution is not merely how to redistribute wealth as promoted by neo-Marxists ideology because it is still framed within the context of development ideology on the basis of modernity. It has to be more radical, a surgical intervention of sorts that really places modernity in its place. This is the reason why it is important to reappraise the concept of community culture because villagers, for generations and generations, have been able to live in harmony with nature and maintain a sustainable life. There are aspects of their culture that are redemptive for our current society. It is important to reappraise and adapt their core beliefs for modern society as possible solutions to our present crisis. "The very problem of higher education is the term uni-versity itself. It is 'uni' and not multi-versity" (ACM2).

The concern regarding the role of development, as stated by participants, is confirmed by other post-colonial scholars as well. According to Z. Sardar (1999) and G. Rist (1997), the concept of development as an instrument for social change is itself Eurocentric. Tikly (2009) states, "the notion of 'development' is part of the Western 'religion of modernity." He further points out, "the unshakable Western view of progress and social change has roots in the European enlightenment…used in Western modernist thought to legitimize such disparate projects as liberalism, Marxism, fascism, and imperialism" (p. 30). Interestingly, the idea of development that has been translated into the context of gender languages as 'women in development' has traces of modernist agenda written all over. The UN and the World Bank have been pushing the concept of rights, mostly based on the dominant discourse reinforcing a homogenous worldview by imposing a Western conception of women's

empowerment focusing on individual rights and sex equality (Tikly, 2009). But as Simmons (1997) observed, these development projects "flooded their land, destroyed their forests, separated children from parents and grandparents, divided men from women, and ridiculed their religions, philosophies and ways of life" (p. 249). Connecting this to education, Tikly (2009) connects development to Western episteme that "forms the basis for the structure and content of formal education around the world" (p. 41). The legacies of colonialism, to Nina Asher (2009),are embedded in our educational system, curriculum and methods of teaching. Hence the way to move forward may lie in recovering the heritage and history. Speaking of indigenous knowledge, Sardar (1999) writes:

> Resistance to Eurocentrism, and hence development, can only come from non-Western concepts and categories. The non-Western cultures and civilizations have to reconstruct themselves, almost brick by brick, in accordance with their own world views and according to their own norms and values. This means that the non-West has to create a whole new body of knowledge, rediscover its lost and suppressed intellectual heritage, and shape a host of new disciplines (p. 57).

Perhaps participants' concerns for local farmers are best captured in words of one of a well-respected farmer in northern Thailand who is known for sustainable living:

> Education in general prepares people for cheap labors. It takes away creativity from local farmers. Farmers used to know how to manage themselves. Now they don't even know how to make a hoe. They used to be able to perform multiple tasks and produce materials needed for their consumption (weave their own baskets to collect vegetable etc.). Now they have been acculturated to buy products. In the past farmers could take one look at the type of soil and know exactly what to plant. Now they wait for experts to instruct on the combination of chemical fertilizers for maximization. Farmers were well educated within their socioeconomic and cultural context but their form of knowledge has been marginalized. Farmers' educational process never ends. They keep experimenting and solving problems. However education keeps promoting how to live successfully within the current economic system by following certain standards and criteria.
>
> Formal education has forced a limit on freedom for farmers by emphasizing specialization, specialization provides employment and employment is converted into a monetary system. Monetary dependency favors quantification of its values. Quantification is bias toward those who have the potential for maximization. Thus freedom decreases while dependency increases. Hence democracy is an illusion because as long as certain voices carry more weight than others, true freedom is called into question. Higher education at the moment serves corporations by training students to constantly be in compliant with the system that serves a few people running corporations. Hence higher education is about employment and employment is about cash flow that profits the elites.

> The corporate and government promote monoculture while farmers in the past grew 30 different types of crops. They did not go hungry. Now they are stuck with one type of crops. And thus mega-corporations dictate for us what to eat by what the markets make available. Think about water bottles. How have we come to the place where educated people pay money for bottle water where the bottles are a lot more expensive than water itself? And plastic bottles weigh heavy on the environment while at the same time take years to decompose.
>
> At the core of life is diversification. Current educational and economic system takes away diversification by promoting monoculture agriculturally and metaphorically. That is how life gets terminated. Education needs to get rid of a core curriculum and offer diversified curriculums that are regionally informed. Villagers need to come together and decide how best to educate their children in order to live meaningfully within their communities and natural environment. Farmers learn on a regular basis how to live with their lands and survive solving problems and create communities. Education, for farmers, is ongoing through practices (ACM3).

The collective wisdom from academicians and practitioners seems to suggest the need to move toward diversification in higher education by acknowledging the legitimization of other forms of knowledge that have existed in Thailand for generations, and upon this basis negotiates with modernity in order to facilitate better living conditions for local farmers. This process of re-polycentralization of knowledge implies acknowledging their social status within the society as well, whereby they are no longer categorized as poor and uneducated. By deconstructing modernity and legitimizing traditional heritage and wisdom, social mobility takes place for local farmers because subsistent living is no longer the way of the primitives, and local knowledge is no longer placed in a binary opposite within a philosophical location. Without deconstructing modernity, the possibility of legitimizing other forms of knowledge could hardly be achievable since the dominant discourse lays claims of truth and its superiority.

Recommendations for Practice

The followings are six recommendations based on results of this research and experts' opinions (scholars and notable farmers interviewed) on possible alternatives within the scope of higher education that could be achieved through the faculty of education nationwide. These recommendations seek to address the issue of accessibility by first creating an alternative to the imposed symbolic violence, while promoting reemergence of the agrarian culture. It is believed that by creating an alternative, it has the potential to relocate imposed symbols and meanings within their appropriate context while navigating one to find a sense of mobility within the agrarian philosophy in this modern world.

1. Promoting King Bhumibol Adulyadej's Poly-culture Method of Farming within the Context of Sufficient Economy

One of the primary findings of this research is the recognition that the current offerings of mainstream higher education in Thailand, in promoting development through modernization, has resulted in greater deterioration of both the economic and social status of local farmers. The alternative, as suggested by King Bhumibol Aduyadej's farming method under the principle of sufficiency, offers a viable option that is cost effective and sustainable within the current economic system. This alternative has been endorsed by a number of academic institutions establishing special programs for farmers, and has proven to be effective. Besides, there are 180 centers around the country that promote agricultural practices using the principle of sufficient economy, including many well-known practitioners endorsing this principle as an effective alternative for farmers' and the next generation of farmers (Manit Kitijoonjit, 2013).

Integrated small farming as promoted by King Bumibhol Adulyadej has been proven to be a viable method of farming that has the potential to generate sufficient income for farmers' household. The principle of sufficiency offers an alternative to the current monoculture approach of farming whereby personal needs have been traded into the hands of corporations. Thus, farmers are forced to render control of the ability to provide for their needs to external forces, the industrial market. The principle of sufficiency reclaims control through appropriate use of land. In articulating this principle Prasopchoke Mongsawad (2010) writes:

> "Sufficiency economy" is a philosophy that stresses the middle path as the overriding principle for appropriate conduct by the populace at all levels. This applies to conduct at the level of the individual, families, and communities, as well as to the choice of a balanced development strategy for the nation so as to modernize in line with the forces of globalization while shielding against inevitable shocks and excesses that arise. "Sufficiency" means moderation and due consideration in all modes of conduct, as well as the need for sufficient protection from internal and external shocks. To achieve this, the application of knowledge with prudence is essential. In particular, great care is needed in the utilization of untested theories and methodologies for planning and implementation. At the same time, it is essential to strengthen the moral fiber of the nation, so that everyone, particularly political and public officials, technocrats, businessmen and financiers, adhere first and foremost to the principles of honesty and integrity. In addition, a balanced approach combining patience, perseverance, diligence, wisdom and prudence is indispensable to cope appropriately with the critical challenges arising from extensive and rapid socio-economic, environmental and cultural changes occurring as a result of globalization (pp. 127-28).

According to this theory of agriculture, farmers are encouraged to go through three stages. In the first stage, the farm is divided into four parts: growing rice (30 percent), growing vegetable (30 percent), water reservoir (30 percent) and residential related (10 percent). When food security is in place, farmers are encouraged in the second stage to move to commercial activities. The third stage is the expansion of production through establishing cooperation within the community through forming cooperative stores (Prasopchoke Mongsawad, 2010).

There are numerous examples of the success of integrated farming. National Economic and Social Development Bank has documented such stories at various sites in Thailand, such as Ban Moung Wan and Ban Koak Chareon Villages in Burerum, Ban Nong Glang Dong, Prajuabkirikan (2005) and Buasai (2004). Reflecting on the principle of sufficiency in Thailand, Paulius Kuncinas, managing editor for Asia Oxford Business Group states, "For decades, the developing world has been increasingly disenchanted by the Anglo-Saxon economic model, finding that the overemphasis on financial indicators and the lack of regard for people, the land, water, health and culture run counter to the long-term interests of society (**TheNation**, March 2, 2017: para 8). "Thailand," he continues, "recognized early on that other, more superior ways of organization may exist and has been a leading advocate of models that incorporate these views. The world is now catching up" (**The Nation**, March 2, 2017: para 9). A study conducted by Pitinutch Saibat (2007) on a community in Mahasarakram Province practicing integrated farming and Somsri Yangsuay (2007) in Khon Kaen confirmed the positive outcomes of the principle of sufficiency within the context of agriculture.

At the current time there are movements that call for the return to agrarian philosophy of farming, recognizing the damages caused by the process of depeasantization through development and modernity. The call seeks the promotion of small farms that have proven to be better sources for food production than mass approaches to farming. Walden Bello, in **The Food Wars** (2009) has documented the devastating impacts of modern approaches to farming focusing on technology, chemical products and monoculture in countries such as Philippines, India, Mexico and China. Speaking of the efficacy of small farms, Miguel Altieri and Clara Nicholls point out that the traditional approach has been named backward and unproductive.

> Research shows that small farms are much more productive than large farms if total output is considered rather than yield from a single crop. Small integrated farming systems that produce grains, fruits, vegetables, fodder, and animal products out produce yield per unit of single crops such as corn (monocultures) on large-scale farms (cited by Bello, 139).

And if we were to take ecological system into consideration, then the benefits of small farms are far more superior than industrial farms. Thus these movements advocate for re-peasantization, re-agrarianization that take into consideration land reforms (redistribution of land and the importance of the irrigation system) (Bello, 2009). Concluding his argument, Bello (2009) writes:

> With the collapse of the global economy and with the deglobalization of production moving very fast, small farmers or peasant-based farming is becoming a model for the locally or regionally sustained alternative economies that people are searching for. Peasants and their allies are demonstrating how

> food sovereignty and other paradigms based on the same principles are relevant, and indeed crucial considerations for all sectors of society (p. 149).

Recognizing the benefits of the principle of sufficiency in agricultural practice, its application can have a wider and more significant contribution if higher education will play a role in promoting this concept. Offering an academic course work within the discipline of education can significantly help to facilitate and advance the principle of integrated farming within the framework of economic sufficiency.

1.1 Creating Alternatives to Modernity through a Required Course

Offering a required course that creates alternatives to modernity through the faculty of education can have significant impacts on the second generation of farmers. According to the report by the Ministry of Education (2013), there are 1,870,738 students registered in formal undergraduate programs in public universities around the country. The Ministry was not able to track majors of 1,607,528 students in the undergraduate program. However of the reported 263,210 students, the highest concentration is in education (69,940 students with second highest number of students majoring in social science, business management and law, followed by engineering) while only 965 reported majoring in agriculture. Chiang Mai University reports a total of 21 students majoring in agriculture (1 undergraduate, 8 Masters Degree and 12 PhDs) (Chiang Mai University, Faculty of Agriculture 2015). Kasetsart University's total number of students was 63, 584 in 2014. Of this number 6,152 were registered in agriculture related majors (Kasetsart University, 2014). There were16, 205 students total registered for the first semester of 2016. Of this total there were 129 students registered for a major in agriculture (Chulalongkorn University, 2016). Perhaps there is a possibility that the faculty of education nationwide can alter this trend, considering the number of teachers around the country that have direct contact with the majority of the population ages 3 to 21. According to 2013 Educational Statistics in Brief (Ministry of Education, 2013), there are a total of 13,606,743 students in formal education throughout the country. Of this number, 11,190,164 students were listed within the range of pre-elementary to high school. Out of this total, 10,140,195 students are in provincial schools. A large number of farmers' children are from provinces other than Bangkok city.

Recommending an offering of a required course for undergraduate students majoring in education entitled "Reappraisal of Community Culture within the Context of Modernity." The primary aim of this course is to raise the awareness about the impact modernity has on knowledge that guides the process of development in Thailand such as technology, economy, education and ways of living.

A retired sociology professor grieves the lack of a course in general education designed to raise awareness of ways in which modernity has impacted our country at many levels. "Most of what we teach (in our educational system) is Eurocentric. Modernity has generated numerous problems in our society. So why

should we keep reproducing modernity knowing what we already know" (ABK2). Critical theory that helps raise awareness of the impact of modernity should be a part of the general education requirements in higher education.

Thirayuth Boonmee believes that "our knowledge of philosophy, ethics, politics, government, literatures, classical music, arts, architectures etc. have been created to project a positive image of the Western world while discriminates against and disengages from local history, arts, culture, philosophy etc. of others" (Thirayuth Boonmee, 2002: 44). He further suggests that in this post-modern era, there no longer is a need to chase after Western values and progress. Traditional Thai values do not encourage people to pursue material progress and competition. In an ironic sense, Thailand's sufficient economy, as proposed by King Bhumibol Adulyadej is indeed a very progressive concept within the context of the post-modern world. Thirayuth Boonmee terms this process "Niche-ization" (Thirayuth Boonmee, 2002: 48). Based on this understanding of post-Westernism, the course can help students realize that modernity is one of the options in how we come to experience life in the modern world (Thirayuth Boonmee, 2002: 46). The course seeks to reacquaint students with the concept of community culture which has been a part of our historical root (Chattip Nartsupha, 1998) and challenge students to think of ways and means to live in the modern world while maintaining the richness of our cultural heritage that has been preserved by local farmers for generations (Chattip Nartsupha, 2014). To achieve these objectives, the course will cover the following contents:

1.1.1 The problem of modernity. In the introduction to the book **Another Knowledge is Possible: Beyond Northern Epistemologies** (2007), Santos et al write: "The production of the West as hegemonic knowledge required the creation of an Other, constituted as an intrinsically disqualified being, a collection of characteristics that were markers of inferiority towards the power and knowledge of the West" (p. xxxv). Modern science has claimed the singularity of scientific epistemology while suppressing other forms of knowledge (Santos at el, 2007: xviiii). Conceptually, modernity has the ability to navigate a culture and its people toward monocentricism. Metaphorically, bio-diversification yields to the domination of monoculture, cash over crops. This lack of multiple views of reality forces a worldview on a population that has for generations lived with a worldview vastly different from that of modernity. The lack of legitimation of local knowledge and experiences strongly suggest a one-way intervention because nothing can be gained, or perhaps, nothing can be added to the existing knowledge acquired through modernity (Ranger, 1998; Schiebinger, 1989; Santos, 1995; McClintonck, 1995), Dussel, 2000).This has an impact on how research in Thailand is conducted as well. The lack of alternate concepts aside from modern methodologies has negatively impacted local communities in a significant way (Editorial, **Fah Diew Gan**, 2003: 17). Diversification, suggests Mignolo, requires engaging in the task of decolonization of modernity. Suggested topics regarding the impact of modernity

include: a) modernity as construct b) Enlightenment as precursor to modernity c) establishment of Bretton Woods in 1944 and the rise of development ideology d) modernity and economy e) modernity and development in Thailand f) modernity and education in Thailand and g) modernity and local farmers.

1.1.2 Community Culture. According to Chatip Nartsupha (1999), 'Thainess' is rooted in community culture. This practice has been in existence long before the feudal system, and continues to exert its values even through the aggressive expansion of capitalism and industrialization. Although the practice is in decline due to constraint imposed by capitalism, it remains a viable solution to the current economic system and the environmental issues we currently face.

The basis of community culture may be translated into King Bhumibol Adulyadej's economy of sufficiency. The economic system of community culture is at the core of the principle advocated by the philosophy of sufficiency. It is that cultural practice whereby social location is rooted within the community. From this center, everything else emerges. Metaphysically, ancestors connect family members together forming communities. Environmentally, respect for the spirit world embedded in nature generates respect for the environment and thus, ways of life that give back to nature. Economically, labor is a collaborative practice. Socially, the concept of community holds people accountable to one another, and families remain at the center of their cultural practices. The center of community culture is the question of how a community can live together collectively within a particular environment, guided by their view of reality which is based on the cyclical process of nature, the seasons of life.

Speaking of the collaborative efforts within such a cultural practice, Chatip Nartsupa (1999) writes:

> Mutual cooperation between members of the village was a very clear expression of the relations of production of the Thai village community. This cooperation was another factor binding individuals to the community. Mutual cooperation was seen in paddy farming, in cooperative labour for transplanting, harvest and threshing, known as *long khaek* (bringing a guest), *kanao mu* (bringing a hand) or *so raeng*. In places where rice was transplanted, villagers helped one another to hoe earth to build bunds for holding water in the field-a practice known as *yokna* (raising the paddy field); in places where paddy was broadcast, they cooperated to build paths which allowed passage for man and buffalo and also provided grass to feed the buffalo (pp. 27-28).

The concepts derived from community culture such as a) the economic system b) the meaning of labor, c) the religious belief in ancestral worship, d) the love for freedom, e) the practice of subsistent farming can provide a greater sense of appreciation of values that have sustained the lives of local farmers historically.

1.1.3 Community Culture in the Context of Modern World. The last section encourages students to think innovatively about ways and means by which traditional values of mutual cooperation, care for community, and sustainable living can be translated within the current context. The course concludes with finding ways to reconstruct local knowledge and wisdom that are relevant to the modern world while maintaining core values. This concept is being explored by Chattip Nartsupha (2014) in his book **Karn Pen Samai Mai kub Naew Kid Choomchon** (Modernity within the context of community culture) suggesting that progress must be done with great respect to local farmers, their ways of living and their practical local wisdom. Another related concept that can contribute to the understanding of the practice of community culture within the current economic system is "ecological economics," as proposed by Witayakorn Chiengkul (2011). After critiquing the economic crisis brought about by neo-liberal policies, the author suggests an economic system that is based on the preservation of the ecological system rather than maximum production, or what the author terms 'natural capital.' It is a system that promotes reduction in the use of chemical products and increases natural organic resources for agriculture; regulates fishing industries, deforestation, the use of energy, big farms and pollution from industries; reduces fossil fuels and promotes alternative forms of energy; encourages the use of appropriate technology within local communities and the principle of sufficiency while using quality of life as index for measuring national success instead of GDP (pp. 92-94). Ecological economics encourages small to medium size organic farms with local farmers providing their own labors, and reduces distances in transporting agricultural products and promotes direct sales instead of utilizing big corporations (p. 108).

2. Guidance Counseling Major to include a thorough Understanding of the Viability of Sustainable Agriculture as a Career

Guidance counselors play an important role in helping students choose their majors and career paths (Nirun Cholasup, 2015). Therefore, it is essential that students majoring in guidance counseling be well informed regarding agriculture as a viable career option. Without the knowledge of agriculture as a possible career path, counselors themselves most likely will not present it as an option nor have sufficient knowledge to provide guidance for students who may be interested in pursuing this as a career. As confirmed by academics (AB1) and practitioners (ACM2 and ACM 3), sustainable agriculture is a viable option and has the potential to provide sufficiently for those who choose to learn, implement and work hard. Pakornum Tubtieng (2015), in his book **University on the Rice Field**, lists numerous examples of individuals who left their employment and returned to agriculture by finding innovative means to create sustainable farms for themselves. It is essential that guidance counselors become aware of academic options within the field of agriculture so they can appropriately guide students seeking alternatives. There are a number of initiatives by

higher education institutions, both private and public, that seek to address the needs of local farmers through establishing academic programs or institutions. The followings are a few examples of existing initiatives that can be initiated by various institutions of higher learning:

2.1 University of Thai Farmers Sri Yonok Na Nakorn Chiang Rai was established in 2009 by Worawoot Tonsuksa who was born into a farmer family in Mae Hong Son Province and completed his PhD through Sukhothai Thammathirat University. The university was designed to return dignity to farmers. The institution's curriculum encourages local participation and input while granting degrees to those completed trainings. The university itself functions as resources for agricultural innovation in accord with King Bhumibol's principle of sufficiency. As such, it is geographically philosophical in offering a place of resistance toward capitalism that weakens agricultural communities (University of Thai Farmers Sri Yonok Na Nakorn Chiang Rai, n.d.).

2.2 Ubon Ratchatani University offers programs in 'Integral Development Studies' since 2006. The program is available for students at the Master's and doctoral level. The focus of the program is to seekintegration of the sufficiency economy concept in relation to behavioral practices, cultural identity and sufficient society. There are a total of 15 students, eight at the doctoral level and seven at the undergraduate level. This program is a joint project of local farmers' communities, Mahacheewalai Isan, Ubon Ratchatani University and Sumnak Ngan Jud Karn Kwam Ru Pue Sangkom (Office for Management of Knowledge for the Society) (Sufficient Economy Database Project for Local Communities, n.d.).

2.3 Bodhivijjala College, Srinakarinwirot University, was formed March of 2007 in Sa Kaeo Province as an institutional attempt to address educational reform in Thailand. For decades, Thailand's educational system was set on the path toward reform that sought to address socio-economic issues the nation is facing. Over the course of time, through economic and political factors, setbacks have prevented such a reform from taking place. Bodhivijjala College was established to take such a reform forward based on the principle of sufficient economy. What drives the establishment of this educational initiative is awareness of the negative impacts of capitalism on the country together with the discourse that delegitimizes all other forms of knowledge and practices, the neo-colonization of Western ideology embraced by leadership within the Thai government. The college offers two undergraduate majors: geosciences and cultural geography. Both majors aim at learning and implementing the principle of sufficient economy, preserving local culture and community identity, applying the concept of sustainability and creating local leadership relevant to the local context while understanding the wider global situation (Bodhivijjala College, n.d.).

2.4 School of Agricultural Resource, Chulalongkorn University, was established in 2009 by the University Council under the leadership of Veterinarian

Professor Anop Kunawongkrit with the primary aim of creating a new generation of well-rounded farmers. Students gather knowledge from multiple fields through various faculties at Chulalongkorn University such as faculties of science, commerce and accounting, veterinary, pharmacy, economics and law. Institutes that contribute to the body of knowledge include language, transportation, marine research, bio-technology and genetic engineering. These undergraduate programs aim at creating a new generation of farmers who are competent at managing resources and skilled in the process of production from the start to completion, including investing and being cost-effective (production, packing, transporting and marketing). The knowledge gained in management of resources will offer students immunity from capitalist ideology while learning to practice the principle of sufficiency (Suthasinee Jitkumchai, 2010).

2.5 Farmers' School, Kasetsart University Kampang Saen Campus, came into operation in 2012. It operates on 200 rai of land located in Tungnaprai, Chiang Saen with the main goal of training farmers to survive within the current economic system focusing on the production of quality seeds. The function of this school is based on five strategies: a) market driven production b) quality over quantity c) net profit per household instead of high quantity d) organic and fewer dependency on external sources of energy and e) honesty. Poly-culture within farming is taught including creating fish ponds, raising chicken and cattle, growing mushrooms, planting coconuts, etc. The training course lasts four months. As of now, 75 regional farmers have been trained. The initiative hopes to train 100,000 farmers within aperiod of 10 years (Prachachat Dhurakit, August 2, 2015).

3. Increase Scholarships for Students Pursuing Degrees in Agriculture

Higher education is one of the major financial constraints for farmers. Based on the experiences of the participants, it is one of the most costly investments for them. When they take out loans or sell their land, they want to be certain of the returns for their investments by encouraging their children to pursue majors with the most promising careers within their reach. Hence, majoring in agriculture and returning to farming the way their families have been does not seem to be the most cost-effective investment from their perspective. Offering of more substantive scholarships could help to redirect and re-channel some students into pursuing higher education in majors related to agriculture.

4. Encourage Higher Education to be Intentional in Understanding this Population

Any attempt at development needs to take into serious consideration the population it seeks to serve. Without a thorough understanding, changes remain at the surface. From the perspective of academic participants, the lack of intentionality in seeking an understanding of this population is the primary reason for the disconnect, resulting in the lack of true relevancy in the life of farmers. Higher education has not

become instrumental in transforming farmers' lives in a positive direction. Knowledge is top-down uni-directional (AKK1). A reputable practitioner suggests the importance of having a government sector immersing itself in local communities in order to gather local knowledge for future integration, in order to create a genuine exchange of ideas for greater productivity (AB1). A retired professor bemoaned the fact that, as educational institutions, we do not take the time to really understand the lived experiences of local farmers who represent half the population of the country (ABK1).This assumption has a significant epistemological implication because it displaces 'knowledge' that has sustained a population for generations.

The development plan as an interventive method has, for decades, been strictly prescriptive…a top-down approach that totally ignores subjectivity of the locals. Farmers' voices, ideas, opinions and experiences have been set aside in the grand scheme of national development through prescription of a particular knowledge, as implemented through higher education. If the plight of local farmers is to be taken seriously by higher education, there is no other way except to first be acquainted and immersed in their world, taking the time to understand, being curious and appreciative of the contributions their culture and wisdom have contributed to the field of knowledge. Without this initial intention, attempts will prove to be futile.

Policies could be designed to enhance local participation. A senior professor mentioned the need for the government to set a policy in ways that will increase participation by the local communities. Thus local communities can have the negotiating power to decide for themselves what is good for them and their future, since they know their region best. By setting a policy that encourages participation, local communities are empowered to claim ownership for themselves and their future (ACM1).

An academician from Isan talks about the need to create a curriculum that will meet the needs of local farmers. The process requires local participation to be effective. Once the program is carefully thought through and implemented, national leaders need to design a policy that can translate this academic training into programs with the potential to enhance the economic reality of local farmers. Without this type of policy, investments in planning may be to no avail (AKK1).

One other way to enhance understanding and promote local engagement is to promote regional curriculum. Every region has its own landscape with its own particularity pertaining to soil, weather, water sources etc. Therefore, curriculum should be regionally designed through participation from local communities. Curriculum designs that lack local participation are non-contextual and hence redirect students from their roots as farmers (ACM3).

Speaking of the importance of acknowledging the rich resources of the local community, Sylvia Hurtado (2015) proposes the method of transformative investigation. It is a type of investigation that immerses oneself in the context of the

people and seeks transformation. In fact, transformation becomes mutual and reciprocal. She states:

> One of the ideal outcomes of a transformative investigation is mutual learning and reciprocal relationships, with the researchers learning from the wisdom of individuals engaged in a long-term struggle under unequal or oppressive conditions and research participants gaining new insight on their own lives and change efforts with the expertise of the researcher (Hurtado, 2015: 288).

This approach concurs with many participants regarding the importance of listening to the community for wisdom and for ways in which educational institution can better be informed in order to make significant contributions to the community. Taking this a step further, in line with one of the suggestions, implies an emphasis on generating problem solving skills within the context of the community itself. On this front Freire (2003) encourages educators to utilize a problem-posting educational method. In this method, there is no distinctive division between teachers and students because in the process, teachers learn through teaching. It is a dialogic. The teacher who 'by being taught also teaches.' And the focus of teaching is the everyday challenges, the problems that exist in real place and time. It is a real world that the students are being thrown into. Not an abstract theoretical world. It is being cognizant of subjects in the tangible world. The question becomes how to solve presenting problems and progress on? Both students and teachers are forced to use critical method in assessing the problem and in seeking its solution. "Education is thus constantly remade in the praxis" (p. 66). As such it looks to the future. It is constantly mobile. At the fundamental core is the belief that those subjected to domination must constantly fight for their emancipation. In this method, both teachers and students become subjects of the educational process. The world is no longer that abstract idea but a reality to be transformed.

5. Teaching methods: Hands-on, On-site and Focus on Problem solving Skills

Within the agricultural context, it is important that learning methods take into consideration on-site hands-on learning experience with a focus on problem solving (AB1, AU1, ACM2, ACM 3). Three of the participants strongly suggest that learning in this discipline should be practical and hands-on. Students must learn through participation. In agriculture, experience is everything. It takes the act of doing it to translate this to knowledge. Theory alone will not make better farmers and agriculturists. For this to take place, it must take place on-site. Students need to be in the rice field and the community because education must be embodied. In the context of farming, learning can never remain cognitive. It must include all sensory participation. They have to see, touch, feel, observe and experiment. They have to touch the soil, plant the seeds, clear the field and observe how nature work. This is yet another important reason to focus on problem solving skills (AB1; AU1 and ACM2). Natural environment differs from place to place, such as the type of soil, the

availability of water and other natural nutrients. As such, the focus should be how to learn to think on-site and find ways to solve problems. This is contrary to top-down implementation that is taking place where experts come and impart knowledge then leave. Local farmers need to learn to think about ways and means of overcoming difficulties that differ from location to location (ACM3). Problem solving skills come from acquiring knowledge and experiments. Students need to work the field and experiment with various methods in order to address existing challenges (AB1). One practitioner observes, "As farmers our knowledge is not derived from referencing Aristotle and Socrates. Our knowledge is derived from on-going experiment with agriculture to see which works best. And the outcome becomes the very source of validation" (ACM3). Learning is not about sitting in class learning theories and passing examinations. It is brining theories into everyday living and experimenting until theories are well translated into the local regions making substantive provision for families and communities.

> There is an increasing focus in education whereby learning is activity base and problem base. This provides an opportunity for learners to access the real world beyond the fence of universities both in academic trainings and field trainings for students, exposing them to the real world beyond the scope of strict academia (AU1).

Recommendations for Further Research

1. Recommendation no. 1: A history and documented research seeking clarity on the emergence of modernity in the Thai educational system, such as the influence of development ideology on the system, changes in curriculum designs and development, the evolution of the process of quality assurance in relation to the gravitation toward globalization, the economics of higher education, and the impact modernity has on the culture of learning within Thailand in comparison to traditional methods of learning.
2. Recommendation no. 2: A qualitative study that explores generational patterns in understanding the role of higher education looking at two different age groups of farmers. The focus of the study is based on comparing the views and perspectives of older and younger farmers when it comes to knowledge, farming methods, the role of higher education and the place of modernity. A further study can provide insight into future trends among younger farmers. It can generate changing patterns that maybe an important contributing factor toward ways to trace the genealogy of higher education in the lives of farmers and, most importantly, the effective ways and method of implementing and retaining the concept of community culture among the younger generation.

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Appendix I

Farmers, Age, Gender, Educational Level, Location and Identity Code

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
Chulalongkorn University

Table 1: Farmers, Age, Gender, Education, Location and Identity Code

No.	Age	Gender	Education	Province	Code	Date
1	61	M	BA	Roi Et	FR1	4/01/15
2	42	F	P6	Roi Et	FR2	4/01/15
3	60	M	P6	Roi Et	FR3	4/01/15
4	72	M	P4	Roi Et	FR4	4/01/15
5	62	M	HS	Roi Et	FR5	5/01/15
6	63	M	HS	Roi Et	FR6	5/01/15
7	45	M	P4	Roi Et	FR7	5/01/15
8	62	M	P4	Surin	FS1	6/01/15
9	71	F	P4	Surin	FS2	6/01/15
10	43	F	HS	Srisaket	FSR1	6/01/15
11	54	M	P6	Yasothon	FY1	6/01/15
12	62	M	P6	Kalasin	FK1	7/01/15
13	50	M	P6	Kalasin	FK2	7/01/15
14	53	M	P6	Kalasin	FK3	7/01/15
15	64	M	P6	Chiang Mai	FCM1	27/01/15
16	60	M	P6	Chiang Mai	FCM2	27/01/15
17	63	M	P4	Chiang Rai	FCR1	28/01/15
18	70	M	P4	Chiang Rai	FCR2	28/01/15
19	41	M	HS	Chiang Rai	FCR3	28/01/15
20	60	F	P6	Chiang Rai	FCR4	28/01/15
21	55	M	P4	Chiang Rai	FCR5	29/01/15
22	63	M	P6	Chiang Mai	FCM3	29/01/15
23	43	F	HS	Lampang	FL1	30/01/15

Table 1: Farmers, Age, Gender, Education, Location and Identity Code

No.	Age	Gender	Education	Province	Code	Date
24	41	F	P6	Lampang	FL2	30/01/15
25	56	M	P4	Lampang	FL3	30/10/15
26	55	M	P4	Lampang	FL4	30/01/15
27	63	F	P4	Phitsanulok	FP1	10/02/15
28	60	M	P4	Phitsanulok	FP2	10/02/15
29	62	M	P4	Phitsanulok	FP3	10/02/15
30	41	M	HS	Phitsanulok	FP4	10/02/15
31	51	F	BS	Phitsanulok	FP5	11/02/15
32	42	F	P6	Phichit	FPC1	11/02/15
33	50	M	HS	Phichit	FPC2	11/02/15
34	82	M	P4	Phichit	FPC3	11/02/15
35	40	F	P6	Kampangpetch	FK1	11/02/15
36	64	F	P4	Kampangpetch	FK2	12/02/15
37	64	M	P6	Kampangpetch	FK3	12/02/15
38	41	H & W	P6	Sukhothai	FSK1	12/02/15
39	43	F	P6	Sukhothai	FSK2	12/02/15
40	43	F	P6	Sukhothai	FSK3	12/02/15
41	35	F	HS	Ubon	FU1	17/02/15
42	34	F	HS	Ubon	FU2	17/02/15
43	30	F	BS	Ubon	FU3	17/02/15
44	45	F	P6	Ubon	FU4	17/02/15
45	52	M	AA	Srisaket	FS2	18/02/15
46	46	M	M9	Srisaket	FSR3	18/02/15
47	46	F	P6	Srisaket	FSR4	18/02/15

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

Table 1: Farmers, Age, Gender, Education, Location and Identity Code

No.	Age	Gender	Education	Province	Code	Date
48	51	F	P4	Srisaket	FSR5	18/02/15
49	62	F	P4	Surin	FS3	18/02/15
50	50	M	P6	Buri Ram	FB1	19/02/15
51	32	F	P6	Buri Ram	FB2	19/02/15
52	42	F	P6	Buri Ram	FB3	19/02/15
53	41	F	P6	Buri Ram	FB4	19/02/15
54	45	M	P6	Udon	FUD1	18/03/15
55	46	F	P6	Udon	FUD2	18/03/15
56	45	F	P6	Udon	FUD3	18/03/15
57	57	F	P4	Nong Khai	FNK1	18/03/15
58	63	F	P4	Nong Khai	FNK2	18/03/15
59	62	F	P6	Loei	FL1	19/03/15
60	41	F	P4	Loei	FL2	19/03/15
61	55	F	BA	Loei	FL3	20/03/15
62	57	F	HS	Nong Bua Lamph	FNB1	20/03/15
65	64	M	P4	Udon	FUD4	20/13/15
66	53	M	P4	Khon Kaen	FKK1	12/08/15
67	65	M	P4	Khon Kane	FKK2	12/08/15
68	67	M	P4	Khon Kaen	FKK3	12/08/15
69	62	M	BA	Khon Kaen	FKK4	12/08/15

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

Appendix II

Children of Farmers Currently in Higher Education, Institution and Identity Code

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
Chulalongkorn University

Children of Farmers in Higher Education, Institution and Identity Code

No.	Gender	Region	Institution	Code	Code
1.	F	Nong Bua Lampu	Rajabhat Loei	FCCR1	13/08/15
2.	F	Nakhon Phanom	Rajabhat Loei	FCCR2	13/08/15
3	M	Khon Kaen	Rajabhat Loei	FCCR3	13/08/15
4.	F	Ubon	Asia Pacific International University	FCCR4	20/08/15
5.	F	Khon Kaen	Asia Pacific International University	FCCR5	20/08/15
6.	M	Mahasarakham	Asia Pacific International University	FCCR6	20/08/15

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
Chulalongkorn University

Appendix III

Children of Farmers who had been through Higher Education, Career, Location and Identity Code

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
Chulalongkorn University

Children of Farmers who had been through Higher Education, Gender, Location, Major and Identity Code

No.	Gender	Location	Major	Code	Time
1.	F	Roi Et	Education	FCCP1	04/01/10
2.	M	Roi Et	Political Science	FCCP2	04/01/15
3.	F	Roi Et	Management	FCCP3	04/01/15
4.	M	Roi Et	Thai Studies	FCCP4	04/01/15
5.	F	Chiang Mai	Economics/ Management	FCCP5	20/02/15
6.	F	Bangkok	Education	FCCP6	25/02/15

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
Chulalongkorn University

Appendix IV

Academic Researchers and Reputable Practitioners, Location and Identity Code

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
Chulalongkorn University

Academic Researchers and Reputable Practitioners, Location and Identity Code

No.	Location	Academic/Practitioners	Code	Time
1	Chiang Mai Univesity	Professor	ACM1	01/02/15
2	Rajabhat Loei, Khon Kaen Campus	Instructor	AKK1	17/03/15
3	Ubon University	Assistant Professor	AU1	20/02/15
4	Buri Ram	Practitioner	AB1	19/02/15
5	Chiang Mai	Activist	ACM2	14/08/15
6	Chiang Mai	Practitioner	ACM3	15/07/16
7	Chulalongkorn University	Emeritus Professor	ABK1	12/03/15
8	Thammasart University	Professor	ABK2	17/08/16

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
Chulalongkorn University

Appendix V

Demographic Information (Age, Gender, Education, No of Children, Land, Location)

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
Chulalongkorn University

Demographic Information of Participants

No	Age	Gender	Education	No. Children	Land / Rent Rai	Land/ Owned Rai	Province	Code
1	61	M	BA	No Info		50	Roiet	FR1
2	42	F	P6	2		50	Roiet	FR2
3	60	M	P6	1		50	Roiet	FR3
4	72	M	P4	5		50	Roiet	FR4
5	62	M	HS	2		50	Roiet	FR5
6	63	M	HS	No Info		50	Roiet	FR6
7	45	M	P4	2		20	Roiet	FR7
8	62	M	P4	3		5	Surin	FS1
9	71	F	P4	No Info		5	Surin	FS2
10	43	F	HS	No Info		5	Srisaket	FSR1
11	54	M	P6	3		5	Yasothon	FY1
12	62	M	P6	3		7	Kalasin	FK1
13	50	M	P6	2		7	Kalasin	FK2
14	53	M	P6	2		5	Kalasin	FK3
15	64	M	P6	2	19		Chiang Mai	FCM 1
16	60	M	P6	2	10		Chiang Mai	FCM 2
17	63	M	P4	2	17	24	Chiang Rai	FCR1
18	70	M	P4	2	30		Chiang Rai	FCR2
19	41	M	HS	2		20	Chiang Rai	FCR3
20	60	F	P6	2		5	Chiang Rai	FCR4
21	55	M	P4	2		25	Chiang Rai	FCR5
22	63	M	P6	1		7	Chiang Mai	FCM 3
23	43	F	HS	No Info		5	Lampang	FL1
24	41	F	P6	1		3	Lampang	FL2
25	56	M	P4	1		7	Lampang	FL3
26	55	M	P4	2		5	Lampang	FL4
27	63	F	P4	2		6	Phitsanulok	FP1
28	60	M	P4	2		12	Phitsanulok	FP2
29	62	M	P4	3		21	Phitsanulok	FP3
30	41	M	HS	2	20		Phitsanulok	FP4
31	51	F	BS	1		11	Phitsanulok	FP5
32	42	F	P6	3	20		Phichit	FPC1
33	50	M	HS	3	50		Phichit	FPC2
34	82	M	P4	5		15	Phichit	FPC3
35	40	F	P6	No Info		10	Kampangpetch	FK1

Demographic Information of Participants

No	Age	Gender	Education	No. Children	Land / Rent Rai	Land/ Owned Rai	Province	Code
36	64	F	P4	2		20	Kampangpetch	FK2
37	64	M	P6	2	50		Kampangpetch	FK3
38	41	H & W	P6	1	80		Sukhothai	FSK1
39	43	F	P6	2		8	Sukhothai	FSK2
40	43	F	P6	2	28		Sukhothai	FSK3
41	35	F	HS	2		8	Ubon	FU1
42	34	F	HS	2		8	Ubon	FU2
43	30	F	BS	2		12	Ubon	FU3
44	45	F	P6	4		5	Ubon	FU4
45	52	M	AA	3		8	Srisaket	FS2
46	46	M	M9	2		5	Srisaket	FSR3
47	46	F	P6	3		8	Srisaket	FSR4
48	51	F	P4	4		7	Srisaket	FSR5
49	62	F	P4	2		5	Surin	FS3
50	50	M	P6	2	34		Buri Ram	FB1
51	32	F	P6	2		10	Buri Ram	FB2
52	42	F	P6	2		10	Buri Ram	FB3
53	41	F	P6	1		10	Buri Ram	FB4
54	45	M	P6	1		20	Udon	FUD1
55	46	F	P6	3		24	Udon	FUD2
56	45	F	P6	3		10	Udon	FUD3
57	57	F	P4	1		2	Nong Khai	FNK1
58	63	F	P4	None		10	Nong Khai	FNK2
59	62	F	P6	2		10	Loei	FL1
60	41	F	P4	2		6	Loei	FL2
61	55	F	BA	2		7	Loei	FL3
62	57	F	HS			5	Nong Bua Lamphu	FNB1
65	64	M	P4	1		10	Udon	FUD4
66	53	M	P4	2		17	Khon Kaen	FKK1
67	65	M	P4	1		18	Khon Kane	FKK2
68	67	M	P4	4		27	Khon Kaen	FKK3
69	62	M	BA	2		17	Khon Kaen	FKK4

(P=Primary, M=Mathayom, HS=High School, AA=Associate Degree, BA=Bachelor)

Appendix VI

หนังสือขอความร่วมมือในการเก็บข้อมูลวิจัย

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
Chulalongkorn University

ที่ ศธ 0512.6(2771)/57- 4155

คณะครุศาสตร์ จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
ถนนพญาไท กรุงเทพมหานคร 10330

23 ธันวาคม 2557

เรื่อง ขอความร่วมมือในการเก็บข้อมูลวิจัย

เรียน

สิ่งที่ส่งมาด้วย เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัย

ด้วย นายศิโรจน์ โสรัจจกุล นิสิตหลักสูตรครุศาสตรดุษฎีบัณฑิต สาขาวิชาอุดมศึกษา ภาควิชานโยบาย การจัดการและความเป็นผู้นำทางการศึกษา อยู่ในระหว่างการดำเนินงานวิจัยวิทยานิพนธ์ เรื่อง "บทบาทของการอุดมศึกษากับการเปลี่ยนแปลงสถานภาพทางสังคมของชาวนาไทย" โดยมี ผู้ช่วยศาสตรจารย์ ดร.อภิภา ปรัชญพฤทธิ์ และศาสตราจารย์ ดร.สุภางค์ จันทวานิช เป็นอาจารย์ที่ปรึกษา ในการนี้นิสิตมีความจำเป็นต้องขอเก็บข้อมูลวิจัยด้วย แบบสัมภาษณ์ กับ ผู้มีประสบการณ์เกี่ยวกับวิธีชีวิตของชาวนา ทั้งนี้นิสิตผู้วิจัยจะได้ประสานงานในรายละเอียดต่อไป

จึงเรียนมาเพื่อขอความอนุเคราะห์จากท่านโปรดอนุญาตให้นิสิตได้ทำการเก็บข้อมูลวิจัยดังกล่าวเพื่อประโยชน์ทางวิชาการต่อไป และขอขอบคุณมาในโอกาสนี้

ขอแสดงความนับถือ

(รองศาสตราจารย์ ดร.เนาวนิตย์ สงคราม)
รองคณบดี
ปฏิบัติการแทนคณบดี

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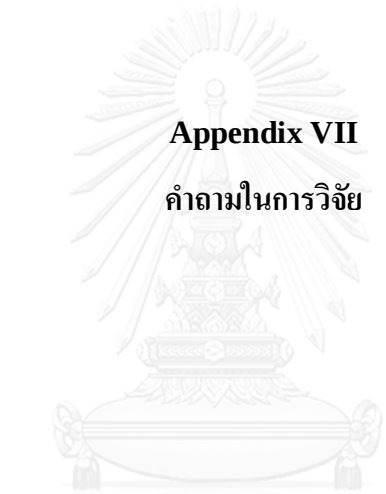
Appendix VII

คำถามในการวิจัย



จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
Chulalongkorn University

คณะครุศาสตร์จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
สาขาวิชาอุดมศึกษา
ภาควิชานโยบาย การจัดการและความเป็นผู้นำ ทางการศึกษา

งานวิจัยเรื่อง

"บทบาทของ การอุดมศึกษากับการเปลี่ยนแปลง
สถานภาพทางสังคม ของชาวนาไทย"

คำถามในงานวิจัย

1. กรุณาบรรยายชีวิตประจำวันของชีวิตชาวนา เช่นกิจกรรม ชีวิตครอบครัว การทำมาหากิน สิ่งท้าทาย
2. กรุณาชี้แจงผลกระทบของการพัฒนาด้านอุตสาหกรรมที่มีต่อชีวิตและสังคม
3. กรุณาให้ข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับประสบการณ์ด้านการศึกษาและผลที่มีต่อชีวิตประจำวัน
4. ท่านเคยคิดที่จะศึกษาต่อในระดับอุดมศึกษาหรือไม่ หากไม่ อะไรคือเหตุผม หากใช่ มีอะไรที่เป็นอุปสรรค
5. ท่านคิดว่าหากท่านมีการศึกษาระดับอุดมศึกษา ชีวิตจะเปลี่ยนหรือไม่ หากใช่ ท่านคิดว่าจะเปลี่ยนอย่างไร
6. อะไรคือสถานะทางสังคมของชาวนาในปัจจุบัล
7. กรุณาอธิบายความหมายของคำต่อไปนี้ ที่เกี่ยวโยงกับสถานะทางสังคมของชาวนา "ความสำเร็จ" "การพัฒนา" "การมีผลงาน"
8. ในความคิดของท่าน ความสำเร็จจะเกิดขึ้นได้อย่างไร จะเป็นคนที่มีผลงานทำอย่างไร สังคมที่พัฒนาแล้วมีรูปลักษณะอย่างไร

VITA

Siroj Sorajjakool was born on the 19th of November 1959 in Bangkok. He completed his undergraduate degree majoring in Theology from Southeast Asia Union Seminary in Singapore. In 1987 he started his teaching career after completed his MA in Religion from Andrews University (extension campus in Pune, India). In 1994 he started his doctoral study at Claremont School of Theology and by 1999 earned his PhD in Theology and Personality with a concentration in counseling. Besides his academic career, he earned the title Diplomate with the American Association of Pastoral Counselors in 2010. In 2012 he started his doctoral study at Chulalongkorn University Faculty of Education, under the Department of Policy, Management and Leadership in Higher Education focusing on higher education. He currently serves as Professor of Religion, Psychology and Counseling for the School of Religion and as Professor, Department of Counseling and Family Sciences, School of Behavioral Health, Loma Linda University, California.

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