

The Challenges of Globalisation to Education in Thailand: A Case Study of Socially Engaged Buddhism

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to explore how the challenges from globalisation impact to education in Thailand. The study will scrutinise the consequences of the processes of globalisation in the scope of international media, political, social and economic crisis and look at how this consequences have impact on the education in Thailand focusing on the 1999 National Education Act. Müller's theory (2011) of education policy in developing countries was used in order to explain the education policy in Thailand. This study argues that in order to achieve the rights to education to all Thailand will need to overcome the inequality which regards as the severe social problem in Thailand. The study concludes that the rights to education to all will not be possible to achieve as long as the state welfare policies have not addresses in Thai society. Buddhist education is the not the answer for the rights to education however the case study of Santi Asoke, a socially engaged Buddhism shows the Buddhist perspective on the challenges of globalisation and the education in Thailand by introducing the alternative path to encounter the problem of the inequality in a spiritual way.

Keywords: Globalisation, Global conception of childhood, Education, Socially engaged Buddhism, Thailand

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

The challenges of globalisation to education regarded as a controversial issue in Thailand. In 2010, The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) commissioned Global Monitoring Report launched in Bangkok. The report focused on reaching the marginalised children and minimising the impact of the financial crisis on Thai education sector under the theme “Financing Quality Education in the Face of the Global Economic Crisis” (McCarthy, 2010). Hence, the global financial crisis and its impact in education sector in Thailand have moved to the forefront of debates on education policy and practice, within states and in relation to the international agenda on education and development. As a result, there are many civil society organisations aim to achieve humanitarian relief by providing welfare and education to these children. Khaopa (2010) brought up the case of how the civil society organisations have assisted street children in Thailand by providing the welfare and education however the number of street children has not decrease (Khaopa, 2010). Regarding to the education policy in Thailand Müller (2011) argues that in the developing countries, education policy often focus on human resource development and not the rights to education (Müller, 2011). In the context of Thailand, the problem of inequality has challenges the education therefore, the rights to education is hampered by the inequality in education for instance, uneven distribution of educational resources. The case study of Santi Asoke, a socially engaged Buddhism is a prominent case study showing how the community was not suffered from the consequences of the globalisation. In a Buddhist perspective, how globalisation impact on the education was explained in a spiritual way. Moreover, it reveals how the Buddhist education in case of Samma Sikha Santi Asoke School has succeeded in engaging the students to the community.

1.1 Literature review and the research problem

Müller (2011) states that in the developing countries, education policy often related to the focus on human resource development. Human resource development is a broad concept, referring to the process of increasing the knowledge, skills and capacities of all people in a society. It is encompassing in economic terms the accumulation of human capital, in political terms preparing people for participation in democratic political processes and in social and cultural terms helping people to lead fuller lives, less bound by constraints (Müller, 2011, p.254). The latter is correlated

with the concept of “development as freedom” for example, the ability to live as one would like is based on the access to health care, to sanitary arrangements or to clean water and protected from unnecessary morbidity in the case of Third World countries. In the case of developed countries it has based on the access to health care, functional education, gainful employment, or economic and social security (Sen., 1999, p.15).

The work of Müller (2011) was used as a foundation to stress a research problem of education in Thailand. The research problem focuses on what have been obstructing Thailand to achieve the rights to education to all looking at the challenges of globalisation to education in Thailand. To understand the challenges of globalisation to education in Thailand, the study begins with the global conception of childhood, the division of space and international media. Various scholars discuss on the global conception of childhood as Stephens (1995) explains how the division of space has emerges in Western society that until the eighteenth century that there was no clear separation between adulthood and childhood. Thus, those who we refer to as children, according to their age would participate in the labour force. During the eighteenth and nineteenth century, however, children – people within a certain age category – increasingly became part of private and specialised institutional spheres such as home, family and school (Stephens, 1995).

Brocklehurst (2006) and Wells (2009) reveal how the conception of childhood is involves with history, locations, cultures as well as political and social changes. Brocklehurst (2006) argues that the conceptions of childhood are lost and found at various junctures of history, in different locations and cultures, and within particular conditions of socio-economic climate. In fact, children and their everyday lives are politicised yet retained a non-political identity because they often excluded from the political sphere. This is because the perceptions of childhood and adulthood may involve with the (adult) priorities of society (Brocklehurst, 2006). Wells (2009) notes childhood is governed by international institutions and international law. For example, national laws about children are concerned with establishing full entry into adulthood, which is generally preceded by the acquisition of responsibilities or rights at different ages (Wells, 2009, p.3). Brocklehurst (2006) notes in some cultures for instance, in sub-Saharan Africa, education is not seen as a right but an indicator of child status. Their informal education is perceived as beginning at home and formal education is deemed as irrelevant for local needs (Brocklehurst, 2006, p.22).

In Thailand the education is also not seen as a right for example, Khaopa (2010) points out that the increasing number of civil society organisations aim to achieve humanitarian relief by providing welfare and education to street children are failed to decrease the number of street children in Thailand (Khaopa, 2010). The study will investigate the education policy and seek for the reasons which obstruct the rights to education to all in the context of Thailand.

1.2 Purpose and research questions

The purpose of this study is to promote the rights to education to all in Thailand. In order to achieve this purpose the study will scrutinise the challenge of the globalisation to education policy in Thailand using the work of Müller (2011). In the context of Thailand, the education policy involves with political, social and economic forces and focusing on the human resource development rather than the education which the learners can determine their own choices or make their own decisions. Hence, the study aims to explore the relationship between globalisation and education policy in a Buddhist perspective in order to understand what have been obstructing the rights to education to all in Thailand. To fulfill this purpose, the study asks the questions as following:

- 1. How the international media impacts on the childhood and education in Thailand?*
- 2. How globalisation influences on the education in Thailand?*
- 3. How the challenges of globalisation to education in Thailand are perceived in a Buddhist perspective in Thailand?*

The first research question will be answered in chapter 2: Childhood and the division of space, the second research question will be answered in chapter 3: Education policy in Thailand and the last research question will be answered in chapter 4, a case study of socially engaged Buddhism.

1.3 Theoretical framework

This study has been given much attention to the contemporary understandings of childhood and international media in order to explore the relationship between globalisation and education policy in Thailand. A case study of Santi Asoke – a socially engaged Buddhism in Thailand highlights the study showing the alternative path in order to understand the problem of the inequality in a Buddhist perspective. The theoretical framework of the study based on the education policy in Thailand. Müller (2011) points out that the education policy commonly involves with a combination of political, social, economic and pedagogic concerns which has objectives beyond

the area of education. This state of affairs implies that in particular in developing countries education or schooling is to contribute to a certain understanding of poverty reduction and human resource development, or more generally to a clearly defined vision of social change. On the face of it, this seems in stark contrast with the intrinsic objective of education as a human right to enable those educated to transform the world in whatever way they aspire to (Müller, 2011, p.253-254).

Müller (2011) writes the education policy in the developing countries focus on human resource development. Human resource development is a broad concept aims to prepare people for participation in democratic political processes and in social and cultural terms (Müller, 2011, p.254). In Thailand the implementation of the 1999 National Education Act has prompted a major re-think in the education sector in terms of both teaching and learning methods, as well as in learning environments. The aim of this education reform is to develop Thailand into a knowledge-based society, which is a pre-requisite for becoming a knowledge-based economy. The reforms will provide the Thai public with equal access to life-long education and training, enabling them to acquire knowledge and capital to generate income and to eventually pull the country out of the economic and social crisis (Bureau of International Cooperation, 2008).

Müller (2011) argues that the education policy in a range of developing and transitional countries is dominated by the poverty reduction imperative, and the right to education is being equated with the right to a certain type of schooling, a major focus centres on the fulfillment of human resource needs, often stipulated by a national development plan. Thailand aims to develop the human resource development, however human resource development can be understood in different ways such as it refers to the process of “increasing the knowledge, skills and capacities of all people in a society” encompassing in economic terms the accumulation of human capital, in political terms preparing people for participation in democratic political processes and in social and cultural terms helping people to lead fuller lives, less bound by constraints (Müller, 2011, p.254-255).

1.4 Method and selection

1.4.1 Design of the study

This study is a qualitative research. I will apply the deductive method which begins with Müller’s theory (2011) of education policy in developing countries and hypothesis and then

analyse the collecting data. Bryman (2004) writes the deductive theory represents the commonest view of the nature of the relationship between theory and social research (Bryman 2004: 8). To understand how the challenges of globalisation to education in Thailand a case study of Samma Sikha Santi Asoke School founded in Santi Asoke Community, Bangkok will be focused. Yin (2009) writes as a qualitative research, the researcher has no intention to take control over contemporary phenomenon. Case study is a most suitable research strategy as it is a compatible strategy when the research questions seek to explain some present circumstance, for instance when how or why questions are being posed and the questions require an intensive and “in-depth” description of some social phenomenon (Yin, 2009, p.4).

1.4.2 Sources of data

The study has been formulated from various sources of data. The primary sources included field observation, interviews and field notes during the fieldwork period in Thailand. Secondary sources included relevant literatures, academic journal, book, written reports, newspaper and online articles related to the issues of globalisation, childhood, education and Buddhism in Thailand.

1.4.3 Sampling, reliability and validity

The sampling is based on the interviews and field notes that I have been taken during my research fieldwork in Kanchanaburi, Petchabun and at Samma Sikha Santi Asoke School, Bangkok. The sampling includes forty unstructured interviews during my volunteering trip. The unstructured interviews refer to *probability sample* which is a sample that has been selected using random selection so that each unit in the population has a known chance of being selected (Bryman, 2004). The aims of the interview are to gain the understanding how media as part of the globalisation processes play a part in Thailand and how it related to the global conception of childhood using the case of the images of children that represented in international media. From December 26 to 30, 2011, I took part in a short-volunteering trip with the local NGO in Khao Kho district, Petchabun, Northern Province and from February 5 to 8, 2012, I have been volunteering with the local NGO in Sai Yoke district, Kanchanaburi, Western Province bordering Burma assisting the children in the shelter. The interviewees were selected at random, and included people who are Thai

citizens and live in the local area but also including tourists. Each interview takes approximately five to ten minutes. On February 7, 2012, twenty unstructured interviews were conducted in Kanchanaburi. I have interviewed local people age from seventeen to sixty-one years old, three females and seven males. On February 27, 2012, twenty unstructured interviews were conducted in Petchabun. Local people and tourist's age from twenty to sixty, fourteen females and six males were participated in the interview.

March 20, 2012, I conducted a formal unstructured interview, note-taken for transcription purposes with a Managing Director, a key informant consent at Santi-Asoke community, Bangkok office. The aim of the interview is to learn the Buddhist perspective on the globalisation and education in Thailand. Santi-Asoke community regards as the prominent socially engaged Buddhism in Thailand which consisted of various functions within the working community such as organic foods and vegetables store, recycling and a second hand store, different projects that involved with agriculture sections and political affairs. The questions including in the interview with the Samma Sikha Santi-Asoke School are:

- 1. How to explain the issue of poor or underprivileged children who are in a difficult situation to access to education in the context of Buddhism?*
- 2. How Buddhism view the issue of helping these children?*
- 3. How Buddhism view the issue of providing education for these children?*

1.4.4 Criticism of the sources and limitations

Site of fieldwork is located in three cities – Kanchanaburi, Petchabun and Bangkok. The study includes two sources. The primary source is based on the forty unstructured interviews conducted in Kanchanaburi and Petchabun. The second source is based on the formal semi-structured interview with the Managing Director at Samma Sikha Santi Asoke School, Santi Asoke Community in Bangkok.

I am aware that the interviews in Kanchanaburi and Petchabun was not intended to justify how Thai society understand the conception of childhood but for the researcher to gain the understanding about how the interviewees response to the conception of childhood or who we refer to as children and the relation to the challenges of globalisation to education.

Another interview in Bangkok with Santi Asoke community was also not intended to show that all Thai citizens are Buddhism. Moreover, the study was not intended to explain how Buddhist education is the solution to achieve the rights to education to all in Thailand, notwithstanding this limitation the understanding about how Buddhist perspective on the challenges of globalisation to education in Thailand is expected.

1.4.5 Ethical considerations

The ethical considerations in this thesis follow the ethical guidelines set down by the Swedish Research Counsel. This thesis has accepts the criteria for engaging in morally acceptable research behavior and insure appropriate citation and reference to sources.

The next consideration that has been taken into account is concerning the ethics when conducting the interviews and participating in the field observation. Before the interview I have introduce myself as a Master student from Lund University and my thesis topic to the interviewees and people who I have been working with during the fieldwork period. However, in this study I will not be using any informant's actual names. Lastly the consideration that has been taken into account is the recommendations from the Childwatch International Research Network. I am aware about child research methodology and sensitivity, thus the children will not be taking part in the interview.

1.5 Disposition

The thesis is divided into four main sections. First it begins with the discourses on the global conception of childhood and international media as part of the globalisation processes. This chapter is including the interviews in Kanchanaburi and Petchabun. The second section examines the education policy in Thailand and apply to the work of Müller (2011) focusing on the 1999 National Education Act. The third section is the case study of Buddhism, a socially engaged Buddhist (Santi Asoke) perspective on the challenges of globalisation to education in Thailand. The last section of the thesis is the conclusion.

CHAPTER 2 – CHILDHOOD AND THE DIVISION OF SPACE

This chapter will outline the globalisation process in the scope of international media. To understand how the international media as one of the globalisation processes plays a part in

Thailand and what is the relationship between the international media and the global conception of childhood. I will begin with the historical information of the conception of childhood in the context of Western society in order to understand how the rights to education is possible in the West. Second I will look at the division of space and the global conception of childhood comparing the global conception of childhood to the Thai conception of childhood. The last section in Chapter 2 includes the interviews analysis from the research fieldwork in Kanchanaburi and Petchabun. The interviews seek for the connection between the globalisation and the education in Thailand using the case of how spectators respond to the images of the child that represents in the international media.

2.1 The conception of childhood: Understanding the compulsory education in the context of Western conception of childhood

Regarding on the problem of the rights to education in Thailand, I would like to seek how the education guaranteed to certain groups of people and societies but not to all focusing on the historical information of the conception of childhood. I aim to look how the division of space arises in the Western society. To understand the conception of childhood it is important to define the term “child”.

What is a child? During the last decade child scholars and researchers encountered the concept of childhood which has become problematic, thus many studies have shed light on the issue. Brocklehurst (2006) explains the reason why persons are potentially receiving or deserving of different treatment throughout the time is not measured by age (Brocklehurst, 2006, p.1). Montgomery (2009) explains the term “child” can be as much a relational term as a description of a younger person at a particular stage of life, so that a person is conceptualized as a “child of” someone, implying mutual support and care throughout life (Montgomery, 2009, p.55). Brocklehurst (2006) states that in the English language alone childhood can be divided to early childhood, middle childhood and adolescence and “baby”, “infant”, “child”, “teenager” and “youth” to describe a spectrum of immature individuals with associated qualities and roles. In addition, in international and customary law one can identify older persons as “child”, “juvenile”, “minor”, and “youth” which the precise term used may also subtly bestow a social and political context, thus there is no single or agreed definition of childhood recognised or acted upon worldwide. (Brocklehurst, 2006, p.1).

Brocklehurst (2006) and Montgomery (2009) show how the conception of childhood is not an independent factor however it inevitably related to a social and political context. Montgomery (2009) states “Children have been continual motifs since the earliest days of anthropological writing, the savage and the child existing in parallel to explain social and cultural development” (ibid, p.18). Various scholars focus on how the conception of childhood has been shaped over time and place. Now I will look at how the scholars understand the conception of childhood as a historically and socially constructed focusing on the historical information. The conception of childhood from sixteenth century to twentieth century explored by various scholars show how modern concepts of childhood came into being and how children were placed in separate domain apart from adults by the division of space.

It was not until the sixteenth century that children became visible in the society. Montgomery (2009) explains because during this time it was possible to see the development of specialised clothing, literature, toys for children, and the artists began to represent real children in portraiture (Montgomery, 2009, p.51). In the late seventeenth century there was no conception of childhood as children has not yet separated as a social group for instance, children were protected and cherished till they were six or seven years old and later they were considered to be pocket-sized adults, who were mostly involved in employment (Jans, 2004, p.32). Many scholars argue that it cannot prove that pre-modern society lacked an awareness of children as different form adults because the conception merely shows that these societies held neither our present day conception of the child, nor the visible social support structures that we recognise in support of this conception (Brocklehurst, 2006, p.2).

In the eighteenth century, there has been a significant shift of the conception of childhood. Stephens (1995) argues that during this time the special conventions in artistic and literary representation clearly marked children as a distinct group and childhood as a separate domain, set apart from the everyday life of adult society (Stephens, 1995, p.5). Brocklehurst (2006) provides an example saying that Western philosophers such as John Locke pointed out that adulthood can be viewed as “a state of being” which has a clear boundary that set apart from a childhood because the child is thought not yet to achieved rational capabilities and has insufficient knowledge to make good decisions (Brocklehurst, 2006, p.3). It can be understood that the separation between

childhood and the everyday life of adult society obstructs children from the employment. Thus, childhood is a dependent factor and required a special cares from adults.

Wells (2009) discusses the concept of childhood was not applied to all children but available only to the upper class. Children from the working class, for instance, hardly noticed any difference in their life, not until the end of the nineteenth century the governmental intervention would guarantee a childhood for all children. In the West, state welfare policies addressed poverty by attacking the rights of poor parents, for instance in England the workhouse was able to separate children from their parents under the New Poor Law 1834 (Wells, 2009). Montgomery (2009) explains the shifting of the concept of childhood in the nineteenth and twentieth century. For example, the emphases on “Child-centred family”, therefore a child was perceived as not ready for life and had to be subjected to a special treatment before he was allowed to join the adults (Montgomery, 2009, p.51). Jans (2004) states that in the early twentieth century, the governmental input interpreted as a deed of ultimate pedagogic charity with regard to children and their families by restraining child labour and introducing compulsory education, the government did not only want to achieve the ability to read, write and calculate for children. It also wanted to teach them virtuousness and patriotism (Jans, 2004, p.32), thus children became the prominent target to the state and explicitly play apart in the political sphere, for example the government intervention (especially in the West). Brocklehurst (2006) criticised that the global conception of childhood therefore use the child as a projection of apparent liberal values such as cultural, legal and social relativisms (which may end at different times), and the “divisions” within childhood to three aspects of conceptions which are “boundaries” of childhood, its beginning and end; “dimensions” of childhood. Hence, childhood can be described as a comparative negative or an individual who is not yet an adult (Brocklehurst, 2006, p.3).

As shown above, the concept of childhood and politics are related. Stephens (1995) points out that various technologies of knowledge have been applied to children, while ideologies of child-centred society give “the child” and “the interests of the child” a central place in the practices of legal, welfare, medical, and educational institutions (Stephens, 1995, p.7). Montgomery (2009) concludes that childhood must be understood as a culturally constructed, social phenomenon which changes over time and place and that it should not necessarily be seen as a time of universal

dependence and powerless (Montgomery, 2009, p.43). The historical facts reveal the conception of childhood is constructed and has been undergoing to various social and political changes. Space plays crucial role in the conception of childhood for example, children belongs to school rather than to the labour force. In the West the conception of childhood was not applied to all until the government succeeds in solving the problem with effective welfare policies. Therefore, the good governance leads to the rights to education to all. For example Stephens (1995) states that the idea of childhood as the privileged domain could only refer to a society that corporate this domain to public culture, discipline, work constraint and rationality (Stephens, 1995, p.6). In Thailand the issue of the rights to education is continuously debated, Later on I will explore what are the factors obstruct Thailand to achieve the rights to education to all.

2.2 Childhood and the division of space: Understanding the global conception of childhood

In the era of humanitarian-reform children were seen as a symbol of common humanity. The idea of children as a common humanity is continues to exist today, particularly in the media. In the post-humanitarianism children are no longer perceived as a symbol of common humanity but rather seen as individual, for instance the global conception of childhood and the emergence of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The global conception of childhood emphases on the rights of the child shifted the child status from being a common humanity to individualisation.

According to Stephens (1995) the division of space is the implications of the global conception of childhood. Stephens (1995) provides an example of the division of space by pointing out that children are no longer accepted in the employment sector but replace by the development of child-focused institutions (Stephens, 1995, p.15). Pupavac (2001) discusses on the issue of children and an international ethical order. In order to institutionalise the ethical order institutions such as the educational systems were created. For example, to be successful children they have to be under greater surveillance of responsible adults (Pupavac, 2001 p.97).

As shown above in the global conception of childhood, children are view as economically unproductive and form a considerable cost by being consumers of goods and services. In contrast in the context of Thailand, children can still be seen as economic investment with a specific return.

For example Montgomery (2009) argues that in rural Thailand, “reciprocity” refers as both an economic and moral one. According to the Thai Buddhist moral scale, parents are entitled to be “moral creditors” because of their presumably self-sacrificing labour of bearing and rearing children while children are “moral debtors”. Children are obliged to express their gratitude by serving and obeying their parents till the end of their lives. A daughter repays the debt to her mother by remaining in the parental household to care for her parents in her old age, while a son ordains as a Buddhist monk to pay his mother back for her breast milk (Montgomery, 2009, p.67-68).

In short, the division of space is an attribute of the global conception of childhood. Brocklehurst (2006) argues that children are perceived as passive and innocence, thus children are recognised as posited in the domestic sphere such as family and home (Brocklehurst, 2006). For example, the child’s world is not yet associates with public space or the political, social and cultural processes however school is the place to prepare children to be part of these processes. However, in the case of Thailand, Buddhism is the crucial factor influences how children are perceived. For example, the relationship between parents and children and the term “reciprocity” are interconnected, especially in rural Thailand.

2.3 Interviews analysis: Research fieldwork in Kanchanaburi and Petchabun

Brocklehurst (2006) notes that since there are different factors such as historical “facts”, locations, cultures and particular conditions of socio-economic climate (Brocklehurst, 2006). In order to explore the media as part of the globalisation processes in Thailand I decided to conduct the unstructured interview. In the interview I choose the case of the media particularly how the spectators respond to the image of the child in international media. The aims of the interview are to gain the understanding how media as part of the globalisation processes play a part in Thailand and how it related to the global conception of childhood. In order to fulfill the objectives I have focus on the images of children that represented in international media because they (the children that represented in international media) usually perceived as lacking of necessity. In this case, the lacking of necessity is determined by the international media.

The locations of the interview are in Kanchanaburi, the city located in the Western Province of Thailand and in Petchabun, the city located in the Northern Province of Thailand. Two places are

selected to conduct the interview during my time volunteering at the local NGOs. The informants were selected at random included people who live in the local area and also tourists and all of the informants are Thai citizens. Each interview takes approximately five to ten minutes. On February 7, 2012, twenty unstructured interviews were conducted in Kanchanaburi. I have interviewed local people age from seventeen to sixty-one years old, three females and seven males. On February 27, 2012, twenty unstructured interviews were conducted in Petchabun. Tourists and local people and age from twenty to sixty, fourteen females and six males were participated in the interview.

As more media become more widely accessible, the images of children in distress and poverty/hardship have been controversially used as the objects of pity for the international media. Holland (2004) points out that the images of children have being reshaped by global processes, structures and circulated through international media (Holland, 2004, p.143). I realized forty interviews provide very intensive data so rather transcribing the entire interviews I will instead analyse the data by dividing the answers into two categories. The question I have asked in the interview is: *How do you feel when seeing the images of children in distress and poverty/hardship that represented in the international media?* The first category includes the informants who show their concern towards the images and second category includes the informants who show no concern towards the images. The results of the interviews reveal thirty-eight informants fell in the first category. When they see the images of children in distress and poverty/hardship the informants feel sympathy for the children. And two out of forty interviews fell in the second category. To avoid the exceeding of words limits I will not transcribe all thirty-eight interviews in the study but I rather focus on how the informants have the conception of childhood (in this case is through the images of children in distress and poverty/hardship that represented in the international media) The informants answered my question as following:

Category 1:

“I feel pity but I think by helping the children it is important to define what type of help we should provide to them. I think education is the good way to help the children.”

Shopkeeper, Male, 42

“I think these children can grow up being aggressive if they have not been raised in a proper way. We should educate families in the community in order to improve their lives.”

Tourist, Female, 42

“I think these children may receive help through donation but in some cases they do not live with their family. Although they can live through donation but it is not the same as living with their own family.”

Tourist, Female, 32

“I also support the charity at the local temple. It is not because of I want to make merit through helping others but it makes me feel relief.”

Shopkeeper, Male, 41

“I feel pity them just because they are children.”

Shopkeeper, Female, 44

“Yes, I feel pity them but actually I do not know where these children come from. I sometimes donating money to the charity especially to the project relates to education for children.”

Shopkeeper, Female, 32

Category 2:

“I do not feel sympathy when seeing the images of children in distress and poverty/hardship. But these images make me feel that the children are detained. ”

Shopkeeper, Female, 26

“I do not feel sympathy when seeing the images of children in distress and poverty/hardship. There are children who may also suffer and maybe they are suffering more than the children that represented in the international media.”

The result of the interviews show that in the first category the informants perceived the idea of childhood in a contemporary understands of childhood which children belongs to the certain spaces; home, family and school. Furthermore, it shows that the global conception of childhood and the images of children that represented in the international media related to the division of space. Gadda (2008) states that the global conception of childhood connects with other concepts such as the family, privacy, individuality, school and the welfare state (Gadda, 2008, p.4). Holzscheiter and Hahn (2002) argue that a philosophy of childhood with the central dimensions of family, home, school and play/leisure is used in the international media for instance the advocacy NGOs (Holzscheiter and Hahn, 2002). Taking education as an example, it can be understood that for the advocacy NGOs, providing education is the solution to avoid or escape the poverty-stricken situation or to change the society without including that education is should be for children to determine their own choices or make their own decisions. This is relevant to Müller's theory (2011) that the education in developing countries commonly involves with a combination of political, social, economic and pedagogic concerns rather than the rights to education (Müller, 2011).

Brocklehurst (2006) asserts that the images of children in distress and poverty/hardship invites motivation to aid and donation by pity but do not focus on structural causes of inequality, instability or children political roles (Brocklehurst, 2006). According to the interviews, I argue that in the case of the informants in the first category the international media can invite motivation to aid and donation by pity however certain issues related to the causes of inequality or instability have been taken into account. For example, the role of family and education are discussed during the interviews as one informant mentioned that it is important to define what type of help has been providing to the children (who is represented in the international media).

In the second category the first informant reveals how she has felt towards the images but at the same time she did not defer to the images by showing her empathy towards the images. Morgan (2008) explains the images tend to obstruct the reality because they are the product of the human imagination (Morgan, 2008). The second informant also did not show her empathy towards the images. Holland (2004) argues that real children suffer in many different ways and for many reasons but pictures of sorrowing children reinforce the defining characteristics of childhood; dependence and powerlessness (Holland, 2004, p.143). The second informant shows how her

opinion connect to Holland's statement (2004) when she mentioned that there are children who are not represented in the international media and these children may also suffer. I will use Chowdhry and Nair's theory of Postcolonialism (2002) to analyse the answers from the second category. Chowdhry and Nair's theory of Postcolonialism (2002) writes Postcolonial does not mean that those colonised countries are fully received independence as "the postcolonial does not signify the end of the colonisation, but rather that it accurately reflects both the continuity and persistence of colonising practices, as well as the critical limits and possibilities it has engendered in the present historical moment" (Chowdhry and Nair, 2002, p. 11). In this case the international media criticised as a form of postcolonial because the informants did not defer to the image of children that representing in the international media.

The interviews fulfilled my aims to explore the media as part of the globalisation processes in Thailand and the relations to the global conception of childhood. I will conclude that media (in this case is an international media) as part of the globalisation processes reveals the unequal educational opportunity in Thailand. For example, the inequality in term of the education raised the informants in the first category's awareness as a result from the international media that urges them to realise how important the education is for children (who is represented in the international media). However, there are two informants out of forty interviews criticised on the international media and the image of children. The vast majority of the informants were not mere invited motivation to aid and donation by pity from the international media. For example, the informants pointed out that there are issues that should be considered such as family and education rather than how the donation can solve the problem of the inequality or instability. Furthermore, this is obvious in the case of the informants who belong to the second category.

The in-depth knowledge from the interviews was appreciated as the information allows me as a researcher to gain wider understanding and insight of the globalisation and its impact in education in Thailand. Some informants in the first category mentioned how certain issues should be taken in a consideration in order to solve the problem of the inequality or instability. In this case the education is one of the issues that the informants has been emphases on when exploring the role of international media as part of the globalisation processes in Thailand. Nevertheless, the study aims to examine how the rights to education is not yet achieved in Thailand. Therefore, I have

further look on how the education has been providing to the children who are in the difficult situation in order to access to the education. For example, Khaopa (2010) points that in the case of street children in Thailand “the number of street children has risen suddenly and unexpectedly - up from 15,000 to 20,000 estimated between 2006 and 2008” While there are many civil society organisations aim to achieve humanitarian relief by providing welfare and education to these children, however the number of street children in Thailand has been increasing over times (Khaopa, 2010).

In the case of Western society, the rights to education leads well-functioning society to the for example, Gadda (2008) claims that the global conception of childhood connects with the welfare state (Gadda, 2008). However, the example from (Khaopa, 2010) shows that the providing education to all cannot enhance the education or achieve the rights to education in Thailand. Furthermore, I conclude that in order to promote the rights to education in Thailand, it is important to consider on how the education has been providing rather than focusing on who has the difficulty to access the education. In the context of Thailand, Buddhism influences in Thai society in various aspects as for example, one of the informants mentioned “merit” during the interview, however not all Thai citizens are Buddhists. The role of Buddhist education will be further discussed in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 3 – EDUCATION POLICY IN THAILAND

In this chapter I will look at how the consequences from social change driven by political, social and economic forces have impact on Thai education. I will apply Müller’s theory (2011) to education policy in Thailand focusing on the National Education Act in 1999. In order to show how political, social and economic forces are impact on Thai education I will answer my research question: *How globalisation influences on the education policy in Thailand?* Furthermore, I will provide the discussion of Holland (2004) and Wells’s (2009) work on the concept of Children’s Rights on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and what is being said about the concept of Children’s Rights and the individualisation and globalisation processes

looking at the discussion of Jans's work (2004). The end of this chapter will focus on the education policy in Thailand analysis by showing how to understand the education policy in Thailand in the work of Müller (2011).

3.1 The 1999 National Education Act

Tichuen (2003) notes that the current framework of education in Thailand is based on the 1997 Constitution and the 1999 National Education Act (Tichuen, 2003, p1). In this study I will focus on the 1999 National Education Act. Suwansathit (1999) writes the 1999 National Education Act aims to achieve human resource development in various aspects (Suwansathit, 1999, p.97). For example, in the 1999 National Education Act, chapter 4 (National Education Guidelines), section 23 states that “education through formal, non-formal and informal approaches shall give emphases to morality, learning process, integration, and knowledge, such as knowledge on Thai society, politics, scientific and technological, religion, art, culture sport, Thai wisdom, mathematics and languages in order to be successful in career and leading a happy life” (The National Education Act, 1999, p.10-11). How education policy in Thailand focuses on human resource development is corresponds with Müller's theory (2011). As Müller (2011) explains the education policy in the developing countries focus on human resource development which is a broad concept associates with political, social and cultural terms (Müller, 2011).

3.2 Globalisation and the education policy in Thailand

The challenges of globalisation to the education in Thailand can be perceived through the political and social changes at the national level. Regarding to the research question of *how globalisation influences on the education policy in Thailand?* My answer is if globalisation is conceived in a positive way it would be understood that globalisation enhances the education policy in Thailand. Ling (2004) explains the world became globalised through economic, political, social and media. The liberal model provides states and citizens freedom and equal rights are well served the global economy when the world became connected and everyone can trade or exchange their goods freely under the international regulations (Ling, 2004, p.120).

In international debates the term globalisation usually conceived negatively for instance globalisation did not bring the prosperity with democracy, freedom and justice to every corners of the world. Furthermore, in the study of Children's Rights it has been questioning if globalisation

brings rights to the children. According to Jans (2004) the term globalisation has highlights on the concept of Children's Rights. Jans (2004) claims that individualisation and globalisation processes generate a growing gap between individualised and isolated citizens but on the other hand the processes influence global systems and structures for example, the concept of Children's Rights reveals the process of societal reform for instance, the changing from risk society to well-functioning society. Therefore, children get space but at the same time obliged to design their own life (Jans, 2004).

I will provide the discussion of Stephens (1995), Brocklehurst (2006) and Suwansathit (1999) on the global conception of childhood and Human Rights education in the Thailand as an example. The conception of childhood separated children as a social group, thus the concept of Children's Rights has been raised by rights-based approach especially in the West. As Stephens (1995) states that "the export of modern notions of childhood is connected to the export of modern constructions of gender, individuality, and the family". The export of modern notions of childhood is therefore criticised for producing new forms of colonial and imperial subjects (Stephens, 1995, p.16). Brocklehurst (2006) explains in aid programs and structural reforms the modern notions of childhood has been utilised for instance in a universal Human Rights discourse in order to measure non-Western practices and ideas (Brocklehurst, 2006).

Holland (2004) and Wells (2009) discuss on the awareness of the concept of Children's Rights. Holland (2004) explains the emergence of Children's Rights using an example of Children's Rights magazine which launched in 1971 by a group of adults and children. The aim of this group is to raise awareness that children should obtain equal rights as adults for instance children should have rights to transform the society (Holland, 2004, p.103). Holland (2004) also provides an example of the how the Children's Rights has been an attention in the public looking at the 1979 International Year of the Child. The aim of the 1979 International Year of the Child is to understand the concept of the rights beyond protection by including Children's participation in the public sphere and claiming a legitimate presence in political space (ibid, p.109).

The concept of childhood that is inscribed into the UNCRC reveals the promising of the rights of child. Holland (2004) points out that the concept of childhood in the UNCRC is universal and the conflicting cultures are trumped by the global idea of childhood (Holland, 2004, p.111). Wells

(2009) argues that the concept of childhood in the UNCRC reveals children are perceived as being individual for instance, children are deserve to participate in the society rather than to be protected from adults for instance, changing the status of the child from a subject to a citizen (Wells, 2009). However, the idea of childhood is in the process of being globalised for instance, the global idea of childhood (Wells, 2009). The contradiction of individualisation and globalisation is a crucial point being made by Holland (2004) and Wells (2009) when attempting to understand the concept of Children's Rights.

Regarding to the aim of the study that to promote the rights to education to all. I have discussed on the work from various scholars on Children's Rights and Human Rights education. I attempt to show that Children's Rights and Human Rights education are the result from the society that guarantees the rights to education. I use the global conception of childhood as a model when studying the education in Thailand to see how the rights to education to all is possible to some societies especially in the West. Jans (2004) discusses on the childhood and citizenship for instance the rights to education is connected to the term "citizenship". Jans (2004) states that "citizenship is an identity that only used when children can borrow this identity from the ecological zones they appropriate. When citizen identity is connected with the socio-cultural legacy of still undiscovered peripheral zones, children will not be able to be a full citizen" (Jans, 2004, p.39).

3.3 Thai education policy analysis: Understanding the education in Thailand in the work of Müller (2011)

Müller (2011) explains the education policy in developing countries commonly involves with a combination of political, social, economic and pedagogic concerns which has objectives beyond the area of education. As Müller (2011) points out the contradictions of the education as a tool to foster the human resource development and the rights to education (Müller, 2011), it occurred to me that this is the important question I shall focus when studying the education policy in Thailand. An example of the 1999 National Education Act shows how education policy in Thailand defined as vision of social change and focuses on a human resource development or contributes to a certain understanding of poverty reduction rather than the rights to education.

I will divide Müller's theory (2011) into two issues focusing in the case of Thailand. First I will look at how educational institution defined as vision of social change and second I will look at how educational institution contributes to a certain understanding of poverty reduction. In chapter 2 I discussed on the conception of childhood and division of space by conducting the interviews. The result from the interviews shows that in international media to provide basic needs such as education is the solution for the children (who is represented in the international media) to avoid or escape the poverty-stricken situation or to change the society. This corresponds with Müller's (2011) explanation on the education policy in developing countries that they are usually focus on human resource development as a broad concept and defined as vision of social change or contribute to a certain understanding of poverty reduction (Müller, 2011).

As mentioned earlier the 1999 National Education Act highlights on the various knowledge that the learners should obtained through education. The impact of globalisation on education policy in Thailand shows in the 1999 National Education Act. For example, how the Thailand focuses on various development aspects such as scientific and technological, religion, art, sport, mathematics and languages while emphasizes on Thai culture. When looking at how educational institution defined as vision of social change it reveals the 1999 National Education Act emphasizes on Thai society and political knowledge as part of the National Education Act. In Thailand the Human Rights education is including in the draft National Plan of Action for Human Rights Education. Suwansathit (1999) explains the Human Rights education plays a crucial role in the process of societal reform. For example, the roles of the family and community members in a democratic society, rights and obligations of citizens in a democratic society are included in compulsory subjects in social studies (Suwansathit, 1999, p.98). However, the problem occurs when the change was not been applied to the whole society as Khaopa (2010) claims that the increasing number of civil society organisations aim to achieve humanitarian relief by providing welfare and education to street children. However, they have failed to decrease the number of street children in Thailand (Khaopa, 2010). Manzo (2008) explains some advocacy non-governmental organizations (NGOs) aim of poverty alleviation which caused from the globalisation and the expansion of an unequal system (Manzo, 2008, p.634). I have discussed this in chapter 2 about the international media, the images of the child and conclude that to promote the rights to education in Thailand it is important

to consider on how the education has been provide rather than focus on why the education is important for the children.

As Müller (2011) claims that the education policy in developing countries which contributes to a certain understanding of poverty reduction rather than the rights to education. I will show the education that focuses on the poverty reduction is obstruct the rights to education by using the explanation by Robinson (2004) and Weingast (2006) on the education and economic growth.

Robinson (2004) argues that education and capital accumulation are not causes of growth because an economic growth is depended on the institutions. The institutions are the driving force in economic growth but institutions cannot explain the modern economic growth. This is because no universal set of agreement that shared for all institutions, for instance different institutions shaped by the political, social, cultural and legal framework and lead to the different distributions (Robinson, 2004). Weingast (2006) explain institutions, organisations and social orders are the key to understand the economic growth. For example, the problem of income inequality occurred when the rule of law has been taking control by mainly elites (Wallis and Weingast, 2006). The case of street children in Thailand shows how Thai society has not been changing to the same direction thus it leads to the problem of income inequality.

Therefore, the problem of inequality is regards as a major problem in the case of Thailand. For example, Onozawa (2000) points out that the uneven distribution of development leads to the problem of educational inequality in Thailand. Children in Bangkok have an opportunity to go to better schools than children who lives in rural areas. Onozawa (2000) explains how different perception of education of urban and rural people in Thailand for example, in rural areas education may not perceived as necessary as in the urban areas because the different ways of living between urban and rural people. In rural areas people in the farms prefers their child to assist with their work such as taking care of younger siblings and herds of animals. In this case education and the ability to read and write may not compatible with their way of living (Onozawa, 2000).

The point here is not how the education is the solution for social change or poverty reduction but how the education has been providing to the children in Thailand. In societies where rights to education is guaranteed to all, education has increased the individualisation. Jans (2004) writes the

processes of globalisation and individualisation are interconnected as the decisions we take as individuals often have global consequences which are increasingly made visible for children in the different framework of education such as environmental education, peace education or development education (Jans, 2004). This reveals the different framework of education cannot be ignored though the rights of education is guaranteed. In the next chapter I will focus on the Buddhist education. I will look at how the education has been challenging from globalisation in a perspective of socially engaged Buddhism in Thailand.

CHAPTER 4 – A CASE STUDY OF SOCIALLY ENGAGED BUDDHISM

The previous chapter shows that Thai education policy focuses on the human resource development and how globalisation influences on the education in Thailand. This chapter will discuss on the political force and religion focusing on the role of institutions, particularly in a political institution. In Thailand, the relationship between state and Sangha is solid, thus religion plays a crucial part in the change of Thai society in the age of globalisation. For this reason, Buddhism has been protected by the state as it imposed upon Thai society and initiated as the primary theoretical legitimation of the rule which dominated by political elite. On the other hand, when Buddhism enters into too explicit a relationship with temporal affairs it is regards as losing its purity and its spiritual and political legitimating authority. The unstable political influences from the relationship between the Sangha and the Buddhism movements are worth considering when examining education in Thailand.

4.1 Buddhism in Thailand

Buddhism acts as root of Thai education until the social change during twentieth century. Lindberg (2007) explains during the twentieth century, the social structure in Thailand was striking change with the introduction of compulsory education by making a clear separation between monastic and secular education. The establishment of government schools meant that literacy was no longer the prerogative of males only, and females as well as males were given access to schooling. Buddhist schools however were unequivocally subordinated to secular schools (Lindberg, 2007).

In Thailand, Buddhism is a system of symbols that provides its believers with a coherent understanding or valuation of life, a meaningful, ordered world in which interaction and

interdependence are enabled (Morgan, 2008). Buddhist influences can be detected in Thai society, as Mackenzie (2007) writes Monarchy, Buddhism and Thai people are defined as three pillars of Thai society (Mackenzie, 2007). Jackson (1989) explains how Buddhism influences Thai life-style, mannerisms, and traditions. Buddhist teachings provide an explanation of the place of human beings in the natural cosmos and the social world by describing the hierarchical structure of traditional Thai society as a reflection of the structure of the cosmos itself (Jackson, 1989, p.2). Mulder (1973) discusses on the term “*merit*” by explains in order to achieve a meritorious life which is most important element of Thai religious behavior is Buddhism of Theravada (Hinayana) school a Thai must acquire merit or “*tham bun*”. Traditionally, “*wat*” or temple is the place where Thais gather for merit-acquiring (Mulder, 1973, p.2).

Jackson (1989) writes Buddhism can be understood as how each person’s place in the social hierarchy by the determination by the impersonal law of moral retribution of “*karma*” (Jackson, 1989, p.2) Hanks (2009) discusses on what “*karma*” is consisting of such as “*merit*” (*bun*) or “*virtue*” (*khwaamdii*), or “*a graded series of penalties*” (*baap*). The station in the hierarchy improves by amassing greater resources for distribution as the power requires not being accumulated in particular groups. In the case of Thailand, the occupations are assume to be fitted in the hierarchy as the power blurs the clear edges of cosmic world and the desire to rise and fear to fall within the hierarchy, however, according to the Buddhist teachings power may belong to anyone but effectiveness derives only from merit (Hanks, 2009).

Political change claimed as the factor to erode the conventional Buddhism in Thailand. According to Mulder (1973) Buddhism in Thailand has a unique symbolic value in Thailand as expressing hopes and aspirations by gaining material prosperity, social and political success rather than only for the religious salvation from suffering (Mulder, 1973, p.12). Kitiarsa (2008) explains the reason how rapid economic growth and political change in 1970s brought the emergence of spirit of Thai capitalism. A continue growing of prosperity cult often imply the negative impression and concerned by Buddhist scholars and intellectuals because it distorts the Buddha’s teachings and erode the conventional Thai Buddhism which includes the images of blind-belief, wealth-oriented faith and worshiping. This phenomenon refers as “*phuttha phanit*” which is a terminology for the commercialisation of Thai Buddhism. The term was coined in the late 1980s refers to a prosperity cult that aim to mistreat the conventional Buddhism in Thailand. Since Thai Buddhist

cosmography can be defined as karma, merit, giving and Buddhist precepts as the core premises which linked to the social values including “*khwan*” (life essence) and “*barami*” (charisma/moral perfection/virtue) in Thai society. Therefore, Thai Buddhist cosmography and social values play together with the market forces and it allows Buddhism to transform to religious commodification. Another common key concept in Thai Buddhist as cosmic and social indicators of a person’s status in the Thai cultural world is “*bunyabarami*” (merit and charismatic power) (Kitiarsa, 2008).

Weller (2008) discusses religious commodification and Buddhism in Thailand using the case of Wat Phra Dhammakaya Buddhism. Wat Phra Dhammakaya Buddhism is commercialised through the reliance on philanthropy. Religious philanthropy accepts the role of the market as a generator of wealth and intends to distribute the wealth to various needs that state fails to provide such as education, health care, sanitation or poverty relief (Weller, 2008). For example, “Millionaire Forever Project” providing the idea that by monthly donation to the temple’s food, donors will earn merit and were promised wealth in each of their subsequent lives (Mackenzie, 2007). Therefore, the example of Wat Phra Dhammakaya Buddhism reveals how religious commodification aims to serve on the individual level or being subjective spirituality.

4.2 Thai Sangha and politics

In order to understand Buddhism in Thailand it is important to explore the relationship between Thai Sangha and politics. Jackson (1989) discussed the relationship Buddhism and politics focusing on the state and Sangha. According to Jackson (1989) the Sangha or order of Buddhist monks as an organisation is a traditional institution that is not oriented towards modern pastoral activities. The relationship between the state and Sangha is called “*sponsorship*” or “*patronage*” (*kaan-upatham*). In order to appreciate the significant of the real and continue relationship between Theravada Buddhism and political activity in Thailand, the notions of sacred and temporal power as Thai political and religious life cannot be categorically distinguished, for example the fundamental to the legitimacy function of Thai Buddhism, both in the past and in the present, is the belief that the welfare of the country is intimately related to the welfare of the teaching and practice of the Buddha’s message of salvation. Therefore, the Sangha becomes an important social institution in its own right whose continue existence and welfare came to be regarded as essential to the security and survival of the Thai nation as independent political entity (Jackson, 1989, p.1-

2). Jirakraisiri (2004) writes Thai Sangha supports democratic view in terms of principles, methods and ways of life and how Buddhism influences in Thai politics as an important institution for creating social order in Thailand (Jirakraisiri, 2004, p.224).

As mentioned earlier about religious commodification or “*phuttha phanit*” claimed to erode the conventional Buddhism in Thailand. As a result it has been challenged by Buddhist movements. According to Jackson (1989) Thai Sangha is an instrument for political regime to restructure the organisation of the order of Buddhist monks in its political image in order to maintain a legitimacy parallelism between the symbolic religious domain and the secular power structure (Jackson, 1989, p.2). Mulder (1973) writes some leading monks suggest that the Sangha should actively support the community development programs of the state such as social and humanitarian service or community development activities in order achieve the Buddhist Teachings (Mulder, 1973, p.13).

4.3 Socially engaged Buddhism: Santi Asoke community

Santi Asoke is a Buddhist community, the core teachings practices are indicate to the anti-system which reverses the dominant form of economic thought and focuses on value of community or politically and socially engaged Buddhism. Heikkilä-Horn (2009) writes the founder of Santi Asoke is Bodhiraksa who was ordained as a monk more than thirty years. Santi Asoke has several Asoke temples located in various parts of Thailand. The group rejects the idea of Buddhism as being commercialised and preoccupied with various animistic and Hindu-rituals. For example, monks and nuns are engaged to magic practices for instance sprinkling holy water or predicting the lottery numbers (Heikkilä-Horn, 2009, p.44). Clarke (2006) notes during the economic recession in Thailand (1997-2000) Santi Asoke was not suffer that much from the economic crisis, as a result it seems to prove the point standing oppose to the anti-system which is the main purpose of the movement which clearly oppose to conventional Buddhism or Thai Sangha. Unlike the conventional Buddhism in Thailand Santi Asoke maintains the Buddhist ways of teaching and practicing by engage themselves with the communities. The modernisation and technology are not denied by the movement but were used as a tool to interpret their purpose. Santi Asoke movement advocates the process of shaping the local religion and being reshaped by it refers to as glocalisation (Clarke, 2006).

During my visiting at Santi Asoke community, the staff gave me a brief tour of Samma Sikha Santi Asoke School and some of the facilities associated with Santi Asoke, including recycling centre, vegetarian restaurant, a store selling second hand items, natural organic foods supermarket, and FMTV, the TV channel owned by Santi Asoke community. Students, ordained men, and women, and lay men, and women live within the same community. To understand the networks of Asoke Heikkilä-Horn (2009) notes Santi Asoke consists of networks of four major wings engaged in spiritual, agricultural, political and social activities (Heikkilä-Horn, 2009, p.40).



Dwelling for nuns (Kuti), Santi Asoke Community, Bangkok by Panjasri Thongaree

The spiritual group consists of monk, nuns, novices and aspirants (Heikkilä-Horn, 2009). The staff at Santi Asoke shows me *Kutis* or a dwelling for monks and nuns. A person can come to *Kuti* and discuss their problems with monks and nuns who act as advisers. According to Heikkilä-Horn (2009) monks and nuns do not give the straight answer in order to solve the problem but attempt to encourage a person to find a solution by applying Buddhism (Heikkilä-Horn, 2009, p.40). The second wing of Santi Asoke network is agricultural group (Heikkilä-Horn, 2009). As I entered Santi Asoke community I can feel agriculture is very important for the community because the followers are strict vegetarian. For example, the community supports the agricultural development by doing agricultural research and acts as a supplier for cheap organic and vegetarian food. The community also has a deep concern on the environmental issues. During the visit the staff took me to the recycling centre and explained that most of the items are from donation and they will go to the second hand store in the community selling for the cheap price. The aim of this project is to reduce waste by recycling. According to Buddhism such practices can be understand that merit is not for accumulation and affect individual level as the first movement but to serve the whole

community by being an alternative way based on social values such as religious, environmental and spiritual developments.



Recycling centre of Santi Asoke Community, Bangkok by Panjasri Thongaree

The third wing of Santi Asoke is the political network. According to Heikkilä-Horn (2009) the political network consists of the supporters of Chamlong Srimuang, a Thai activist and former politician. The supporters are rural and urban Asoke members, however the majority of the supporters are from the urban Santi Asoke community (Heikkilä-Horn, 2009, p.42). I noticed that Santi Asoke is a political active Buddhism as when the staff was giving me a tour in the community she brought up the political issues as part of the conversation. The fourth wing is the socially engaged group working in education and healthcare (Heikkilä-Horn, 2009). As the study focus on the challenges of globalisation to the education in Thailand, I will concentrate on this group, particularly in education. Santi Asoke respond to the challenges of globalisation by applying the Buddhist teachings to the community as Kitiarsa (2008) explains Santi Asoke regards merit as religious goods, however in order to gain merit it is not necessary for one to engage to business and donation but by ways of living. In the era of globalisation, merit was used as a tool to against the capitalism, materialism and consumerism with its emphasis on vegetarianism, alternatives to capitalism, and environmental concern (Kitiarsa, 2008). It shows that globalisation impacts on Thai education in both positive and negative ways as discussed in chapter 3. My question is: *How the challenges of globalisation to education in Thailand are perceived in a Buddhist perspective?* The interview with Santi Asoke is shown in the next section.

4.3.1 Interview analysis: Research Fieldwork at Santi Asoke community in Bangkok

The field-observation has taken place on March 20, 2012. A semi-structured interview was conducted with a Managing Director of Santi Asoke community, Bangkok Office. The interview took approximately forty minutes and transcribed from the note-taking as following:

Samma Sikha Santi Asoke School is based on a Buddhist education located in Santi Asoke community in Bangkok. I have been informed by my key informants that there are approximately fifty students in who studies in the school. Most of the students are from families that have been working in Santi-Asoke community. Samma Sikha Santi Asoke School divided into kindergarten, primary and high school, providing free education and accommodation for students. Children are learning to engage to the community and being a productive by working in organic vegetables projects and they are not allowed to carry the money at school. During the field observation my key informant explains that school has prioritised the accumulation of merit rather than the human capital. For instance, merit was used as a tool to against the capitalism, materialism and consumerism with its emphasis on vegetarianism and environmental concern.

In order to enter the school parents and students will have an interview with the school, then school will examine whether they pass the criteria or not. Students require following the strict Buddhist rules for instance, the school is strongly prohibit drinking, gambling, fighting and being strict vegetarians and of students break the rules they will need to leave the school. At Samma Sikha Santi Asoke School, students learn the compulsory subjects but focus on the aspect of Sila (moral conduct), Samadhi (concentration), and Panna (Wisdom) as illustrates in the practical learning, including vocational training such as growing organic vegetables, weaving, community work and the practice of vegetarianism.

During the interview there are some questions I have asked my key informant. His answers are as following:

How to explain the issue of poor or underprivileged children who are in a difficult situation to access to education in the context of Buddhism?

“It does not matter if they are poor. In the case of Samma Sikha Santi Asoke School is free education but students need to follow Buddhist rules.”

How Buddhism view the issue of helping these children?

“There are two types of helping, the first one is when they are really in needs for instance, when suffer for natural disasters. The second type is by providing welfare to them. In Buddhism spiritual development is more important than only providing welfare.”

How Buddhism view the issue of providing education for these children?

“Education is good but it is also depends on what type of education it is.”

The case of Santi Asoke reveals how the globalisation challenges to Buddhism in a way that globalisation refers to capitalism, materialism and consumerism which against the Buddhist rules. On the other hand globalisation impacts the community in a good way, for example the community combines the globalisation with Buddhist teachings. The community accepts the modernisation and technology in order to maintain their networks. Regarding to the question of *how the challenges of globalisation to education in Thailand are perceived in a Buddhist perspective?* My own interpretation based on the interview is when globalisation is perceived negatively it can be understood that globalisation causes inequality. Regarding street children in Thailand as one of the social problems in Thailand, providing welfare and education for them is not the solution for this problem. This is because education does not give rights to the children but mere changing social status. Müller (2011) claims the education in developing countries usually involves with various ideologies beyond the areas of education rather than education for a self-determined life for those being educated (Müller, 2011). I argue that in the case of Thailand inequality is the major problem as the challenges of globalisation cause the gap between rich and poor. The case study of Santi Asoke reveals how Buddhist education ignores social status but more concern on spirituality. For example, when my key informant said that “it does not matter if the children are poor but they need to follow Buddhist rules”.

Santi Asoke shows how Buddhist education is an alternative path to respond to the challenges of globalisation. The practical learning at Samma Sikha Santi Asoke School such as working with farming projects or weaving allows children to engage to the

community. According to the interview I found that the rights to education cannot apply to the Buddhist education. Nevertheless, in the case of Thailand education encounters the cause of inequality from the globalisation because education can provide the social status to children but in a certain extent the children cannot express their thoughts as part of the society, for instance the case of street children in Thailand. Furthermore, based on the interview Buddhist education is not defined as the framework of education that lead to the rights to education. However, it reveals how this framework of education achieved the equality in term of spirituality. As in the case of Thailand the cause of inequality is the crucial factor that obstructs the rights to education to all.

CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSION

Not until the eighteenth century that the boundary between adulthood and childhood became manifest in the Western society. The romantic idea of childhood has shifted the role of the child from being productive to a consumer by replaces the working space and public sphere to family, home, school or private sphere. Once the welfare policies have been achieved in the Western society had succeed in poverty alleviation, the idea of humanitarian development has exported to the South due to the available of the international media and the images became more extreme. As a result, the image of suffering children has fulfilled the romantic idea of childhood in order to reinforcing the defining of characteristics of childhood; dependence and powerless therefore, children were given the humanitarian identity it creates the moral obligation as spectators show his or her concern to towards the suffering from spectator's imagination.

The interviews in Kanchanaburi and Petchabun show the result from the international media as part of the globalisation processes reveals the problem of the inequality in Thailand for example, the relationship between the images of suffering children and a classic human development. The study found that how the education is provided to the children is important. The case of street children in Thailand reveals education is not the solution in order to improve the rights to education in Thailand. This is because the children received the education however they are not engaged to the society and as a result of this the number of the street children are increasing over times and left as one of the unsolved social problems in Thailand.

In Western society the conception of childhood did not play a prominent role until the introduction of the effective welfare system by the government for instance the New Poor Law 1834 in England. For example, the humanitarian style as the provision of private charity has shifted to the public intervention such as the development of child-focused institutions or the state-supported compulsory school and changes the status of the child from a subject to a citizen, from a dependent to a semi-legal person or future citizens which regards as the liberal values. For example, the emerge of the UNCRC that children have rights to be protected in the happiness, home, play and school in order to become rational and finally gains the rights to full citizenship. Nevertheless, despite the liberal model of childhood is seen as the colonial metaphor because the implication of the UNCRC shows that the rights are not applied to all but will recognised only to those who aware of the rights. As shown above, the humanitarian-approach and the right-based approach are moving to the different directions in order to be legitimized, despite they both accept that there is a separate domain set childhood apart from the adulthood, thus regarding to this perspective children are belong to school rather than working in the labour force.

In this study reveals how Thailand responds to the challenges of globalisation however it causes the inequality to education in Thailand. I have examined Thai education policy focusing on the 1999 National Education Act and applied to the work of Müller (2011). In 1997-2000, Thailand suffered from the serious financial. The consequences from the challenge from industrial development in Asia and the process of globalisation influence in Thai education sector intensively. The global financial crisis and the economic growth and its impacts in education sector became the issue in the international debates on educational policy and practice. For example, the UNESCO commissioned Global Monitoring Report launched in Bangkok in 2010. The report focuses on reaching the marginalised children and minimising the impact of the financial crisis on Thai education sector. In international media the images of children continue to exist. For instance, the pictures of suffering children that represent in the work of advocacy NGOs who play as a moral actor by speaking on behalf of children and have the philosophy of childhood with the central dimensions of family, home, school and play.

In the case of Thailand there are many civil society organisations who aim to provide welfare and education to children who determined as underprivileged and poor children for instance, suffering children who represented in the international media. I applied this to the work of Müller (2011)

that the education in developing countries can contribute to a certain understanding of poverty alleviation and human resource development, or more generally to a clearly defined vision of social change (Müller, 2011). The increasing of advocates NGOs participated in the policy-making process aim to alleviate poverty by providing welfare such as education to the children, however it claims as solely giving the social status to children but not empowering the children. Furthermore, the challenges of globalisation cause the inequality to education in Thailand for instance, the unequal resources distribution of education between the urban and rural Thailand. The 1999 National Education Act and what Müller (2011) pointed out that the education policy commonly involves with a combination of political, social, economic and pedagogic concerns which has objectives beyond the area of education (Müller, 2011) are interconnected. The 1999 National Education Act reveals how Thai education policy focus on human resources development particularly, in the urban Thailand however ignores the certain group of marginalised children such as street children or the problem of the unequal resources distribution of education between the urban and rural Thailand. As Onozawa (2000) explains in Thailand there is different perception of education of urban and rural people in Thailand based on their way of living (Onozawa, 2000). The rights to education will not be possible in Thai society because though all receive the education (for determine their own choices or make their own decisions) the education will only change the social status for children but not engaging all to the society. I conclude that the problem of the inequality is the crucial factor that obstructs the rights to education in Thailand, hence the rights to education is not yet appropriate to discuss if the inequality is not yet being solved.

In chapter 4 I attempt to show the alternative path in order to solve the problem of inequality in Thailand. I have look at how Buddhism influences in Thai global conception of childhood and in education reform. For example, temple was a centre of education until the separation between monastic and secular education during the nineteenth and twentieth century. As a result of this, the global conception of childhood is also changing the gender role in Thai society. The Buddhist temple school was serving mainly for males and females were working in a domestic space such as taking care of the households. After the compulsory educational policy has launched during the twentieth century, males and females have the equal opportunities to access to education in both formal school and Buddhist temple school. Buddhism plays a prominent role in this case as the complex relationship between state, the Sangha and Buddhist movements in Thailand impacts on education policy in Thailand. This is because Buddhism in Thailand has a unique symbolic value

as rather than only for the religious salvation from suffering it is able to express its aspiration by gaining material prosperity, social and political success. Due to the consequences from rapid economic growth and political during the 1970s, Buddhism has been commercialised through the reliance on philanthropy which accepts the role of the market as a generator of wealth and aims to serve on the individual level or being subjective spirituality. Therefore the Sangha has been challenged by socially engaged Buddhism as the example of Samma Sikha Santi Asoke School. The core teachings practices of the school are indicate to the anti-system which reverses the dominant form of economic thought and focuses on value of community.

The case study of Santi Asoke shows how socially engaged Buddhism responds to the challenges of globalisation. Samma Sikha Santi Asoke School has prioritised the practical learning such as growing organic vegetables, weaving, community work and the practice of vegetarianism. Santi Asoke regards this way of learning as the way of living or Buddhism. The school has a clear religious purpose states that merit is used as a tool to against the capitalism, materialism and consumerism with its emphasis on vegetarianism, and environmental concern, despite the modernisation and technology are not denied by the movement but were used as a tool to interpret their purpose for instance, the FMTV, television's channel owned by Santi Asoke. The focus on human resource development in this case is more related to the politics because it aims to achieve the religious purpose and attempts to pursue social change in Thai society. For example, the idea of anti-capitalism, anti-materialism and anti-consumerism are put to practice in the school. Children are learning to engage to the community and being a productive by working in projects that emphasis on vegetarianism and environmental concern.

In the conclusion, the rights to education will be a long way to go in Thailand because the problem of inequality in education. The case study of Santi Asoke shows how to achieve the equality in a spiritual way. Samma Sikha Santi Asoke School highlights how education has not focus on the social status but to engaging the learners to the community. The case study did not attempt to show that Buddhist education is the answer for the rights to education to all in Thailand. Nevertheless, Santi Asoke community appears as the case which demonstrating how equality can be perceived in an alternative way while the welfare system has not been introduced to Thai society.

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APPENDIX I: SITE OF FIELDWORK – MAP OF THAILAND

