

Education as the Practice of Freedom: time to liberate marginalized groups in Thailand

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Abstract:

This article is the result of a qualitative study on educational management state and the promotion for the liberation of marginalised groups in Thailand that are found to be dominated by education, including unable to organize education to create their own identity. The data was collected from the analysis of documents related to educational management in Thailand and field study, in-depth interviews and observation on educational management state of marginalised groups in five areas Including ethnic groups, community cultural rehabilitation groups, transnational labour groups, non-formal education groups, and homeschool groups. The informants were selected using purposive in five areas that representatives phenomena of the oppression and suggest the educational management to the freedom. Data were analyzed based on content analysis and verification used a triangulation technique. The results revealed that mainstream education makes ethnic groups abandon their original beliefs and domiciles; emigrate to urban societies more. Mainstream education also overwhelms thinking methods in the way that it makes learners not to believe in self and human dignity that can create cultures on their own. Therefore, educational rehabilitation must start from a belief in human dignity. Cooperation from different sectors is also required. The key freedom creation process is to promote learner self-realization through cultures, customs, and original beliefs; to promote knowledge creation, and to apply knowledge to develop their valuable communities.

Keywords: *Emancipation learning, Freire, non-formal education, community education, Thailand.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, emancipation in education is the most well-known and widely This paradigm has been associated with critical

influential theory of education especially in the field of non-formal education and adult education.

pedagogy that believed in education as an instrument for liberation and became an issue of global concern for educational management for special target groups (Duckworth & Tett, 2019; Tur Porres , Wildemeersch, & Simons, 2014). Many countries have adopted the concept of education for liberation in their education. In the United States, prison education programs and holistic reentry programs have attempted to bring those concepts to those who have low educational attainment and low job skills to have opportunities and quality of life for prisoners after acquit (Robinson & Smith, 2019). In Palestinian refugee camps in the West Bank, State education manipulate Palestinian by the oppressor's worldview and reduce human identity. Both the curriculum and pedagogy contributed to reducing the awareness of Palestinian history. Besides, if the state reduces its role, Palestinian groups will be interested in history, indigenous knowledge, and will free them from the colonial paradigm (Pherali & Turner, 2018).

In Thailand, before the schooling system in Thai society, learning was hidden in the way of life of people. For example, sons followed fathers to work, or into forests for finding food. Daughters followed mothers into kitchens for cooking, and to wash clothes or clean the floor. For the formal part, men learned from temples while women learned from the elderly. This can be viewed that education served the livelihood of human in all aspects for living together in societies. Later on, when modern education has come with the belief leading to differentiate humans and to view ethnic groups as well as underprivileged as non-Thais. It hinders those people from being Thais, as to discriminate irrelevant people away, minorities, stateless children, migrant workers, disadvantaged people and homeschool. These groups are treated, received educational opportunities, differently from other people in societies. Therefore, these people are hindered out and finally become marginalised groups. They are also under the control of power through the government mechanism. Moreover, when the need for nation-state creation occurs intending to create the same characteristics to

all people, schools emerge to accomplish this goal. They focus on producing people into systems expected by the government and to producing people into the labour market (Laungaramsri, 1998; Thianlai & Sakulsri, 2012; Thongdeelert, 2017).

When considering educational management in Thailand, only the increase of formal education is found. Non-formal education, adult education, is neglected despite its significance of rural and agricultural development (Panitchpakdi, 2018). When considering down to the local level, it was found that each contains different economic characteristics. Some are mainly agriculture while some are mainly mining and farming. Therefore, education should be promoted to conform to the characteristics of each local area in which learners get involved in and used to see, rather than educational management in which they have never had experiences before. Well-organized educational management must try to lead to the goal stated above, from which learners' interests conform to common interests. If so, common interests will not be neglected. Learners should also be focused on rather than mainly on government interests (Ungphakorn, 2016).

According to studies on the community level, it was found that the knowledge system and original relationship system have been eroded, from interdependence and sharing among inhabitants to more individual living. That is because each must work hard to gain income for themselves and their families, resulting in no time for social activities. The social relationship has changed to an economic relationship or so-called sharing individuals' interests bound with money instead of interdependence relationship. This also includes learning in communities turning its back to community knowledge, neglect of community customs, and turning to the relationship system based on economic interests under the conceptual framework of capitalism. This sign implies the deterioration due to the government's national development system that forces inhabitants in communities to receive education provided by the

government. The education system is a dilemma that brings prosperities to communities but deteriorates local life and makes people recognize their origins less (Nakornthap, 2008).

However, the education is a selected and regulated social process to develop individuals' efficiency to its maximum at best as per the desirable social values. The education should facilitate the learners to liberate themselves from slavery under the system and can fully serve the human spirit. This called education that brings freedom creation to learners (Darder, 2015; Jarvis & Wilson, 2005). Therefore, it can be viewed that government education does not serve communities but capitalism. According to the state that the government tries to make them become others, a study on freedom should be guidance on liberating learners from government bondage. Therefore, the researcher was interested to study such educational management, with the key objective to study guidance on educational management to promote freedom creation for marginalised groups.

II LITERATURE REVIEW

When mentioning education for freedom, it usually refers to freedom, autonomy, social justice, and self. Many educators support these ideas such as Curle, Freire, Giroux, Mezirow, Nyerere, and Ranciere. These educators expect to drive people under oppression to take actions for their self-protection. Nevertheless, to reach freedom, they must understand first what they want. Such knowledge and understanding are based on their presupposition toward power relations and social justice support to create self; including self-reliance, autonomy, self-confidence, and perception change to meet their true spirit. The freedom creation process requires implementation strategies, multiple methods of knowledge acquisition, and criticism of things in their own lives and societies. However, such characteristics of learners are the key factors leading them to new perspectives, because experiences create self and judgement on societies (Freire, 2016;

Giroux, 2010; Smidt, 2014; Streck, Redin, & Zitkoski, 2012).

To reach freedom, individuals must understand the state of oppression first. De Lissovoy (2008) studied the three forms of oppression paradigm as followed; 1) cultural hegemony, referring to the establishment of a thinking system, idealism system, and cultural system as the main thinking and cultural system of societies while others are hindered as unjustified systems (Gramsci, 1982). 2) Capitalist accumulation refers to the accumulation of capitals owned by elites, with capitalists developing production capacity to increase their markets to make profits. Capitalist accumulation causes a concentration of capitals at capitalists while labours lack of purchasing power, finally resulting in a monopoly (Thomson, 2018). In addition 3) discursive effect formation. Discourse refers to convincing words or speeches that also lead to ripples, hoping for agreement/deference of most people. Politics is thought to fight, and political thoughts are usually formed up from perspectives (Arya, 2019).

After the phenomena of oppression are understood, Freire (2016) suggested that education is an indispensable tool for human and societies. It is a powerful driving social change. Learners should be liberated from traditional instruction that forces and control student thoughts to accept social states. He also suggested instruction guidance on illiterate adults to learn, to understand themselves and environments so that they can learn self-analysis and environmental analysis. It is self-learning for conscience and for liberating themselves from oppression, inertia, and ignorance.

Nyerere was a Tanzanian anti-colonial activist and political theorist who applied the educational concepts of freedom to Tanzania. The goal of his educational management was not to create people for serving the system or for being used as a responsive tool to the system. He rather gave precedence to two issues like 1) responsibility for social values and educational system producing people. To clarify, responsibility for educational management must take a new generation into

considerations. Creating people with only knowledge but lack of criticism cannot support the future state. 2) education and society cannot be separated. Likewise, formal education cannot instruct children to get isolated from societies and economy. Children are like adults, learning must be based on experiences rather than learning from education promoters and textbooks (Mulenga, 2001). When considering the context in Thailand, education is usually controlled by the government to be identical. This can be viewed from the case of hill tribes in the northern part and the borders of the central region in several provinces. The government provides formal education in all areas. For those with no schools, the government provides different forms of educational measure instead, projects of adult education agencies. Therefore, it can be viewed quite clearly that the government applies education as a key measure to create the same pattern to societies and cultures. The measure seems to be successful at a satisfying level to the government (Dulyakasem, 2010).

To harmonize a group of people with different origins and characteristics in terms of social class and cultures for becoming a single unit as people of the government is a key logic of the government based on one inseparable authoritarianism. It creates unity leading to homogeneity, without allowing the diversity of people in the country. Therefore, despite the existence of effort to maintain self of different cultural groups for keeping their rights, holding to homogeneity by the government side also still exists. That is because at least the culture in term of the right for equality is accepted (Wongyannawa, 2016). For education at the area level, it was found that hill tribes are regarded as marginalised groups, mostly neglected by societies in term of their opportunities or rights, as they live around the outer margin of societies. Therefore, the government or urban people can oppress marginality of hill tribes through any processes in the form of policies or educational management. This leads to the legitimacy of discrimination on hill tribes by the government. For example, hill tribes are exploited by the government

for their interests through fulfilling the needs of urban people in the lands of hill tribes. Legitimacy processes to own those lands through announcements of preserved forest areas deprive the rights of hill tribes to make a living although they are also actual people of the government (Sattayavinit, 2014).

Although the government has created administrative legitimacy through educational management process under the same standards in the whole country for homogeneity. The right of human dignity for hill tribes as representatives of marginalised groups discriminated by the government and societies; and of which original societies and traditions are hindered to keep growing in the way they should have. Therefore, the researcher applied these concepts as the framework in the study to create freedom of marginalised groups in Thailand.

III. METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative research to study educational state to create freedom of marginalised groups as follows. 1) The documentary study was applied, based on documents related to educational management in Thailand, to study the overall educational management state. 2) The issues obtained from the documentary study were turned into the interview in the target areas Including ethnic groups, community cultural rehabilitation groups, transnational labour groups, non-formal education groups, and homeschool groups. The source of data in this phase was the selection of the key informants to study educational management state for freedom at the area level. Purposive sampling was used to select five key informants from five area of marginalised groups. In-depth interview and observation were applied to obtain educational management state for freedom at the area level.

For data analysis of educational management state, content analysis was applied. Specifically, it focused on reading for comprehension from field data to obtain the contents. After that, those meanings were differentiated and categorized. Patterns of meaning groups were searched for and linked altogether to

find educational issues. Next, data was verified by the triangulation technique to confirm findings and to create the reliability of data obtained. Sources of data were also verified including documents, situations, places, and informants.

IV. RESULTS

Educational management state of Thailand for marginalised groups

The study on broad educational management state reflected that the problems occur due to the failure of the educational system to facilitate local development. In addition, educational management requires critical reflection creation. Current educational management is still traditional education, that is, it is viewed as out-of-date. The traditional educational pattern creates excessive meanings of a "certificate." Education is only consumer good rather than for investment and rather than the form of individuals' trustable competencies. Therefore, such situations lead to paper valuing rather than living ability. If learners are unable to learn as per criteria fixed, they will be regarded as no knowledge at all. Due to this tradition, educational management cannot step over its old pattern. Instructors are still the centre of learning. Instruction is still in the form of rote learning despite useless knowledge to learners. Despite its goal to be education for local areas, learners and local areas are separated. Local areas do not get any interests from such educational system. Moreover, learners abandon their domiciles after graduation to develop and make their living in better societies. Therefore, local areas are left behind due to such educational development and management.

While educational images at the area level show that education promotes knowledge by listening and paying respect to instructors as well as textbooks, being confident in curriculums, it does not promote paying respect to nature and ourselves. The new belief system is created, not to be confident in the traditional system taught by parents that used to focus mainly on nature-based and environment-

based learning. Besides, an image emerging is to create belief to be employees after graduation; and to forget the community thinking system passed through the family. The phenomena consists of two parts as followed; 1) lack of learning about their origin and 2) lack of cultural inheritance. Inheritance here refers to no succession or participation in ethnic groups' activities by new generations of descendants. Therefore, inheritance does not occur and no transfer from old generations to new generations, resulting in the disappearance of cultures.

Furthermore, the problem of self-realization has arisen from no space for self-understanding and recognition. One reason is that to grow up in poor environments, resulting in inefficient learning that finally makes learners "not recognize themselves." Another reason is there is no space for other educational patterns. Mainstreams already overwhelm most educational space.

One of key informant, community cultural rehabilitation groups, reported:

"...Even now, the trend that we are most tired of is the generation of immigrant parents, who believe that language and culture are not necessary. An old man who says that he was very hurt in this situation, as he sent his son to school and never returned. For this reason, he reflected on what had happened instead of returning to develop his homeland to prosper as he was. But he sees it as inferior, worthless, not prosperous. Those in the world of the past who still have children in the present day are also difficult to accept. ..."

Basic belief to promote learning in the new perspectives

The basic belief significant for educational management is that we must believe that learners embrace "human dignity." Educational management must refocus mainly on learner spirit. "Life" and "religion" must be regarded as the same thing. It is about life in term of spiritual enhancement, not just about occupations and finding income like today.

One of key informant, ethnic groups, reported:

"... Don't believe otherwise. What we believe is that this world is the one who determines our destiny. Nature is mainly because that the highest of knowledge and education is nature. But the new system of education tells you to discard this and believe this education, you will have a job and you will survive. It is a completely contradictory, but if anyone lives with nature, it is legal to get it wrong. We were destroyed by the attitude that I said. The cost of living is that the parents still grow crops for sale and are still poor. Therefore, to be an employee is more comfortable. Children today, we change the knowledge and beliefs. Therefore, when they believe that education will make them survive under the unknown, but, of course, he went school to study to find a job. The teacher taught this way that in the same way, did not survive. ..."

The next characteristic is participation. Learners will have the right of equality to take part in their learning process, to determine their fates, and to create their own learning culture. Learner participation creates thinking, decision-making, and responsibility for their learning outcomes. If viewing in the aspect of liberation, it can be viewed that persons who can liberate themselves are learners only.

The results of the field study indicated that learning in the Karen people conforms to their living state. They live based on their way of life and local wisdom. Their culture of living with forests and the utilization of natural resources with value recognition makes them feel love and possessive toward their communities. Therefore, learning promotion process that combines learner life and local way of life as one will become persistent and sustainable learning.

Providing zones for cultural activities in communities is also a key condition. Having those zones can create a belief in communities that their knowledge and local wisdom are valuable and link inhabitants altogether. To rehabilitate communities back to their cultural wealth like previously, community knowledge must not be neglected.

Therefore, believing that knowledge and local wisdom are significant and to pay respect to sacred items; and that these are the education zones of tribes, the cultural inheritance will occur. It is also believed that community strength must be based on strong knowledge and the strength of inhabitants.

One of key informant, community cultural rehabilitation groups, reported:

"... As I said, how to strengthen a community where it begins with individuals. ... when his knowledge is strong, he himself is strong. This one is a target, but it is a far target. But we want it to be like that. As I said earlier that What to do to allow him to live without leaving himself... "

Learning promotion to create freedom of marginalised groups

Learning promotion provided to marginalised groups for their self-development until it leads to freedom creation consists of the following key components. Self-realization: It is self-analysis to understand backgrounds, origins, and cost of their own and community. This is the starting point of viewing their own social and cultural values.

One of key informant, non-formal education groups, reported:

"... Learning about local issues should be linked to local history, kinship plans, so that learners know about their own relatives, which will ultimately lead to self-understanding. ..."

Discussion and knowledge sharing (dialogues): To view overall processes. It is to motivate their interest in knowledge sharing with other people. It is also to conclude knowledge and receive feedbacks (reflect) to be expert and proficient in developed knowledge. In addition, it is to develop critical thinking in the same way, too.

Key informant, transnational labour groups, reported:

"... What you learn, you will write the problem and write it to share the experience. We will have experience from this person over there. It is not a single learning ... interact with each other, right? ..."

Will be divided in Rayong, some Khlong Yai, we will have a meeting to take lessons to learn and share experiences together. Therefore, everyone will learn everyone's experience. ..."

Adaptation: It is to adapt what they obtain to contexts of communities and societies they live in (practice and verify), and to link their thoughts that already pass critical thinking to real practice in communities. However, the results of practice will create proficiency to who do. Moreover, if they are even also aware of rights and survival of other communities as fellow humans sharing the same fates, they will become leaders who develop and extend knowledge and concepts to transfer to other people later.

One of key informant, homeschool groups, reported: *"... The word "nature" and "environment" because this is important, there are all phases, not wide-division and cannot see because it has connections from myself and the environment in the family, right? Then linked to the Thai society and the global society ... Group learning together in a specific subject matter that learners are interested in and promoting activities based on interests. His interest will develop to create learning skills that will lead to expert knowledge. ..."*

V. DISCUSSION

Educational management in Thailand is still based on key guidance from the centre as the core. Whichever parts in the country we live, we learn in the same pattern as a whole despite the diversity of our races and cultures across the country. The goal of such educational management is to create homogeneity while the goal of educational management at the area level of isolated marginalised groups is to inherit and transfer their own accumulated culture from ancestors. According to the state mentioned, it can be viewed that the government, as the key leader of mainstream education, used the value of homogeneity against the value of knowledge, local wisdom, and cultures of marginalised groups. According to what has

happened, it can be viewed that the government uses its value to overwhelm the value communities. A lot of knowledge has disappeared. As a result, what communities call as local wisdom, cultures, and customs inherited for many generations become valueless. However, answers for the issue of values may not be found that easily due to the collision of values among each particular society, in which different groups of people hold to their own highest values. Therefore, the collision of values in societies is the conflict of interests, beliefs, feelings, and possibly also cultural backgrounds as well as nice customs. This issue is the conflict judging which exit to be found. In fact, since the regime revolution B.E. 2475 (The Siamese Revolution of 1932), the collision of values has occurred continually. Taking a certain side against conforming to democratic principles leads to the same endless conflict (Kittiyapong, 2019). Other than these, it can also be viewed that another problem of educational management is education itself as a tool of the government that keeps repeating formal and same knowledge across the country. This is the destruction of the cultural diversity of ethnic groups. What the government do does not to eliminate but neglect. Such neglect refers to ignorance, including not to pay attention to non-formal education and informal knowledge of people. That is why those community knowledge has gradually disappeared. These government processes destroy human dignity of marginalised groups (Deranty, 2010; Freire, 2016; Rancière & Ross, 1991); and convince them to prefer and tend toward mainstream educational culture. For this reason, these people lose their self-realization, leading to no respect for themselves and communities. Then, they view that they have had are useless, e.g., knowledge and customs. As a result, their homes and communities finally collapse. Greater number of marginalised groups abandon their domiciles and emigrate to urban areas partly due to these causes. Furthermore, the research results indicate that community participation relates to a positive sense of self-worth for community education. Similar to the studies suggesting that the

lack of self-realization arises from the feeling that they are not part of the community. The emancipatory potential of genuine self-realization can be released by making that person feel their responsibility to the community through participating in the dialogue and decision-making process (Magee & Pherali, 2019; Thunman, 2012).

Aforementioned, the government process tries to conduct educational management for ethnic groups based on top-down principles and concepts, of which contents do not relate to ethnic group communities; and of which knowledge obtained is useless to communities. It is not only to dehumanize but it also does not link to communities. It can be viewed that learning in the Karen people includes living with their nature. Therefore, learning and thinking methods mostly link to surrounding things. Nevertheless, external educational system overwhelms their communities by hindering their original thinking system and beliefs until they become different from main social thinking systems. This is another way to overwhelm them while communities have their own identities and self. Therefore, educational management should have conformed to the original way of life of those people. Even so, it does not come out that way in reality. It can also be said that their previous public areas as natural classrooms, learning from ancestors, and freedom have gradually disappeared until they are unable to conduct their educational management that facilitates their “self.” Their freedom/liberty and prosperities are hindered instead of the way they should have been according to the human way of life. Roles of their “self” are reduced while the government roles keep increasing multifold. The growth of ethnic groups is hidden (De Lissovoy, 2008; Finlayson, 2005; Habermas, 1987; Hermann, 2017). Consequently, the education in refugee camps in Jordan and the West Bank suggests that the government controls the policies and perspectives of education without ignoring indigenous knowledge and resourcefulness. While the case from the UK healthcare system point out that the government is paying attention to the majority in the country and

disregarding the possibility of a minority as well as pushing citizens to become marginalized. Therefore, marginal people do not have the same educational opportunities as before (Hui, Latif, Hinsliff-Smith, & Chen, 2020; Magee & Pherali, 2019; Pherali & Turner 2018).

To promote marginalised groups to conduct their educational management is not only to let them learn their “self.” The educational process must increase their human dignity, too. Education is a tool to create freedom of marginalised groups. According to this phenomenon, Habermas (1972) explained that freedom would occur if individuals perceive their rights and their “self.” The top goal of freedom is autonomy, which can be reached based on self-reflection in all dimensions, curiosity, knowledge and self-reflection to social contexts. The results in the target areas also indicated that the first thing that will promote their freedom is self-realization, a significant factor leading to the growth of learning in ethnic groups. It can be said that self-realization is the freedom to learn “self,” self-reliance, and full responsiveness to the human spirit. Perceived learning state leads to the perceived state of community knowledge. Those people with catch up with alienated knowledge coming to destroy the learning system to dehumanize and to believe in the current educational system of the government. According to these issues, it can be viewed that oppressed people can liberate themselves if they perceive actual oppression state through self-recognition. As long as they still fail to catch up with changing, they will remain under those bondages (Freire, 2016; Galloway, 2012; Jarvis and Wilson, 2005). Therefore, to liberate ethnic groups from those bondages, they must be promoted for being able to fully serve their human spirit. That is the goal of the studies for true freedom.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study on educational management state to promote freedom creation for marginalised groups was to study non-formal educational management

state in Thailand based on documentary study and interview with representatives of marginalised groups in different areas. The key issues studied included educational management state, beliefs toward learning promotion, and learning promotion for freedom of marginalised groups; with the key findings from the study as follows. 1) The educational image at the national level focuses mainly on formal education and neglects non-formal as well as local education, firstly resulting in abandonment of domiciles. Educational images at the local level include lack of knowledge of their origins and lack of cultural inheritance, resulting in no self-recognition among learners. Local educational management should reduce the roles of formal education. Adult and non-formal education should be increased. Cultures, customs, and original knowledge should be used as the core for educational management so that learners can access their origins. 2) Beliefs in human dignity and participation are significant to promote learning. Marginalised groups embrace human dignity to conduct their educational management, too. Participation of all sectors can also lead to community education. 3) Learning promotion for freedom of marginalised groups consists of 3 components, self-realization; discussion and knowledge sharing (dialogues); and adaptation to societies they live in (practice and verify). All of these as stated in the first ladder step leading to learning for truly liberating marginalised groups to conduct their educational management.

Recommendations

1. Local educational management should reduce the roles of formal education. Adult and non-formal education should be increased. Cultures, customs, and original knowledge should be used as the core for educational management so that learners can access their origins.
2. Learning promoters must believe in the human dignity of learners. They must also cooperate

with involved agencies for the success of local education.

3. Learning promoters must encourage self-study to learners, along with knowledge sharing with other people and real practice. Feedbacks/reflections from instructors are required so that learners can criticize their actions.

VII. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest.

VIII. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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