

Educational Cooperation between Thailand and Cambodia: Outcomes on Human Development, International Understanding and Future Prospect

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Abstract

Thailand and Cambodia set up educational cooperation since 1996, before signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Promotion of Education in 2003. This research aimed to investigate outcomes of educational cooperation projects on Cambodia human development and international understanding, process of participatory learning and action on educational cooperation among Cambodian coordinators and beneficiaries, driving force and future prospect on educational cooperation, and propose policy recommendation for educational cooperation in the middle future (2020). This research performed 3 phases: documentary research, survey research, and futures research. The samples were 2 groups of participants: 1) 10 Thai and 7 Cambodian coordinators; and 2) 311 Cambodian beneficiaries. The research results revealed Thailand and Cambodia had 4 main educational cooperation projects which consisted of 7 sub-projects. About 14,923 Cambodian beneficiaries were developed by educational cooperation projects. Most of them participated in the project initiated by Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn. After participating with the projects, international understanding among Cambodian coordinators was increased by 2.47 to 3.47 (40 percent); while among Cambodian beneficiaries was increased by 2.81 to 3.59 (28 percent). Analyzing the driving forces affected by the interaction between human development and international understanding indicated educational cooperation between Thailand and Cambodia in the middle future should be focused on higher education and vocational education scholarship.

Keywords: educational cooperation, human development, international understanding, middle future, Cambodia, Thailand

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduce the Problem

Over the past two decades, Thailand is determined to “leap frog” in development status because of strong economic growth and a substantial reduction in poverty (UN Thailand, 2008). Comparing with Cambodia, the closure neighboring country which had had post-war situation, Cambodia’s GDP has quadrupled, increasing from \$216 per capita in 1992 to \$909 per capita in 2011. From 1994 to 2011, Cambodia experienced an average growth rate of 7.7 percent. Between 2004 and 2007, the economy grew above 10 percent annually. (Ministry of Environment, Cambodia, 2012) The EFA Project founded pupils learning achievement is low in the remote areas; more girls drop out of school than boys do. The remote area is generally disadvantaged in the provision of education, education indicators are all low, literacy and non-formal education do not receive enough attention. The mass media education programme for better living is highly limited both in content and reach technical and vocational education is limited to urban areas, available training does not attract the youth and the fit between the skill taught and market needs is poor, quality of basic education generally is low and access limited (National EFA Assessment Group, 1999).

1.2 Explore Importance of the Problem

From 1992 to 1996, the Thai economy showed the continuous development and growth. Amid the rapid development in Thailand, while neighboring countries still confronted several problems of economic development and poverty, thereby leading to greater disparities in social and economic development. (NEDA, 2005) On 2010, After Asian Financial Crisis in 1997, Thailand desired to become a donor country to provide assistance to its neighboring countries, as one of the main issues of the Kingdoms foreign policy. The assistance aimed to enhance development, reduce economic gap in the societies of the neighboring countries, and also strengthen relationship between Thailand and foreign countries through development cooperation in various areas. (UNDP, 2014; UNESCO, 2014; United Nations in Thailand, 2015) The Bilateral program has also been developed to strengthen the relationships between Thailand and neighboring countries including Cambodia, Laos PDR, Vietnam and Myanmar as well as some other developing countries. Although Cambodia has education policy and strategic framework 1995/2000 to put quality improvement and equitable access as the main policy objectives. The majority of Cambodia is still lacking learning facilities such as textbooks, libraries, laboratory, and other learning materials both in number and quality. In the more developed rural areas lack of standard teaching equipment. Libraries remain poorly stocked and out of date. The functionally literate people make up roughly 37 percent of Cambodia's adult population. (UNESCO, 2000; Cambodia Daily, 2000; Sadiman, 2004) According to the bilateral program, Thailand and Cambodia have developed bilateral cooperation since 1993, with importance given to the receiver's demand (demand driven approach) such as technical assistant, medical and health care. Under the Five-Year Plan (2009-2013), education and human resource development has been focused, and Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in education was applied in 2000, the cooperation may take the form of linkage between schools and institutes, exchange of high officials, educational experts, staff and students, exchange of all forms of education-related materials and information, and also included people-to-people relations through cultural and public diplomacy (Ministry of Education, 2000; Media Center, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010; TICA, 2013).

The role of education in promoting international understanding was firstly advocated by UNESCO in 1974. Education is the key to uniting nations, understanding of other countries and its culture, bringing human beings closely together and cultivates their sense of unity as global citizen, world interdependency, and awareness toward peace/human-rights/environment. Education will equip people with the knowledge, skills and concepts which they must have in order to be effective world citizens, help peoples of differing cultures to see what it is that they have in common which when added together is greater than what each has separately, provide awareness, for healthy attitudes, create desirable interest, and promote critical thinking and appreciation among the others. (Palm, 1951; UNESCO, 1974; SWASTIK, 2012; Dinámicas, 2013) Among our neighboring countries, none seems similar to Cambodia, Thai-Cambodian relations are based on deeply rooted beliefs, historical wounds and nationalism conflict (Rojanaphruk, 2011). In addition, the study on educational cooperation strategies between Thailand and neighboring countries from 1994 to 2004 found some Cambodian beneficiaries believed that Thais had negative attitudes towards them even if most of them got the useful knowledge, pleased and proud to be educated, got promotion in work, and being appointed to be either leader or administrator of the organization (Siribanpitak et al., 2009).

1.3 Describe Relevant Scholarship

Most literature sources also emphasize the importance of the education on international understanding. Education is uniquely placed to provide lasting solutions to the major problems facing world society, through the development of better world citizens. Such individuals would have particular attitudes and values such as 'international understanding', tolerance, acceptance, respect and cooperation. While Hill referenced interpersonal relationships as a key indicator of international understanding. (Peterson, 1987; Mattern, 1991; IBO, Gellar, 1996; McKenzie, 1998; Mayor, cited in Peel, 1996, 1998; Norberg, 2000, Hansen, 2002; Hill, 2003; Paris, 2003; Schwindt, 2003; ISA, 2004; UWC, 2005, cited in James, 2007) Prior to studying of 'international understanding', Hinrichs (2003) found it involved knowledge of different cultures, customs, political systems, and religions around the world. It's important to understand economic and technological system and advances in different countries and also how they related to others.

Education can help rural people's capacity to diversify assets and activities, increase productivity and income, and strengthen social cohesion and participation. (Burchi & Muro, 2007) The dominant approach to rural development planning of the early growth-oriented national development strategies became known as the 'blueprint' approach to reflect its emphasis on the project preparation process as they key to successful intervention (Gilbraith, 1997). Since the late 1970s the underlying global trend has been away from directive planning toward enabling planning (World Bank, 1996 cited in Hanna & Picciotto, 2000). While planning

failures occur in rich as well as poor states, and their effects more serious, and so faces greater problems in identifying best choice solutions to complex problems (Korten, 1980 cited in Gilbraith, 1997). In 1988 Chambers put forward sustainable projects in the developing world. These principles have come to inform much rural development research and practice in areas within and beyond agriculture. However, further experience is suggesting that the challenges of sustainable rural development often lie in the relation between levels of action such as how local rural people's organizations articulate with donor organizations and state institutions. (Bebbington, 2004 cited in Elliott, 2006) Since the 1990s, many methods have been developed to explore local issues and realities and to give greater voice to a wider set of local interests. Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) is an approach for learning about and engaging with communities. It combines an ever-growing toolkit of participatory and visual methods with natural interviewing techniques and is intended to facilitate a process of collective analysis and learning. The approach can be used in identifying needs, planning, monitoring or evaluating projects and programmes. Whilst a powerful consultation tool, it offers the opportunity to go beyond mere consultation and promote the active participation of communities in the issues and interventions that shape their lives (Elliott, 2006; Thomas, n.a.).

1.4 State Hypotheses and Their Correspondence to Research Design

Since 1996, Thailand government aimed to strengthen the relationships between Thailand and Cambodia based on educational cooperation; while Cambodians' attitude towards Thais was rather complex, based on deeply rooted beliefs, historical wounds and nationalism, surrounded by popular beliefs among Thais and Cambodians perpetuate prejudice and distrust. (Rojanaphruk, 2011; United Nations in Thailand, 2015) In this study, the researchers would like to study outcomes and future prospect on educational cooperation between Thailand and Cambodia. This research focused on four aspects:

- Investigation outcomes of educational cooperation projects on Cambodia human development and international understanding.
- Examination the process of participatory learning and action on educational cooperation projects among Cambodian coordinators and beneficiaries.
- Identification of driving force and future prospect on educational cooperation between Thailand and Cambodia in middle future (2020).
- Proposing the policy recommendations for educational cooperation between Thailand and Cambodia in middle future (2020).

2. Method

This research performed 3 phases: documentary research, survey research, and futures research. We started with documentary research in Thailand, after that we collected the data from Thais and Cambodians who participated with the projects, and finished by futures workshop in Thailand. The concept of international understanding was applied by the study of Hinrichs in the year 2003 while the concept of participatory learning and action based on Chambers' approach for learning about and engaging with communities (1988). Finally, the driving force derived by cross impact technique was used to propose the policy recommendations for educational cooperation in middle future (2020).

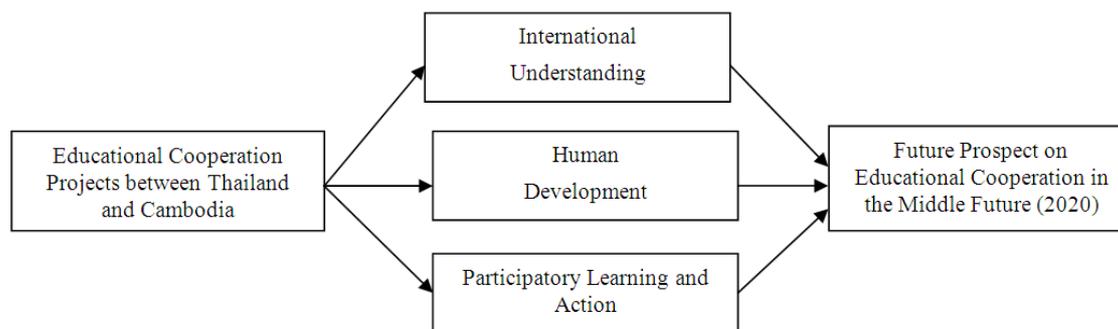


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

2.1 Identify Subsections

This research was conducted both in Thailand and Cambodia and was divided into 3 phases. The first phase started in 2011 by documentary research. The second phase, survey research conducted in Thailand and Cambodia. This phase took a long time from 2012 to 2013 due to great flood in Thailand. The third phase, futures workshop was manipulated in Bangkok, Thailand in 2013.

2.2 Participant (Subject) Characteristics and Sampling Procedures

In this research, we unable to determine the exact number of participants but we estimated by analyzed the educational cooperation projects' documentary. Thais and Cambodians projects' participants were identified and voluntary participants were informed prior to data collection.

Thais and Cambodians were groups into project coordinators and project beneficiaries. 10 Thais and 7 Cambodians coordinators; and 311 Cambodians beneficiaries engaged in self-administration. Key informants: 2 Thais and 5 Cambodians involved in futures workshop to identify the driving forces of educational cooperation outcomes and future prospect on educational cooperation between Thailand and Cambodia in 2020.

2.3 Research Design

This research had 3 phases as followed:

- The first phase started in Thailand, the documentary research was applied, educational cooperation projects' report both in paper, and electronic form were analyze to describe the projects especially the human development outcomes.
- The second phase, survey research was organized in Cambodia and Thailand. We used self-reported questionnaire to collect the data from coordinators and beneficiaries of the educational cooperation projects. The questionnaire was translated into Cambodian (Khmer), back-translation method was used to minimize discrepancies in meaning between the original Thai version and Khmer version. The questionnaire had two major parts. Part 1 comprised 17 items of international understanding (7 elements) based on the study of Hinrichs (2003): 1) developing personal knowledge, communication skills, attitudes, ethical reasoning, and responsibility necessary to live effectively across cultures; 2) recognizing and appreciating ethnic diversity, cultural pluralism, and diverse values and beliefs; 3) recognizing interdependence and connections among cultures and nations; 4) understanding contemporary and historical global issues, their causes, and their effects; 5) valuing peace and international interests over nationalism and cultural identity; 6) understanding how domestic policies affect the world; and 7) respecting democracy and basic human rights. The answers had two stages, before and after participating with the projects; and each stage had 5 levels of Likert's scale. Part 2, had 15 items of the 3 process of participatory learning and action: 1) planning cooperation; 2) implementation; and 3) evaluation. The answers had two stages, chance and need to participating with the projects; and each stage had 5 levels of Likert's scale. In this stage descriptive statistics and Modified Priority Needs Index (Wongwanich, 2010) were used to summarize and describe international understanding and participatory learning and action among coordinators and beneficiaries.
- The third phase, futures workshop was manipulated in Thailand to project the future prospect on educational cooperation between Thailand and Cambodia in the middle future (2020). Then cross impact analysis technique was applied to examine the driving forces on educational cooperation. (Kijtorntam & Siribanpitak, 2008). At the end, policy recommendations for educational cooperation between Thailand and Cambodia in 2020 were proposed.

3. Results

Investigation outcomes of educational cooperation projects on Cambodia human development and international understanding.

3.1 Educational Cooperation Projects and Outcomes on Cambodia Human Development

Table 1. Educational cooperation projects between Thailand and Cambodia and outcomes on human development

Educational cooperation projects between Thailand and Cambodia	Duration	Providers/Level of Cooperation	Number of beneficiary	Cooperation Process
Kampong Cheuteal High School College and scholarships at the vocational education level and the higher education level.	12 years (2000-2012)	Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, Thailand/Bilateral	10,648	Basic education couple with professional training.
2. The neighboring relation project.	6 years (2006–2012)	Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Thailand/Bilateral	60	Educational personnel visiting and short course training.
3. Technical Cooperation Projects: Thai language Department in Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP); and Cambodian–Thai Skill Development Center (CTSDC) in Phnom Penh.	16 years (1996–2012)	Thailand International Development Cooperation Agency (TICA)/Bilateral	4,093	Professional short course training for workforce and short course of Thai language.
4. Staff and Student Exchange Program.	16 years (1996–2012)	Greater Mekong Sub-region Project (GMS), Office of Higher Education Commission (OHEC)/Multilateral	122	Higher educational staff and student exchange program.
Total Number of Projects' Beneficiaries			14,923	

Since 1996, Thailand and Cambodia had 4 main educational cooperation projects which consisted of 7 sub-projects. The longest time-period of cooperation provided by the Thailand International Development Cooperation Agency (TICA) and the Office of Higher Education Commission (OHEC). All projects except 'Staff and Student Exchange Program between Thailand and Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) were at bilateral level of cooperation. About 14,923 Cambodian beneficiaries were developed by educational cooperation projects. Most of them were participated in project initiated by Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn.

3.2 Educational Cooperation Projects and Outcomes on International Understanding among Cambodian Participations

Table 2. Mean of international understanding among Cambodian project coordinators and beneficiaries and percentage of change by the period of participation

IU outcome	Before		After		Percentage of IU Change	
	Coordinators	Beneficiaries	Coordinators	Beneficiaries	Coordinators	Beneficiaries
1. Developing personal knowledge, communication skills, attitudes, ethical reasoning, and responsibility necessary to live effectively across cultures.	2.36	2.58	3.50	3.63	48	41
2. Recognizing and appreciating ethnic diversity, cultural pluralism, and diverse values and beliefs.	2.57	2.66	3.44	3.53	34	33
3. Recognizing interdependence and connections among cultures and nations.	2.56	3.22	3.44	3.99	34	24
4. Understanding contemporary and historical global issues, their causes, and their effects.	2.42	2.81	3.43	3.54	42	26
5. Valuing peace and international interests over nationalism and cultural identity.	2.20	3.22	3.46	4.03	57	25
6. Understanding how domestic policies affect the world.	2.79	2.56	3.67	3.27	32	28
7. Respecting democracy and basic human rights.	2.64	2.88	3.36	3.65	27	27
Total	2.47	2.81	3.47	3.59	40	28

Note. Mean 1.00–2.33 = low level of the international understanding. Mean 2.34–3.66 = moderate level of international understanding. Mean 3.67–5.00 = high level of international understanding.

After participating with educational cooperation project, international understanding of the project coordinators was increased by 40 percent higher than international understanding of the project beneficiaries (28%). Among the project coordinators the highest element of international understanding was ‘Valuing peace and international interests over nationalism and cultural identity’; while among the project beneficiaries the highest element of international understanding was ‘Developing personal knowledge, communication skills, attitudes, ethical reasoning, and responsibility necessary to live effectively across cultures.’

3.3 Future Prospect on Participatory Learning and Action on Educational Cooperation Project

Table 3. Mean of participatory learning and action and PNI on Level of future prospect of educational cooperation among Cambodian project coordinators and beneficiaries

Participatory Learning and Action on Educational Cooperation Projects	Existing		Future Prospect		PNI	
	Coordinators	Beneficiaries	Coordinators	Beneficiaries	Coordinators	Beneficiaries
Planning cooperation	2.36	3.04	3.39	3.80	0.76	1.03
Implementation	2.33	3.20	3.83	3.91	0.71	1.50
Evaluation	2.46	3.21	3.71	3.92	0.71	1.25
Total	2.38	3.14	3.62	3.87	0.73	1.24

Note. Mean 1.00–2.33 = low level of participatory learning and action. Mean 2.34–3.66 = moderate of participatory learning and action. Mean 3.67–5.00 = high of participatory learning and action.

The future prospect on participatory learning and action among Cambodian coordinators was in middle level, lower than those of Cambodian beneficiaries (3.62 and 3.87, respectively). In addition, the PNI of educational cooperation among Cambodian coordinators was lower than those of Cambodian beneficiaries (0.73 and 1.24, respectively).

3.4 Identification of Driving Force and Future Prospect on Educational Cooperation between Thailand and Cambodia in Middle Future (2020)

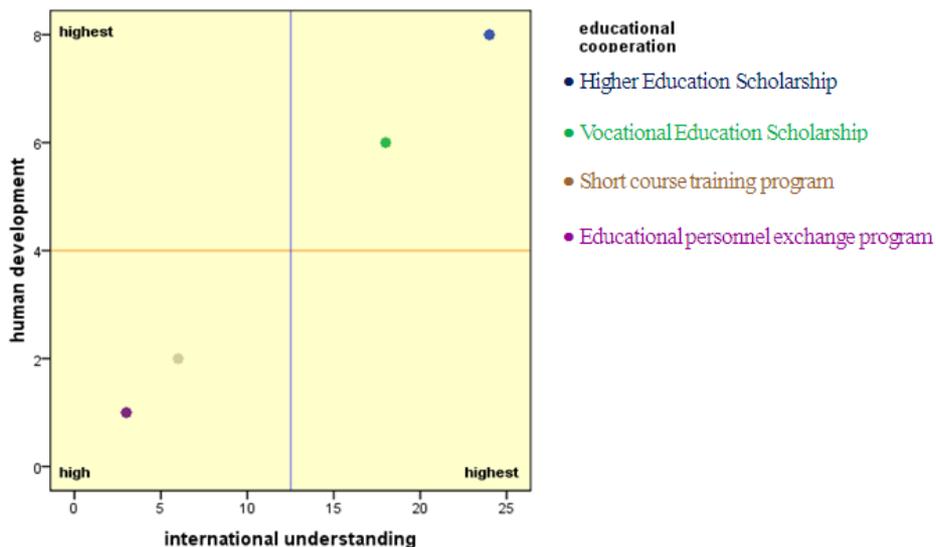


Figure 2. Driving forces of educational cooperation on human development and international understanding

Analyzing the driving forces affected by the interaction between human development and international understanding found two directions of educational cooperation. The highest level of driving force should be derived by higher education scholarship and vocational education scholarship; while the high level of driving force should be derived by short course training and educational personnel exchange program.

3.5 Proposing the Policy Recommendations for Educational Cooperation between Thailand and Cambodia in Middle Future (2020)

According to the driving forces, the policy for educational cooperation between Thailand and Cambodia in the next 10 years should be emphasis in two directions: first, higher education and vocational education scholarship; and second, short course training and educational personnel exchange program.

4. Discussion

This research illustrated educational cooperation could help develop the 3 main groups of Cambodians that had impact on their national goal: 1) equipped poor children in rural area by basic education, vocational education and basic/required professional skills that could lift them out of poverty; 2) developed capacity of educational personnel and teaching profession could strengthen educational system; and 3) enhanced workforce skills could improve Cambodia's productivity and economic growth. Furthermore, the educational cooperation projects preserved the most powerful instruments for reducing poverty and involved the Cambodia Millennium Development Goals for poverty reduction and could involve in Cambodian Government's Achievements and Future Directions in Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2012).

As far as is known, education could play an important role for peace and international understanding, based on a school program encouraging the development of a curriculum exploring the theme of nationalism within an international context, the view that teaching subjects like history and geography should be premised on the goal of promoting internationalism through all educational activities of school, but mainly through the teaching of the national language, social studies, geography, history, foreign languages, and moral education. (Howlett, 2008; Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan, 1965) In this study, education did not involve any program or any curriculum but promote the collaboration among Thai and Cambodian coordinators to enable the projects and let Cambodian beneficiaries utilize and develop their knowledge and profession skills to promote their quality of life related to nation goal. It demonstrated the powerful of education itself can work for international understanding through working cooperatively, but in this point of view the international understanding would stick to valuing peace and international interests over nationalism and cultural identity. Among the project beneficiaries, they had more knowledge, communication skills, attitudes, ethical reasoning, and responsibilities necessary to live effectively across cultures.

The results on driving forces of human development and international understanding affected future prospect of educational cooperation between Thai and Cambodian; in middle future, educational cooperation should focused on higher education and vocational education scholarship. After finished their study, they would contribute socio-economic development in recent years, in a range of areas vital for development, from research and development and innovation to the provision of high-quality training for professionals. (The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the United Kingdom (CSC), 2012) Furthermore, impact of the vocational education will strengthen technical and vocational education, and training system. The outcome will be an agreed project design for strengthening technical and vocational education and training (TVET) sector in Cambodia to help the Government achieve its goal of sustained economic growth and poverty reduction by improving the earning potential of the country's youth (ADB, 2008).

5. Conclusion

Since 1996, Thailand and Cambodia have been launched 4 main the educational cooperation projects with 7 subprojects. It was founded that educational cooperation between Thailand and Cambodia not only supporting the nation goals on human development: the development of poor children in rural area, educational personnel and educational system, and workforce skills; but also promoting Cambodia's productivity and economic growth. In addition, the future educational cooperation between Thailand and Cambodia on higher education scholarship and vocational education scholarship could drive human development and international understanding between Thailand and Cambodia into the highest level.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Recommendation for Research Utilization

The educational cooperation projects between Thailand and Cambodia should be stressed on planning cooperation by project's coordinators and implementation.

6.2 Recommendation for Further Research

Because Thailand and Cambodia had many areas of cooperation projects: such as health, agriculture, and engineering; outcomes on other aspect and driving forces should be investigate. Nevertheless, the needs for

educational cooperation projects between Thailand and among ASEAN countries should be explore.

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