RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CLASSROOM AUTHORITY AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL BELIEFS AS ESPOUSED BY PRIMARY SCHOOL MATHEMATICS TEACHERS FROM THE VERY HIGH AND VERY LOW SOCIO-ECONOMIC REGIONS IN THAILAND

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***ABSTRACT**: This article presents findings of a larger single-country comparative study which set out to better understand primary school teachers' mathematics education-related beliefs in Thailand. By combining the interview and observation data collected in the initial stage of this study with data gathered from the relevant literature, the 8-belief / 22-item 'Thai Teachers' Mathematics Education-related Beliefs' (TTMEB) Scale was developed. The results of the Mann-Whitney U Test showed that Thai teachers in the two examined socio-economic regions espouse statistically different beliefs concerning the source and stability of mathematical knowledge, as well as classroom authority. Further, these three beliefs are found to be significantly and positively correlated.*

Introduction

While the research field of teachers' beliefs has existed for several decades (Thompson, 1984; Ernest, 1989; Pajares, 1992), the majority of these studies are conducted in the Western culturally dominant context. Given that teaching and learning are culturally-situated activities evolving "over long periods of time in ways that are consistent with the stable web of beliefs and assumptions that are part of the culture" (Stigler & Hiebert, 1998, p. 2), it is important that teachers' beliefs should thus be understood "in relation to the cultural beliefs and assumptions that surround them" (ibid, p. 2). Given that no studies concerning Thai teachers' mathematics education-related beliefs have been conducted, and given that people in different socio-economic settings are found to adopt different values and beliefs (Willits et al., 1977; Komin, 1991); it is thus the intention of this study to carry out a single-country comparative study to examine more closely whether mathematics education-related beliefs as espoused by primary school Thai teachers in different socio-economic contexts might vary.

The role of teachers' beliefs cannot be overlooked, especially when Pajares (1992) points out that "the beliefs teachers hold influence their perceptions and judgements, which, in turn, affect their behaviour in the classroom" (p. 307). Studies, such as Staub & Stern (2002), Clooney

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(2001) and Lubinski & Jaberg (1997), have all shown significant relationship between teachers' pedagogical beliefs and their instructional practices. Thus, the importance of teachers' beliefs should not be neglected, despite such beliefs may not be fully transformed into instructional practices due to various contextual constraints (Ernest, 1989).

Further, Thompson (1984) notes that "any attempt to improve the quality of […] teaching must begin with an understanding of the conceptions held by the teachers and how these related to their instructional practices" (p. 106). Unless these beliefs are being scrutinised thoroughly, Richardson (1994, p.6) argues, "teachers may perpetuate practices based on questionable assumptions and beliefs"

Epistemological and Classroom Authority Beliefs

Given the scope of this article, a strategic decision has been taken to focus on three beliefs, namely the two epistemological beliefs concerning the source and stability of mathematical knowledge on the one hand, and the classroom authority belief on the other. Further, given that the field of mathematics education lacks a comprehensive theoretical model of epistemological beliefs (Muijs, 2004), a decision is made to adapt Schommer's (1990) epistemological framework to help guide the subsequent discussion of some of the seminal studies that deal with epistemological questions in the field of mathematics education.

Drawing from the works of Perry (1970), Dweck & Leggett (1988) and Schoenfeld (1983), Schommer (1990) designed the 63-item Epistemological Questionnaire (EQ) to elicit U.S.-based undergraduate students' epistemological beliefs and investigate how they might affect students' comprehension in reading. Factor analysis yielded five different constructs - three of which are epistemological dimensions i.e. *source of knowledge* (alternatively known as *omniscient authority*), ranging from knowledge as

> [H]anded down by authority [such as teachers or textbooks] to derived from reason and evidence"; *stability of knowledge* (alternatively known as *certain knowledge*), ranging from knowledge as "certain to evolving"; and *structure of knowledge* (alternatively known as *simple knowledge*), ranging from knowledge as "isolated bits to integrated concepts" (Schommer-Aikins et al., 2005, p. 209).

While Schommer's (1988, 1990, 1993, 1994, 1998) classification of epistemological beliefs was not designed with mathematical knowledge and mathematics teachers in mind, and that while the on-going debate concerning whether epistemological beliefs are domain-general (Schommer & Walker, 1995) or domain-specific (Stodolsky et al., 1991; Hofer, 2000) still remains inconclusive; such epistemological classification is thought to be applicable and useful to frame the current study as it appears to encompass most of the recurring themes emerging in the following literature on epistemology and mathematics education. However, given the word limit of this article, only the beliefs relating to the source and stability of knowledge beliefs will be examined here.

Source of Mathematical Knowledge

Drawing from Plato's perspective on the nature of mathematical entities, *Platonists* argue that mathematical knowledge exist "outside space and time [and] independent of any

consciousness, individual or social" (Hersh, 1997, p. 9). Alternatively put, mathematical knowledge has always been out there waiting for human to discover it. They were never created. They never change. Similarly, Hardy (1940) believes that,

> [M]athematical reality lies outside us, that our function is to discover or observe it, and that the theorems which we prove, and which we describe grandiloquently as our 'creations', are simply our notes of our observations (p. 35).

For Platonists, external authorities are the main source of knowledge, as Hersh (1997, p.9) highlights that "what mathematicians publish, cite, and especially teach, will decide the rules". The *constructivist* school of thought appears to disagree with Platonists concerning the source of knowledge, arguing that knowledge is not discovered, but constructed by humans (i.e. learners) themselves. Platonists would, however, challenge that view by arguing that

> When two dinosaurs wandered to the water hole in the Jurassic era and meet another pair of dinosaurs happily sloshing, there were four dinosaurs at the water hole, even though no human was present to think, "2 + 2 = 4." This shows […] that 2 + 2 really is 4 in reality, not just in some cultural consciousness. 2 + 2 = 4 is a law of nature […] independent of human thought" (Hersh, 1997, p. 15).

Stability of Mathematical Knowledge

Drawing from Lakatos's (1978) notions of Euclidean and Quasi-empirical, Lerman (1990) distinguishes two major perspectives of the nature of mathematics, namely *absolutism* and *fallibilism*. In terms of the former view, mathematical knowledge is seen as "timeless truths" (Lerman, 1990, p. 54) and as an "objective, absolute, certain and incorrigible body of knowledge, which rests on the firm foundations of deductive logic" (Ernest, 1995, p. 451). In brief, mathematical knowledge is thus perceived to be highly stable, permanent and fixed. Fallibilists, on the other hand, view mathematics as "a social construction, its results relative to time and place, and subject to revolutionary change as much as other forms of knowledge" (Lerman, 1990, p. 55), and as such mathematical knowledge is understood to be "fallible and eternally open to revision, both in terms of its proofs and its concepts" (Ernest, 1995, p. 452).

An example to illustrate both views can be found in geometry, which served from the time of Plato as proof that certainty is possible in human knowledge (Hersh, 1997). However, it was not until the nineteenth century that the foundation of this belief was challenged by the advent of non-Euclidean geometries, which showed that the Fifth Postulate (or the Parallel Postulate) of Euclid's Elements was not always certain. In brief, while it could be logically deduced from the Fifth Postulate that the sum of the angles in every triangle is 180° (Lewis, 1920), non-Euclidean geometries prove that the three angles of a triangle do not always add to 180°, whereby in hyperbolic geometry the sum of the three angles is always less than 180° and can approach zero, while in elliptic geometry it is greater than 180° (Milnor, 1982). Subsequently, this illustrates how what once was perceived as absolute and permanent, was subject to revision upon new knowledge and rules.

Classroom Authority

This belief is associated with Thai culture, and is grounded in the empirical data gathered from Thai teachers, that was not evident in the Western culturally dominant literatures. From the interview data, one teacher, for example, talked about how pupils in Thai society needed to respect teachers as they are regarded as pupils' second parents. This resonates the observation data in which the observed teachers established power distance within the classroom by expecting the class to demonstrate their respect to them, through prompting the class prefects to order their classmates to give them a 'wai' – a respectful gesture made by placing one's hands together in front of their face and bowing a little. This act can be done while either sitting or standing.

Power distance can be taken to mean the extent to which less powerful members of a society (i.e. juniors) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally (Hofstede, 2007). According to Hofstede (1994), such extent could be measured using Power Distance Index (PDI): the bigger the index, the higher the level of acceptance and expectation of such mutual inequality. According to Hofstede (2007)'s study, Thailand scored 64 on the Power Distance Index (PDI), indicating a relatively high level of acceptance and expectation of power being distributed unequally in the society. Hofstede (1994) describes the classroom environment in a culture with high PDI score as follows:

> Teachers are treated with respect; students may have to stand up when they enter. The educational process is teacher-centred […]. In the classroom there is supposed to be a strict order with the teacher initiating all communication (…) Students in class speak up only when invited to; teachers are never publicly contradicted or criticised and are treated with deference even outside school (p. 34).

Subsequently, given the above social expectations and features of Thai society, it becomes apparent why Thai pupils tend to be very respectful to their teachers, and why Thai teachers expect them to do so.

Socio-Economic Differences in Thailand

The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) *Human Development Index (HDI)* is a well-established socio-economic status indicator and is employed in this study to distinguish different provincial-level socioeconomic settings in Thailand. The Index is ultimately Weberian, as it is essentially a composite index comprising eight different indices, covering both economic-related and non-economic-related dimensions of social stratification i.e. Health, Education, Employment, Income, Housing and Living Environment, Family and Community Life, Transportation and Communication and Participation Indices (UNDP, 2007).

From this report, the following ten provinces have the highest HDI scores: Phuket, Bangkok, Pathum Thani, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya, Nonthaburi, Songkhla, Sing Buri, Nakhon Pathom, Rayong, and Samut Prakan; while the following ten provinces have the lowest HDI scores: Mae Hong Son, Tak, Surin, Kamphaeng Phet, Sisaket, Narathiwat, Chaiyaphum, Nakhon Phanom, Phetchabun, and Nong Bua Lam Phu.

One major weakness of the HDI is the extent to which a socio-economic status, given to each province, being representative to the entire population who live in that province. Clearly, the fact that Bangkok is thought to be doing *very well* socially and economically does not necessarily

imply that every single person who lives in Bangkok experiences the same level of status. However, given the fact that the *HDI – Thailand* report (UNDP, 2007) appears to be the only and most credible source of information being available on socio-economic status of all Thailand's provinces, it is thus considered appropriate to adopt the HDI to help categorise provinces according to their socio-economic status.

Research Questions

In accordance with the discussion above, two central research questions are subsequently formulated as following: "To what extent are Thai mathematics teachers in the very high and very low socio-economic settings share their beliefs on classroom authority, the source and stability of mathematical knowledge?"

Furthermore, as Ernest (1989, p.251) points out that "teachers' views of the nature of mathematics provide a basis for the teachers' mental models of the teaching […] of mathematics", it would thus be of great interest to ascertain whether there is any relationship between beliefs concerning mathematical knowledge on the one hand, and their beliefs concerning mathematics learning and teaching on the other.

Consequently, the second and final research question reads: "To what extent are Thai mathematics teachers' beliefs concerning classroom authority, and the source and stability of mathematical knowledge related across the two socio-economic settings?"

Method

As previously mentioned, given that there is no existing literature on Thai teachers' mathematics education-related beliefs, it is subsequently essential that Thai teachers' beliefs are elicited during the pilot stage, and also included in the final questionnaire statements. For this, a sample of Thai teachers will be interviewed and their mathematics lessons observed to elicit their espoused beliefs as an attempt to ensure that as many unexplored beliefs, if any, are being considered. Therefore, a mixed-methods research can be said to help minimise the threats to the validity and representativeness of the research findings.

Participants

For the qualitative stage, eight Thai teachers in four Thai state primary schools were observed and interviewed. The first and second schools were located in Bangkok and Samut Prakan respectively (i.e. the very high socio-economic cohort), while the third and fourth schools were located in Tak and Nong Bua Lam Phu respectively (i.e. the very low socio-economic cohort).

During the pilot survey stage, of the 120 Thai mathematics teachers in both the very high and very low socio-economic settings to whom the pilot survey had been sent to, 98 teachers responded. Forty of these teachers were from the very high socio-economic cohort, while the remaining 58 teachers were from the very low socio-economic cohort.

For the final survey stage, 500 teachers in each of the two socio-economic cohorts were asked to complete the final TTMEB survey, totalling 1,000 teachers. As many as 745 teachers completed and returned the survey, resulting in a 74.5% response rate. Of these 745 teachers, 379 teachers (or 50.9%) were from the very high socio-economic cohort, while the remaining 366

teachers (or 49.1%) were from the very low socio-economic cohort. Across the two socio-economic cohorts, the majority of Thai teachers participated in this study were female (65.6%), aged 51-60 year old (39.3%) with some 21-30 years of teaching experience (33.4%) and whose highest education level was bachelor's level (85%), with a class size of 21 - 30 pupils (38.9%) as the most common class size.

Development of the TTMEB Questionnaire Instrument

In order to answer the two central research questions, a five-point Likert ''Thai Teachers' Mathematics Education-related Beliefs' (TTMEB) scale was first developed. Since the majority of existing scales on this topic at the time were created in the Western culturally dominant context, it was crucial not to assume that a survey instrument developed in one socio-cultural context would also be applicable and relevant in another.

The TTMEB scale was thus created by combining existing survey items (e.g. those found in the studies of Raymond, 1997; Nisbet & Warren, 2000, Barkatsas & Malone, 2005; Ernest 2006), with newly constructed items using fieldwork data that were collected from interviewing eight Thai mathematics primary school teachers, and observational data of their associated mathematics lessons. These qualitative data were then analysed systematically using the coding and constant comparative methods. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss in detail these two methods, it might suffice to say that the former is the process in which labels are given to words, phrases, or sentences, found in a given transcript, that appear regularly and significant (Creswell, 2005; Ayr et al., 2006). In the context of this study, some 16 codes (e.g. 'Pupils' Prior Knowledge' and 'Roles of Teachers') emerged from the interview transcripts and the observation field notes. In the final stage of this qualitative analysis, efforts were made to apply the derived codes onto the original transcripts to see if all the data now fit into these codes, for if there is a poor fit between data and codes, then the codes have to be modified until all the data are accounted for (Cohen et al., 2007). Such process is referred to as *constant comparative method*, a continuous refinement where initial codes may be changed, merged, or omitted; and new codes are generated (Ayr et al., 2006).

By combining existing survey items and those newly constructed items using fieldwork data, this gave a 99-item pilot survey instrument, covering 16 aspects of teachers' mathematics education-related beliefs, grouped under four broad categories i.e. 1) beliefs concerning the nature of mathematical knowledge *('Source of Mathematical Knowledge'; 'Stability of Mathematical Knowledge'; 'Structure of Mathematical Knowledge')*; 2) beliefs concerning mathematics learning *('Roles of Learners'; 'Pupils' Autonomy'; 'Prior Knowledge'; 'Personal Relevance');* 3) beliefs concerning mathematics teaching *('Roles of Teachers'; 'Classroom Organisation'; 'Classroom Activities'; 'Assessment'; 'Intended Instructional Outcome'; 'Use of Mathematics Textbooks')*; and 4) beliefs concerning constraints to mathematics teaching *('Classroom Mobility'; 'Time'; 'Exams and Math Core Curriculum').* To help maximise the validity of the survey instrument, accuracy of the Thai translation of the survey items was checked by a group of bilingual Thai native speakers whose task was to translate he survey items back to English to see whether the original meaning of the survey items remain intact.

Given that it cannot be assumed that the belief structures of Thai and Western mathematics teachers are identical, the exploratory factor analysis was performed on the pilot survey data to reveal the underlying structure of Thai teachers' beliefs. The analysis yielded an 8-factor 26-item solution, which provides a meaningful, robust and interpretable set of factors. With an exception of

one factor, each of the remaining seven factors comprises between 3 to 4 relevant survey items with loadings higher than 0.5. These eight factors can be grouped under two broad themes, namely 1) beliefs concerning the nature of mathematical knowledge *('Source of Mathematical Knowledge'; 'Stability of Mathematical Knowledge'; 'Structure of Mathematical Knowledge')*; and 2) beliefs concerning mathematics learning and teaching *('School Mathematics as Relevant Experience'; 'Classroom Authority'; 'Learning Activities'; 'Constraints to Mathematics Teaching'; 'Exam Pressures').*

The fact that the exploratory factor analysis reduces the original 99-item 16-belief structure into a newly arranged 26-item 8-belief structure, arguably shows that while some mathematics education-related beliefs are central to Western mathematics teachers, the same cannot be said about their Thai counterparts, and vice versa. More specifically, three specific beliefs found in the TTMEB scale, namely, '*Classroom Authority', Constraints to Mathematics Teaching' and 'Exam Pressures'*, were not found in any of the reviewed studies, especially those conducted in Western culturally dominant contexts.

The exploratory factor analysis was again performed on the final survey data derived from a much larger sample size. Of the five potential factor solutions (4-, 5-, 6-, 7- and 8-factor solutions), the 8-factor solution was chosen as it provides the most meaningful, robust and interpretable set of factors than the rest. With an exception of Factor 2 ('Source of Mathematical Skills'), the remaining seven factors appeared in both pilot and final factor analysis, increasing the likelihood that these factors are indeed, replicable and thus relevant across the Thai state primary mathematics teacher population. Table 1, as shown below, gives the pilot and final item loadings of the 'Classroom Authority' belief; the 'Source of Mathematical Knowledge' belief; and the 'Stability of Mathematical Knowledge' belief only. Secondary factor analysis was performed on both the pilot and final data, and yielded no sub-factors for each of these three examined beliefs.

Classroom Authority	Pilot	Final
My role is to ensure that my pupils are obedient	0.673	-.799
All mathematical questions always have a right answer	0.672	n/a
Learners should be obedient to their teacher	0.664	-.816
Percentage of Variance	4.70	5.5
Alpha	0.717	.633

Source of Mathematical Knowledge	Pilot	Final
Mathematical concepts are not created, but discovered	0.651	0.589
Mathematical concepts existed even before the existence of human beings	0.641	0.717
My role is to encourage interaction between my pupils and me	- 0.592	n/a
Percentage of Variance	3.59	4.5
Alpha	0.482	0.322

Stability of Mathematical Knowledge	Pilot	Final
Today's mathematical concepts are no different from those of long ago	- 0.764	-0.757
Basic mathematical facts will always remain exactly the same	- 0.624	-0.595
Percentage of Variance	3.53	4.4
Alpha	0.654	0.376

Table 1 Item Loadings of the 'Classroom Authority' belief; the 'Source of Mathematical Knowledge' belief; and the 'Stability of Mathematical Knowledge' belief as yielded by the exploratory factor analysis

Classroom Authority

The final *Classroom Authority* scale appears to be concerned with the notion of *obedience* i.e. '*My role is to ensure that my pupils are obedient*' and '*Learners should be obedient to their teacher*'. This aspect of mathematics learning and teaching only emerged in the interviews with the Thai teachers, and was not evident in the Western-culturally dominant literatures.

Given how both items had negative loadings, no reverse of scores or meaning is needed. Subsequently, teachers who scored very lowly on the two items comprising this scale ('1' being 'Strongly Agree') could be perceived as *traditional* teachers, upholding the very deep-rooted social value which says juniors should respect and be obedient to their seniors.

On the other hand, teachers who scored very highly on this scale ('5' being 'Strongly Disagree') could be considered as *constructivist* teachers, meaning that they prefer to create a learning environment where pupils should be free to challenge their teachers' teaching and free to be intellectually argumentative to their fellow pupils and teachers. This type of teachers thus chooses to ignore the status quo and work towards eliminating classroom hierarchy to provide an environment conducive to effective learning.

Source of Mathematical Knowledge

Drawing from the wordings of the two items above (i.e. '*Mathematical concepts existed even before the existence of human beings'* and '*Mathematical concepts are not created, but discovered'*), the *Source of Mathematical Knowledge* scale appears to be concerned with the nature of mathematical knowledge acquisition.

Teachers who scored very lowly ('1' being 'Strongly Agree') on the scale could be described as *Platonist*, subscribing to the view that mathematical knowledge has always been out there waiting to be discovered, and that they were never created. These teachers might thus adopt the didactic approach to teaching and learning, in that they expect their pupils to simply discover mathematical facts and rules from their teachers, through listening and taking notes, without a great deal of teacher-pupil or pupil-pupil interaction, if any. Simply put, knowledge is to be transmitted from teachers to learners.

On the other hand, teachers who scored very highly on the scale ('5' being 'Strongly Disagree') could be described as *constructivist* teachers, subscribing to the view that mathematical knowledge is created – either by individuals on their own (von Glasersfeld's (2002) '*Radical Constructivism*') or through a process of social interactions (Ernest's (1999) '*Social Constructivism'*).

Teachers with this view might be more likely to encourage their pupils *to construct* their own knowledge based on their prior experience, while social constructivist teachers would emphasise on interactions between teacher and pupil and collaboration among pupils.

Stability of Mathematical Knowledge

Given the wordings of the two items above *('Today's mathematical concepts are no different from those of long ago'* and '*Basic mathematical facts will always remain exactly the same')*, this scale appears to be concerned with the permanence or stability of mathematical knowledge.

Given how both items had negative loadings, no reverse of scores or meaning is needed. Subsequently, teachers who scored very lowly ('1' being 'Strongly Agree') could be described as *absolutist*, who likely believes that mathematical knowledge is permanent and fixed.

Subsequently, they might be more likely to encourage their pupils to memorise facts and formula, treating them as immutable. On the other hand, teachers who scored very highly on this scale ('5' being 'Strongly Disagree') could be perceived as *fallibilist*, subscribing to the view that mathematical knowledge is evolving and "eternally open to revision, both in terms of its proofs and its concepts" (Ernest, 2004, p. 12). Therefore, teachers with this view might be more likely to encourage their pupils to be critical of any given facts and emphasise the role of reasoning.

Data Analysis

Mann-Whitney U Test

In order to answer the first research question concerning the extent to which urban and rural Thai mathematics teachers share their beliefs on classroom authority, the source and stability of mathematical knowledge, the Mann-Whitney *U* Test was undertaken to test the null hypothesis, which states that there is no difference in the way the Thai mathematics teachers in the very high and very low socio-economic settings view a certain dependent variable (belief), versus the alternative hypothesis, which is that there is a difference. If the significance (*p*) value of these tests is below a conventional significance level of .05, then the null hypothesis would be rejected, implying that there is, in fact, a significant difference in the way the Thai teachers of different socio-economic settings respond to that particular dependent variable. Black (1999) explains that:

> Conceptually, the issue being addressed is whether the two samples come from the same population, thus, the question asked is: are the two underlying population distributions the same? As usual, it is unlikely that they are identical and [Mann-Whitney *U* Test] is asking whether they are close enough to be considered the same or so different as to be considered two different distributions (p. 570).

While Pallant (2006) adds that,

> Instead of comparing means of the two groups, as in the case of the t-test, the Mann-Whitney *U* test actually compares medians. It converts the scores on the […] variable to ranks, across the two groups. It then evaluates whether the ranks for the two groups differ significantly (p. 291).

Spearman's rho

In order to answer the second and final research question on the extent to which Thai mathematics teachers' beliefs concerning classroom authority, and the source and stability of mathematical knowledge related across the two socio-economic settings, *Spearman's rho* tests were performed to test the null hypothesis, which states that the examined variables are independent, versus the alternative hypothesis; i.e. variables are not independent. If the significance (*p*) value of these tests is below a conventional significance level of .05, then it can be concluded that there is, in fact, a significant relationship between the examined variables.

Sarantakos (2005) defines Spearman's *rho* as being "a product-moment, non-parametric correlation coefficient which deals with ranks (not magnitudes), and measures the strength of the linear association between variables" (p. 379). It does this by "ranking people on each variable and then comparing people's relative position on the two variables" (De Vaus, 2002, p. 187). Spearman's *rho* produces "a result between -1 (for a perfect negative correlation: as the independent variable increases, the dependent variable decreases) and +1 (a perfect positive correlation: both rise or fall together)" (Buckingham & Saunders, 2004, p. 216).

Results and Discussion

Comparison by Socio-economic Cohort of Province of Teaching

	All		**Very High Socio-economic Cohort**		**Very Low Socio-economic Cohort**		**U**	**sig**
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*		
1. Classroom Authority	3.11	.94	3.23	.95	3.00	.91	59554.50	**.001**
2. Source of Mathematical Knowledge	2.29	.74	2.37	.75	2.22	.74	62007.50	**.011**
3. Stability of Mathematical Knowledge	3.07	.85	3.14	.84	3.00	.86	63188.50	**.032**

Table 2 Mean scores and standard deviations of each factor for all teachers, as compared by socio-economic cohort of province of teaching. Significant probabilities are in bold.

Classroom Authority

As Table 2 shows, the highest significant socio-economic difference (U = 59554.50, p = .001) was found in the Classroom Authority belief. Teachers in the very high socio-economic cohort (M = 3.23, SD = .95) appeared to hold a significantly stronger belief than their counterparts in the very low socio-economic cohort (M = 3.00, SD = .91) by rejecting the authoritarian classroom management style, implying that they might be more likely to create a classroom environment where pupils are encouraged to be intellectually argumentative and critical of their teachers' teaching.

As it has been previously discussed, the expectation that pupils should be obedient to their teacher is common in Thai classrooms. This is, as Hofstede (2007) argues, due to the notion of *power distance*, or the extent to which less powerful members of society accept and expect that

power is distributed unequally. Using his Power Distance Index (PDI), Hofstede (2007) was able to measure such concept as manifested in different societies globally, where the bigger the index, the higher the level of acceptance and expectation of such inequality. Thailand, according to his study, scores 67 out of 100, while the US and the UK, for example, score only 40 and 35 respectively. Since teachers in Thailand are regarded as highly as parents, and Thai children are expected to be obedient to their parents as a way to pay back a moral debt to their raising them up (Mulder, 2000), Thai pupils are thus expected to be obedient to their teachers too.

Taking into account of this socio-cultural value as manifest in Thai society, the significant difference in the way teachers in the two cohorts view the Classroom Authority belief might not be that surprising. Komin (1991) explains that rural Thais (i.e. those who live in the very low socioeconomic cohort) are more likely to keep certain traditional socio-cultural values and are less likely to change, while their more liberal urban counterparts (i.e. those who live in the very high socio-economic cohort and who are arguably more exposed to Western values through media, such as Hollywood films that often depict non-hierarchical society), are less likely to hold on to traditional socio-cultural values. Komin's (1991) thesis corroborates that of Willits et al. (1977, p.682) who argue that urban people "tend to be more accepting of nontraditional ideas than their [rural] counterparts [due to the former's] exposure to a wider range of differing circumstances".

However, the findings of the current study is inconsistent with that of Arredondo and Rucinski's (1996) study of 126 teachers and principals from primary and secondary schools in Chile, which found no significant difference in the way private school teachers (i.e. those teaching in the high socio-economic setting) and their state school counterparts (i.e. those teaching in the low socio-economic setting) responded to the *Don't criticise authority* scale. In general, they all appeared to believe that pupils should be able to criticise their teachers' teaching openly.

Martin & Yin's (1999) study of 145 secondary school teachers in the USA also reported no significant difference in the way urban and rural teachers responded to the *Behaviour Management* scale, which was taken from Martin, Yin & Baldwin's (1998) 'Attitudes and Beliefs on Classroom Control Inventory', comprising survey items, such as: 'I believe teachers should require student compliance' and 'respect for law and order'. Regardless of the socio-economic context of the school they taught in, the teachers had neither particularly controlling nor non-controlling view towards their classroom management approach.

While none of the these studies offered any explanation for their reported non-significant differences, it might be useful to note that the finding of Martin & Yin (1999) was unexpected to their authors, whose literature reviews predicted a significant difference in the way rural and urban teachers think about classroom authority. More specifically, drawing from the studies of Herzog and Pittman (1995) and Roweton & Bare (1990), Martin & Yin (1999) pointed out that unlike urban schools,

> [R]ural schools […] are typically characterised not only by a strong sense of community within the school itself, but also by a sense of being a part of the larger community and an extension of the family (p. 101).

Subsequently, they argued that "these environmental variations would lead to different [views about classroom dynamics] in these two settings" (Martin & Yin, 1999, p. 102).

Source of Mathematical Knowledge

An additional significant difference (U = 62007.50, p = .011) was reported in the way teachers in the two socio-economic settings viewed the Source of Mathematical Knowledge belief. While teachers in both cohorts appeared to be Platonist-oriented, subscribing to the view that mathematical knowledge has always been out there and waiting to be discovered, implying that mathematical knowledge is to be transmitted from external authorities (e.g. teachers and textbooks) to the learners; teachers in the very low socio-economic cohort (M = 2.22, SD = .74) appeared to be significantly more convicted in that belief than their counterparts in the very high socio-economic cohort (M = 2.37, SD = .75).

While the reported significant socio-economic difference is consistent with the finding of Arredondo and Rucinski's (1996) study of 126 teachers and principals from elementary and secondary schools in Chile, their finding concluded that private school teachers appeared to have a significantly stronger belief that knowledge resides in external authorities than their state school counterparts, when responding to the *Depend on authority* scale.

Using the *Source* scale, which comprises such items as: 'Whatever the teacher says in science class is true', Conley et al.'s (2004) study of 187 5th-grade students from low and average socio-economic backgrounds in the US, as measured by whether one received free or discounted school lunch, found that students of the low socio-economic background appeared to hold a significantly stronger belief that external authorities are the main source of knowledge than students of the average socio-economic background.

While Arredondo and Rucinski (1996) did not offer any explanation for their reported significant socio-economic difference, Conley et al. (2004), drawing from Pintrich (2002), attributed their reported difference to the "possible mechanisms for class effects" (Conley et al., 2004, p. 200), where the nature of interactions with people and institutions in different contexts might result in different knowledge representations and ways of thinking that could create group differences in epistemological thinking.

Similar to the Chinese society, where "students are expected to show respect for, and be obedient, to elders and authority figures [and where] it is assumed that authority figures or experts hand down knowledge" (Chan, 2004, p. 7), the structure of Thai society is also hierarchical (Mulder, 1997; Hofstede, 2007). And since Komin (1991), as previously discussed, found that rural Thais (i.e. those who live in the very low socio-economic cohort) are more likely to keep certain traditional cultural ties and less likely to change, when compared to their more liberal urban counterparts (i.e. those who live in the very high socio-economic cohort), it becomes apparent why rural Thai teachers might be significantly more convicted than urban teachers in viewing knowledge as objective reality, waiting to be handed down from teachers to learners.

Stability of Mathematical Knowledge

There appeared to be a significant difference (U = 63188.50, p = .032) in the way teachers in the two cohorts viewed the Stability of Mathematical Knowledge belief. While teachers in both cohorts did not appear to have a fully formed view about the stability of mathematical knowledge, teachers in the very high socio-economic cohort (M = 3.14, SD = .84) seemed to have a slightly and significantly stronger belief that mathematical knowledge are constantly evolving than their counterparts in the very low socio-economic cohort (M = 3.00, SD = .86).

The reported significant socio-economic difference is consistent with the finding of

Conley et al.'s (2004) study of 187 5th-grade students of low and average socio-economic backgrounds in the US, which concluded that students from the low socio-economic background appeared to hold a significantly stronger belief that knowledge is permanent than their counterparts of average socio-economic background, when asked to respond to the *Development* scale, comprising items such as: 'Some ideas in science today are different than what scientists used to think' and 'The ideas in science books sometimes change'.

The findings of the above studies are however, inconsistent with that of Arredondo and Rucinski's (1996) study of 126 teachers and principals from primary and secondary schools in Chile, which found no significant difference in the way private and state school teachers responded to the *Knowledge is certain* scale. Regardless of their school's socio-economic setting, the teachers appeared to subscribe to the view that knowledge is fixed.

Similarly, Tang's (2010, p.94) study of 1,204 secondary school students in China also found no significant difference in the way rural and urban students responded to the *Stability of Maths Knowledge* scale, which ranges from "certain knowledge to changing knowledge" and comprised items, such as 'Math knowledge is not a fixed, but continuously evolving culture'.

While Arredondo and Rucinski (1996) and Tang (2010) did not offer any explanation for their reported non-significant differences, Conley et al. (2004) attributed that finding to contextual factors. For example, they argued that factors such as the nature of learning activities can shape one's belief concerning the stability of knowledge. They gave an example of hands-on classrooms, which often create

> [S]ome doubts about the certainty of knowledge, given the high potential for different students to generate different results from their hands-on experiments. Performing their own experiments and observations, as well as sharing differing results might have helped students understand that answers to questions […] are subject to revision and change (p. 199).

Further, this arguably implies that teachers' view about the stability of knowledge might be influenced by the kind of learning activities they themselves were exposed to during their schooling.

Correlations Between the Two Beliefs Concerning the Nature of Mathematical Knowledge, and the Classroom Authority Belief

Spearman's rho	**Classroom Authority**
Source of Mathematical Knowledge	$r_s = .085$, $p = .020$
Stability of Mathematical Knowledge	$r_s = .165$, $p = .000$

Table 3 Correlations and their associated probabilities calculated between the two beliefs concerning the nature of mathematical knowledge, and the Classroom Authority belief.

Regarding the positive correlation with the Classroom Authority belief, it appears that the stronger the belief that mathematical knowledge is a human's creation, and hence derived by learners' own effort and learning process, the stronger the belief that pupils should not need to be obedient to their teachers, and hence should instead be encouraged to be intellectually argumentative with them, and vice versa. This correlation makes sense in that if knowledge is created by humans, then learners should be encouraged to construct their own knowledge, and one way to make that happen is to create a learning environment where teachers should not be viewed as the sole authority of knowledge to be obeyed, but a learning environment where learners are encouraged to question their authority or teaching.

Regarding the positive correlation with the Classroom Authority belief, it appeared that the stronger the belief that mathematical knowledge is permanent and fixed, the stronger the belief that pupils should be obedient to their teachers. Alternatively, this can also be viewed as the stronger the belief that pupils should be obedient to their teachers and should not question their teaching, the stronger the belief that mathematical knowledge is permanent and fixed. The relationship between these two beliefs reflects that of the Source of Mathematical Knowledge and the Stability of Mathematical Knowledge beliefs, where the hierarchical structure of Thai society and its associated socio-cultural values, means young Thai children, generation after generation, are taught by their parents to *cheu farng khoon-kru* (*cheu* = believe in; *farng* = listen to; *khoon kru* = teachers). Such Thai mentality that teachers are the knowledgeable authority to be obeyed, respected and trusted would also likely result in another mentality that their teaching is always correct, and hence the transmitted knowledge would likely remain fixed and absolute.

Conclusion

Drawing from the finding of the first research question, there appears to be a dissonance between the constructivist principles underlying Thailand's educational reform on the one hand, and teachers' epistemological and pedagogical beliefs on the other. More specifically, Thai teachers' beliefs concerning the Source of Mathematical Knowledge and Classroom Authority do not appear to be conducive to creating a constructivist classroom environment where pupils themselves actively construct their own knowledge and are encouraged to be openly critical of their teachers' teaching. This might also explain why their Stability of Mathematical Knowledge belief is not fully fallibilist, for in a socio-cultural context, like Thai society, where teachers are regarded as the supreme source of knowledge, their teaching and hence the transmitted knowledge, would also be perceived as absolute truth and fixed. Subsequently, these three beliefs should be addressed together.

Once again, both teacher educators and professional development administrators could make it more explicit to pre-service and in-service teachers respectively of how some of the Thai socio-cultural values could hinder teaching and learning. They could also be assessed, through reviewing lesson plans or classroom observations, to see whether they have done enough to encourage their pupils to construct their own knowledge through, for example, trial-and-error approach, and reasoning. More specifically, they could encourage their pupils to come up with different ways of solving a mathematical problem, perhaps through group-then-whole class discussion, so they could see that there is no one absolute answer. Also, through the process of reviewing different potential solutions together, pupils could be encouraged to judge which solutions are more efficient and why; giving them the autonomy to assess other students' ideas and choose their own favourite method. In brief, not only would the problems with the Source of

Mathematical Knowledge, the Classroom Authority, and the Stability of Mathematical Knowledge beliefs get addressed, but other aspects of mathematics teaching and learning, such as pupil autonomy and collaboration would be addressed here too.

What is interesting is that the three largest significant differences between teachers' examined beliefs in the two socio-economic cohorts happened to be the Classroom Authority, the Source of Mathematical Knowledge, and the Stability of Mathematical Knowledge beliefs with the mean differences of 0.23, 0.15 and 0.14 respectively on the 5-point Likert scale. Teachers in the very low socio-economic cohort appeared to espouse the three beliefs in a more traditional, Platonist and absolutist manner respectively than their counterparts in the very high socio-economic cohort (*refer to previous section on Stability of Mathematical Knowledge)*, and such difference can be explained using Komin's (1991) thesis that rural people tend to hold on to traditional values more firmly than their urban counterparts who are more exposed to a diversity of socio-cultural heritages. Had teachers in one socio-economic cohort appeared to espouse the beliefs that are more perfectly in line with the reform, while teachers in the other cohort failed far behind, a recommended policy would have been to encourage teachers from the latter group to spend a few years teaching in the former group to observe and espouse the belief system of their counterparts.

However, the mean socio-economic differences of the three problematic beliefs, whilst statistically significant, are of small size and are equally not perfect. It would thus be more productive to tackle them – that is reducing the gap between what is endorsed in the reform and what Thai teachers currently view these three beliefs – nationally through the above policy recommendations.

This study has some limitations. Firstly, all the interpretations found in this study are, to an extent, subjective. For example, while the interview and observation data were analysed systematically using the coding and constant comparative methods, the final decisions of which aspects of the data were to be coded, and then which codes were to be retained, were all made by the researcher alone.

Finally, translating survey items from one language to another can be challenging. Drawing from their experience of translating survey items from English to Korean, Shin & Koh (2007), for example, pointed out that:

> Because the school cultures and classroom settings were different in the two countries, some of the questions in the survey questionnaire might not have exactly made sense to the Korean teachers. For example, the item, "students should choose the learning topics and tasks" may be interpreted for Korean teachers as the learning topics for students' independent study at home, not topics for school learning" (pp. 305-306).

This thus highlights potential misinterpretation by the survey participants, even when accuracy-checking strategies, such as back translating, have been employed. Drawing from the finding of the first research question, whereby significant socio-economic differences were found in the three examined beliefs, it might thus be of interest for future studies to adopt a largely qualitative research design to examine more closely what are intrinsically different about these two socio-economic settings that have caused such significant discrepancies.

Beyond building on the findings of this study, other research opportunities also exist. For example, Thailand's Basic Education Curriculum has, for over a decade, been promoting

constructivist approach to teaching and learning. Yet international comparisons of mathematics achievements, such as the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) have shown that East Asian students of the traditional pedagogical influence consistently outperform their Western counterparts of the constructivist pedagogical heritage. To help avoid adopting a particular pedagogical model uncritically, the direction of future research might thus include attempting to establish which of the Thai mathematics teachers' epistemological and pedagogical beliefs, if any, are significantly correlated with students' high mathematics test scores, and whether those beliefs are traditional or constructivist in nature. The research finding could potentially lead to a *pragmatist* view of education reform, where certain traditional and constructivist pedagogical beliefs and practices, that are shown to significantly correlate with high mathematics test scores, are equally embraced.

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ADVANCING THE ORANG ASLI THROUGH MALAYSIA'S CLUSTERS OF EXCELLENCE POLICY

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ABSTRACT: *Since gaining independence in 1957, the government of Malaysia has introduced various programmes to improve the quality of life of the Orang Asli (aboriginal people). The Ministry of Education, for example, is committed in providing education for all including the children of Orang Asli. However, whilst the number of Orang Asli children enrolled in primary and secondary schools has increased significantly over the last decade, the dropout rate among them is still high. This has been attributed to factors such as culture, school location, poverty, pedagogy and many more. The discussion in this article is drawn upon findings from fieldwork study at an Orang Asli village in Johor, Malaysia. This article discusses efforts in raising educational attainment of the Orang Asli through the implementation of the Clusters of Excellence Policy. In so doing it highlights the achievement of the policy and issues surrounding its implementation at the site.*

Introduction

Malaysia is one of the Newly Industrialised Countries (Bożyk, 2006) and ranks 28 in term of GDP per capita and 21 in term of ease of doing business (The World Bank, 2010). It is one of the most multi-ethnic and multi-religious countries in Southeast Asia (Brown, 2005) with a population of 28,717,780 of which 65% are Bumiputeras[1], 26% Chinese, 8% Indians, and 1% other ethnic groups (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2012). Whilst it is not the intent of this paper to engage in a detailed discussion of the history of Malaysia, even in the earlier works of key figures in the field of comparative and international education—such as Sadler (1900), Kandel (1933) and Hans (1959)—there has been an emphasis on the importance of examining "educational phenomena within the broader socio-political contexts in which they occur" (Crossley, 2000, p. 321). Hence, in our attempt to understand the issues related to the education of Orang Asli (the indigenous minority of Peninsular Malaysia), context—including historical context—"does matter more than many policy-makers and educational researchers realise" (Crossley, 2012, p. 8).

Prior to the colonisation period, much of the focus of education in Malaysia was on the inculcation of religious values and acquiring of skills vital for survival, such as fishing and farming for boys, and cookery and weaving for girls (Ministry of Education Malaysia (MoEM), 2009). Further education was obtained by devoting time as apprentices, living with a *guru* and learning various skills from the latter. By early nineteenth century, many *pondok* schools or *madrasah* (religious schools) were built by prominent Islamic scholars in the states of Kedah, Perak, Terengganu, Kelantan and Penang (MoEM, 2009).

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Although Christian missionary schools had been established during the colonisation period by the Portuguese, Dutch and British, they did not garner much response from the Malays, who feared that Christianity would influence their children.

The primary interest of the British during the earlier colonial period was commercial. To maximise the exploitation of Malayan resources profitably, the British adopted an 'open door' policy towards Chinese and Indian immigrants. This policy has lasting effects on the population structure of the country by polarising Malaya both in terms of ethnic disparities and class differences (Po-chu, 1999). This created problems closely linked with urbanisation, employment patterns and above all education (Watson, 1982, p. 92). Although the educational policies that developed in Malaya were largely defined by individuals on the spot rather than some kind of long-term Machiavellian colonial plans on the part of the British Government in Whitehall, nevertheless, there were a few constants that influenced these policies such as support for the Malay rulers, maintenance of the status quo for the Malay peasantry and relative indifference to the education of the immigrant groups (Watson, 1982, p. 105). Thus only a select few gained access to English schools and hence to lucrative and prestigious positions in government or in European firms. Consequently, two lines of education emerged. On the one hand, the Malay aristocrats received an elitist and English form of education, and on the other hand, the Malay peasants went to Malay schools. No consideration was paid to the education of the people of Chinese and Indian origin as they were regarded as transitory alien labourers without citizenship status or rights (Andaya & Andaya, 1982; Bokhorst, 1993; Cheah, 2002). Similarly not much attention was paid to the education of Orang Asli as "western involvement was to some extent relatively superficial and hardly penetrated the hinterlands" (Watson, 2012, p. 34). Hence, when Malaysia gained its independence from Britain in 1957, the government was left with the difficult task of pulling the different groups in society together (Watson, 1982, p. 106).

Education Development in Malaysia

As pointed earlier, the school system inherited from the British was a divisive force in the Malaysian society since Malays, Chinese and Indians went to their respectively vernacular schools and the English schools were usually for the elites (Aziz & Chew, 1980). Hence, educational efforts immediately after independence focused on forming a single system of national education and expanding the provision of basic education. The Razak Report of 1956 and Education Ordinance of 1957 were the two vehicles used to achieve the first objective. These two documents suggested the establishment of a national education system with the national language (Malay language) as the medium of instruction. A common curriculum for all schools was also suggested. The Rahman Talib Report in 1960 and the Education Act in 1961 on the other hand, greatly expanded basic education opportunities emphasising the 3Rs (reading, writing and arithmetic) basic education (MoEM, 2007). The 1961 Education Act also set a timetable to phase out English-medium schools and convert government-aided Chinese-medium secondary schools to *Bahasa Melayu*-medium secondary schools.

The racial riot of 13 May 1969 was a watershed in Malaysian history, which sent a clear message of the need to work on national unity. Following this—besides launching the New Economic Policy (NEP)—the government instituted a name change for the national language from *Bahasa Melayu* (Malay language) to *Bahasa Malaysia* (Malaysian language) so that the non-Malays would not regard this language as having a Malay identity (Asmah, 1987, p. 17). The incident also

further emphasised the need to implement the Rahman Talib's recommendations without any more delays. Educational efforts of the government after the 13 May racial riots were geared towards eradicating poverty and restructuring the society by providing greater opportunities for the lower income and the Malay and other indigenous groups.

The 1990s saw fundamental education reforms in Malaysia partly due to the pressure from the global market. This period of the Malaysian history began with the declaration of Vision 2020, which envisaged Malaysia to become a developed nation in its own mould by 2020 (Prime Minister's Office of Malaysia, 2009). The introduction of the New Development Policy (NDP) replacing the NEP was aimed at continuing to achieve the objectives of promoting national integration and unity as well as providing greater opportunities for the Bumiputeras. The importance of education and training in the era of global competition is also stated in the NDP document:

> Competitiveness, productivity, innovativeness and capability in management of new technologies in Malaysia will be determined by the quality of its human resources. […] In view of the challenges ahead, Malaysians should be well equipped with a strong base in education and training. (Government of Malaysia, 2012)

The government's concern that Malaysia's education system must be improved so that the country can remain competitive in the global market is reflected in two significant bills passed by Parliament. The Education Act of 1996 has managed to buttress the national education system by incorporating pre-school, and public and private higher education into it. Hence, all preschool centres are now required to abide by the curriculum guidelines set by the Ministry of Education under the Education Act of 1996 (Siow & Chang, 2011). The passing of the Private Higher Educational Institution Act, also in 1996, on the other hand, has increased the private sector's participation in tertiary education.

The new Millennium brought about yet another paradigm shift in teaching and learning. The emphasis in the new Millennium is on "the relevance of education to the future developments of individuals and their society" (Cheng, 2007, p. 74). This has brought about the notion of world-class education. Malaysia realised that it needed to work hard to further develop its education system to produce ethical and knowledgeable human capital to meet this globalisation wave and the challenges of Vision 2020 (MoEM, 2006). Thus, the Education Development Plan 2001-2010 (EDP 2001-2010) was unveiled. In a nutshell, EDP 2001-2010 outlines four main thrusts which are to increase access to education, increase equity in education, increase quality of education, and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of education management with the aim of creating world-class quality education system which will promote Malaysia as a centre of education excellence (MoEM, 2006). Although the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MoEM) is yet to achieve all the aims it set out, the EDP 2001-2010 has nevertheless provided an impetus for a further change in the education system to meet future challenges.

In accordance with the aspirations of the Rukunegara (National Ideology), National Education Philosophy, Vision 2020, and the EDP 2001-2010, the MoEM unveiled yet another "blueprint"—the Education Development Master Plan (EDMP) 2006-2010—on 16 January, 2006 to serve as a guide to provide focus, strategies, and implementation plans in ensuring the nation's

education stays relevant in the future (MoEM, 2009). These are the principal thrusts that the government believes would help propel Malaysia into providing world-class education and becoming a centre of educational excellence.

In June 2012, the MoEM published its Interim Strategic Plan 2011-2020 as a continuation to the EDMP 2006-2010. In a nutshell, it aims at strengthening current initiative enablers to spur further change in the education system, and identifying new dimensions in achieving excellence in education quality (MoEM, 2012). However, the government admits that this will require amendments in the Education Act 1996.

Details of the development of education in Malaysia furnished above are necessary, as they provide evidence that the government of Malaysia is working tirelessly to improve access to, equity in and quality of education in Malaysia as a tool for national integration, to eradicate poverty and more recently to ensure that Malaysia is capable of producing human capital or resources that are able to meet the demands of the global market. Nevertheless, studies and available data have suggested that these efforts have not necessarily been beneficial for Orang Asli in general. Although the number of Orang Asli children enrolled in primary and secondary schools has increased significantly over the last decade, the dropout rate among them is still high. The following section, hence, discusses the education development of Orang Asli in Malaysia.

Education Development of Orang Asli

The Orang Asli of Peninsular Malaysia comprises of 18 ethnic subgroups classified under the Negrito, Senoi and Proto Malay (Nicholas, 2005). They make up only 0.6% of the total Malaysian population. Senoi is the largest ethnic group constituting about 55% of the total population of Orang Asli, followed by the Proto Malays and the Negritos at 42% and 3% respectively. According to the Annual Report of the Department of Orang Asli Development or JAKOA (formerly known as the Department of Orang Asli Affairs or JHEOA), in 2006, there were about 147,412 Orang Asli living mostly in Pahang and Perak (Department of Orang Asli Affairs, 2006). However, 76.9% of the Orang Asli population remains below the poverty line. 35.2% is classified as living in hard-core poverty, compared to 1.4% nationally (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2010). The national infant mortality rate is at 8.9 out of 1,000 live births, yet Orang Asli infant mortality rate is at a high of 51.7. The average life expectancy for Orang Asli is 53 years, compared to the national average of 73 years (Rusaslina, 2010).

Since independence, the government has embarked on a comprehensive development programme in efforts to develop the Orang Asli community. These developments can be classified into two types. The first is public development, which has impacts on the community. Education developments discussed in the previous section fall under this, at least in theory. The second is planned development specifically targeted for this community. For example, today there are about 869 Orang Asli villages throughout the country, 2% are located at the vicinity of existing townships, 61% in the outskirt of existing rural villages and 37% are in the remote areas (Mason & Arifin, 2005). Some of them have been provided with and enjoyed modern facilities through the implementation of various development projects such as village resettlement programmes, rural roads, provision of electricity and water supply, social amenities, as well as access to education (Khor, 2001).

The JAKOA has been entrusted with the task of overseeing the development of the Orang Asli. Originally, the British formed the department in 1950—it was then known as the Department of Aborigines—to win the loyalty of the Orang Asli. Later in 1954, the government expanded the

department and made it responsible primarily for enlisting Orang Asli in the government cause against the communists. The Aboriginal Peoples Act of 1954 gave the department control over all matters concerning Orang Asli (Asian Indigenous & Tribal Peoples Network, 2008). In November 1961, the government made the department permanent, and all programmes concerning Orang Asli became its responsibility. One of the reasons for the single agency approach was that over 60% of the Orang Asli still lived in isolated areas, far from normal government services like education and medical care.

Education is the main agenda in the Orang Asli's development programmes and as a key mechanism in the effort to improve their quality of life (Mohd Tap, 1990). Prior to 1995, all educational programmes for the Orang Asli were run by the JHEOA. The department ran a three-tiered educational programme aimed at preparing Orang Asli children to enter the national education system (Asian Indigenous & Tribal Peoples Network, 2008; Kamarulzaman & Osman, 2008):

1. The first three years of the inception of the programme, children went to village schools taught by JHEOA field staff;
2. Students who continued after three years went to central primary schools in larger Orang Asli communities where they could continue through primary six;
3. Students who passed their exams at the end of sixth grade could then go to normal government secondary schools in nearby rural or urban areas.

However, the educational programme managed by the JHEOA was a major failure (Ikram, 1997). The JHEOA field staffs were not formally trained and most of them had a low level of education themselves.

Furthermore, the Malay teachers supplied by the MoEM at the central primary schools lacked knowledge about the Orang Asli culture and tradition (Asian Indigenous & Tribal Peoples Network, 2008). Surviving on financial assistance from JHEOA alone was not enough to maintain all the Orang Asli schools. These were some of the contributing factors towards the failure of the JHEOA educational programme. As the educational programme served to supplement rather than replace the national education system, thus whilst the teachers worked for and were paid by the JHEOA, the syllabus came from the MoEM.

Orang Asli children have been classified as a group of at-risk in the context of modernisation and hence face serious problems (Ministry of Education, 2006). Leaving the task of educating Orang Asli children to the JHEOA, however, did little to improve their condition. Realising this, the Malaysian government launched a policy that allocates special help to provide opportunities for equal footing, integrate them with the advanced section of the population, and protect their traditional beliefs (Ministry of Education, 2006). Part of this was done through the restructuring of the Orang Asli educational programme. In 1995, after a discussion with the relevant parties, it was decided that the best way to move forward was to allow all Orang Asli schools to be governed by the MoEM. Thus, under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the Ministry of Education and JHEOA, the MoEM took over the administration of all Orang Asli schools again, a situation that continues today.

Whilst there have been claims that the Malaysian government neglects the development of Orang Asli (see for example Tijah & Joseph, 2003; Nicholas, 2005, 2006; Asian Indigenous & Tribal Peoples Network, 2008; Rusaslina, 2010), these, however, are beyond the intent and scope of the

current paper. Rather, this paper intends to discuss an effort on the part of the MoEM in advancing the education of Orang Asli and their indigenous knowledge through the Clusters of Excellence Policy (CoEP) introduced in 2007.

Clusters of Excellence Policy (CoEP)

One of the core strategies in the EDMP 2006-2010 is to accelerate excellence in educational institutions through the establishment of school clusters based on their niche in academic, co-curricular and sport activities. This gave birth to the Clusters of Excellence Policy (CoEP). The CoEP proposed in the EDMP 2006-2010 is based on the government's belief that it is imperative to develop different approaches, standards, and performance indicators to help schools characterised by various types of diversity to achieve excellence (MoEM, 2006). In effect, the MoEM suggests that the 'one size fits all' approach is no longer appropriate for Malaysia. In a nutshell, the Policy envisages the selection of 300 schools from the various categories available in the country. These are excellent schools within their own categories with clear niche areas, which will then become models of excellence for other schools of the same type[2]. To achieve this, a move towards some degree of decentralisation in the form of guided-autonomy has been proposed.

When it was first proposed in April 2006, Orang Asli schools were somehow left out of the shortlisted schools. However, a directive from the Minister of Education in December 2006 had resulted in their inclusion in the clusters. The CoEP was implemented in mid-2007 with the announcement of 30 "excellent" schools inducted into the Clusters of Excellence. The idea is to allow these schools to further advance their niche areas through the allocation of a special fund and school-based management. Schools are required to first identify their niche areas and then prepare a request-for proposal (RFP) detailing how the funds will be used to further enhance their niche areas. The niche areas identified are both in academic and non-academic fields. To improve their performances in these niche areas, the schools are given autonomy in the areas of school management, human resource management, financial and physical resources management, curriculum management and implementation, and co-curricular management and implementation (MoEM, 2009). These aspects of guided autonomy allow the schools to, for example, introduce flexible working hours, hire consultants, external coaches and trainers, select suppliers, and offer academic subjects and co-curricular activities not available in other schools.

The remaining sections of this paper discuss the implementation of this policy at an Orang Asli school and its impact on advancing the Orang Asli children.

Context Matters

Henceforth, the discussion in this paper is driven by fieldwork findings of a case study involving an Orang Asli school in Johor—the southern-most state in West Malaysia. The study involved a series of interviews, observations and document reviews at the site. The participants included teachers, parents and students at the case-study school.

The case-study school was established on a piece of aborigines' reserved land with the aim of providing education for Orang Asli. It is not accessible to all because the two routes to the school are through an oil palm estate, which is privately owned. Visitors are required to produce relevant documents in order to gain passage. There is no properly paved road through the estate. The

condition is even more unbearable during the monsoon season. When it was founded in 1963, the school was put under the administration of the Department of Aborigines (JOA) until 1966 when it was taken over by the MoEM and put under the administration of a nearby primary school. In 1975, the school's administration was returned to the newly renamed JHEOA under the watchful eye of its education unit. At the time, only one JHEOA teacher managed the school. However, in 1995, the school was officially handed back to the MoEM in line with the change in policy at the national level. The school finally received its first official head teacher in 1997. In 2001, the construction of the school's new buildings was started on a 10-acre land on the present site. This new concrete-building school boasts much better facilities than its predecessor.

The 299 hectares reserved land where the settlement and case-study school are located is populated by more than 300 people from 65 families of aborigines of the *Jakun* sub-ethnic group. *Jakun* is the second largest of the 18 sub-ethnic groups in Peninsular Malaysia. Most of the aborigines in Malaysia are animists. However, in the last 3 decades, Christian and Islamic missionaries have managed to persuade some to embrace Christianity and Islam.

At the case-study site, for example, 10 families—including that of the *Tok Batin's* (Orang Asli chief)—have embraced Islam as their new faith. Christianity is also flourishing with the establishment of two churches in the area. The *Jakun* language, which falls within the Malay Aboriginal languages, is the mother tongue of the people at the settlement. However, the national language is also widely used among the people, especially at official events.

Traditionally, the aborigines engaged in various forms of forest utilisation activities such as farming, gathering and hunting. However, in an effort to eradicate poverty among the aborigines, the government has regrouped most of them in settlements such as in the case-study site. Many have benefited through this development programme as they enjoy better facilities and living standards. As a result of their resettlement, most of the settlers at the case-study site are now involved in permanent agriculture such as rubber, oil palm, cocoa and fruit trees. Today, most of them are known to be wage earners. However, there is also a danger of the people losing their indigenous knowledge related to forest resource utilisation. At present for instance, there is only a handful in the community who are able to identify herbs and their special use.

The school is categorised as under subscribed. At the time of this case study, there were 29 boys and 24 girls studying in pre-school through year 6 in the school. There were 17 teachers and 3 non-academic staff in the school—9 female and 11 male. With the exception of the head and assistant head teachers who had a total of 50 years of experience between them, the majority of the teachers had less than 10 years of teaching experience, with 9 teachers having less than 5 years teaching experience.

Advancing the Orang Asli through CoEP

The niche areas selected by the case-study school are English language, aquatic and Orang Asli traditional culture and herbal medicines. The school believes that selecting English language as one of the niche areas gives it better chance to improve the level of English language competency among the students. The Orang Asli traditional culture and herbal medicines are chosen at the suggestion of the selection panel (MoEM Advisory Panel), while aquatic is included because the school's students are quite capable swimmers. Swimming in the nearby river has been part of the growing process of children at the case-study site. The inclusion of Orang Asli traditional culture and herbal medicines is significant as it allows the school to promote these to the younger generation and the outside world.

Activities to enhance the niche areas of the school require a huge sum of money. Evidently, the allocation of 150, 000 US Dollars as a special fund has helped the school tremendously. For example, in the English language niche area, one of the English teachers had devised an improvised 'snake and ladder' board game as a teaching and learning resource. A huge 'snake and ladder' board was produced on which pupils stood and moved according to the roll of a huge dice. At various stages, pupils had to complete tasks, such as naming an adjective beginning with the letter 'd', or risked the chance of rolling the dice when it was their next turn. The school had also managed to secure a total of 20 personal computers for the teaching and learning of English. Language camps involving students from other Orang Asli schools were also organised at the school compound.

Similarly, programmes to enhance pupils' skills in the Orang Asli traditional dance were taking place. Pupils practised at the village hall on weekends with the help of a few parents and two local teachers. According to these teachers, the school occasionally received assistance from professional trainers from one of the universities in the state. In the area of traditional herbal medicines, it was observed that some of the hundreds of medicinal herbal trees around the school bore the names of students who were in charge of caring for them. According to the pupils, they learnt the names of these trees and their usage from the late Pak Awi, who was a national expert in medical trees.

The aquatic niche area school's report noted that pupils had been taken to a public swimming pool in town twice every fortnight for training purposes. One of the biggest successes of this programme was in organising a swimming competition involving other Orang Asli schools in the district. The cost of the competition was borne by the case-study school. The competition provided other Orang Asli schools with the valuable experience of participating in such an event.

The impact of these activities is reflected in the improvement in students' performances. For example, there was an abrupt increase in the percentage of passes in the English language Primary School Assessment Test (UPSR) from 0% before the school was included in the Clusters of Excellence to 42.86% a year later. This, according to the school's teachers, is attributed to the various English language programmes that the school had organised using the special fund allocated to them. In swimming, a state level swimmer was born out of the many aquatic programmes carried out by the school. Students' performances in the Orang Asli traditional dance have been taken notice with invitations to perform in various state functions pouring in. Agencies such as MARDI (Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute) and FRIM (Forest Research Institute Malaysia) have also expressed their interests in visiting and studying the hundreds of medicinal herbal trees available around the school.

Challenges

While the achievements described above have been attributed to the CoEP, it does not mean that the implementation of the initiative has been unproblematic. While admitting the potential of the cluster's concept, teachers criticised the sudden way in which the new policy was introduced. This means that teachers were ill-prepared to implement it in their school. Furthermore, when the MoEM announced its intention to create the Clusters of Excellence, the school community was not clear of its concept. Teachers' understanding at the initial stage of the implementation process was vague due to lack of information disseminated directly to them. Clarity, as suggested by Fullan (2007), is crucial in any educational change effort as without it

teachers may not know what they need to do differently.

Although the case-study school eventually managed to select its niche areas, it is evident from interviews and document reviews that there was no in-depth deliberation on the choices of niche areas, and neither teachers nor parents were included in the decision-making process. As a result, teachers who are entrusted with the task of managing the niche areas believe that their voices have not been heard. This phenomenon is not uncommon in Malaysia as emphasised by Boey (2010), who claims that shared decision-making is still rare in Malaysian schools.

The exclusion of teachers in the selection of niche areas has created other problems. Some teachers believe that the school should be allowed to revise the niche areas selected with the possibility of dropping those that they are incapable of developing or enhancing. Enhancing the English language niche area, for example, has proved a formidable task. This is because English is the third language of the Orang Asli community. This can be seen in students' performances in the Primary School Assessment Test. Although the school had achieved 42.86% passes in the subject a year after it was inducted into the Clusters of Excellence, it is yet to achieve a better or similar result ever since.

In the case of aquatic niche area, it was found that pupils from the school do not frequent the river in the village anymore since it is now muddy and shallow due to rapid development. This was an oversight during the selection of swimming as a niche area. Some see this as a disadvantage while others see this as an opportunity to train pupils at the swimming pool to acclimatise them to the real competition situation. But to do so, teachers have to ferry students to the swimming pool in their own cars. This places the safety of the pupils in the hands of the teachers. It is also inconvenient when the teachers responsible for transporting the students are already overburdened with other responsibilities.

The death of Pak Awi, the person who was instrumental in identifying and maintaining the medicinal trees, has been a crippling blow to the school. This is because Pak Awi's wealth of knowledge had not been transferred to anyone else, not even his own son. Hence, the school is now in dire need of assistance from agencies such as MARDI and FRIM and individuals with the necessary expertise. Unfortunately, it is possible that this expertise does not exist as most of the trees around the school are only found locally.

Pupil absenteeism is another obstacle to the implementation of the initiative. Throughout the site visit period, it was observed that about 5 to 6 pupils were absent during the morning roll call. Every day, the on-duty teacher would have to seek these pupils at their homes. Sometimes, the teacher would have to wake the pupils and wait for them to get ready to go to school. Teachers believe lack of interest among parents and pupils means it is impossible to maintain high standards at the school. The same lack of commitment was observed during English night classes and cultural performance training sessions. Some parents blame their children's attitude saying that they have tried everything to make them go to school. While others, especially the parents of female pupils believe that education will not take them anywhere. Pupils, on the other hand, cite too much homework, strict teachers, uninteresting activities and tiredness as some of the reasons for staying away from school.

Another major obstacle to the advancement of niche areas is the lack of support provided to pupils once they leave their school. Teachers see this as the result of the failure of the policy to provide clear guidelines on students' future development once they have left primary school. Teachers claim that the lack of coordination among agencies both within and without the MoEM is

responsible for the lack of post-primary support for students in the niche areas. Although the school managed to produce a state level swimmer through its aquatic niche area programme, it is most unfortunate to find out that the student had dropped out of his secondary school just a year later. When JHEOA had its education unit, the school was able to monitor the progress of its students because they were all under the purview of the Department. Now that the unit has been abolished, it is difficult as students have no one from the Department to monitor and guide them.

Teachers at the case-study school, echoing the intent of the MoEM, are committed in raising the educational attainment of Orang Asli. However, this is sometimes hampered by their lack of understanding of the nature and culture of Orang Asli. Studies have found that Orang Asli is a unique community adhering to their traditional system and beliefs. In the eyes of Orang Asli, learning is treated as a process to become a good person rather than competing for awards and certificates (Nicholas, 2005). Hence to Orang Asli, learning does not necessarily take place in schools. This is in total contrast to the national system of education, which places emphasis on fixed curriculum and exams results.

In another study, Abdul Razaq and Zalizan (2009) suggest that it is in the nature of Orang Asli children to be hyperactive. Orang Asli's traditional way of life—hunting and gathering in the jungle—is in their blood and thus contributes to this hyperactive behaviour. While it is easy to blame Orang Asli children for having short attention span in class (Kamarulzaman & Osman, 2008), teachers—and the MoEM—sometimes fail to take notice of the contrast in the pedagogy when it comes to the education of Orang Asli. How can one expect Orang Asli children to sit through six hours of lessons a day when what is being taught is of little relevance to them?

The situation in the case-study site worsens especially since teachers live far away from the village, and thus are very much detached from the community as they only spend time at the school during weekdays from 8 in the morning till 2 in the afternoon. Although there is a block of quarters built for teachers at the case-study school, unfortunately, the six units available are left dilapidated without any takers. Teachers prefer to commute from the nearest town even though the journey takes almost one hour to complete. Of the total 17 teachers at the school, only 2 are Orang Asli.

The Way Forward

However, not everything is gloom and doom. The government of Malaysia must be applauded for taking steps in addressing the issues surrounding the well-being of Orang Asli especially in eradicating poverty, which has been identified as one of the major contributing factors that hinder their active participation and competition in the mainstream economic, social and political spheres (Nicholas, 2005; Asian Indigenous & Tribal Peoples Network, 2008; Kamarulzaman & Osman, 2008; Abdul Razaq & Zalizan, 2009). Educational programmes, such as the Clusters of Excellence initiative, introduced by the MoEM have also contributed in improving the educational attainment of Orang Asli. There are also some encouraging signs in term of Orang Asli dropout rates. In 2008, the dropout rate of Orang Asli children at the primary level was 39.1%. This has been significantly reduced to 29% in 2010 and 26% in 2011. The MoEM is also working on to reduce this to 15% by 2015. But there are still rooms for improvement, and it is heartening to see that the government is putting much effort into it.

On 21 June 2012, the government introduced seven initiatives in an effort to raise the educational attainment of Orang Asli (The Sun Daily, 21 June 2012). Under the Orang Asli Education

Transformation Programme, the initiatives are listed as follows:

1. to strengthen administration at the school, district education office, state education department and ministry level;
2. to put elements of basic vocational education in lower secondary schools;
3. to reduce the dropout rate of Orang Asli students by 6 per cent each year;
4. to increase the intake of Orang Asli students for the Bachelor of Teaching Special Programme;
5. to improve the infrastructure for Orang Asli education;
6. to strengthen collaboration with strategic partners;
7. To create a performance detection system for schools and Orang Asli students.

By launching the Orang Asli Education Transformation Programme, the government intends to enhance the quality of leadership and management at all levels so that issues and problems of Orang Asli children can be resolved quickly. It is also encouraging to see that the MoEM acknowledges the need to take drastic action to reduce or if possible eliminate the dropout rate among Orang Asli children. Basic vocational education may be one of the ways to make education more relevant to Orang Asli children as it is a subject that they may be able to readily relate to.

As the number of Orang Asli teachers posted to Orang Asli schools is still small, the move to increase this is commendable as they are familiar with the culture, tradition and problems of Orang Asli children. Furthermore, they can become role models for the children and guide them to succeed. It is hoped that these initiatives coupled with the 7 million US Dollars that the government of Malaysia allocates annually for Orang Asli students will be the way forward in advancing Orang Asli.

Conclusion

Orang Asli have been living in isolation for many years. They have been deprived of proper education and health services. Nevertheless, the government of Malaysia has, since independence, allocated millions of dollars to improve their living condition. Various educational programmes have been devised in an effort to raise educational attainment of Orang Asli in Malaysia. For example, through CoEP the case-study Orang Asli school is provided with further financial assistance to help in their advancement. And more recently, the government announced its Orang Asli Education Transformation Programme to further improve the situation.

While financial assistance is much needed in advancing the Orang Asli, it is not the only critical success factor. The government may introduce various policies and programmes, or allocate millions of dollars for the purpose of Orang Asli education. But ultimately it requires the existence of enabling factors in order to succeed. A recent study by Tikly and Barrett (2010) suggests that a good quality education arises from interactions between three enabling environments: policy, the school, and the home and community. Hence, it is important that everyone involves is clear of the programmes and policies introduced by the government. Of no less importance, is the need to allow for stakeholders' engagement in policy formulation and implementation. This will not only overcome the 'implementation gap' between national policy and local level practice but also close 'the expectation gap' between the outcomes of education and what the communities expect education to deliver. With the involvement of and support from all, it is not impossible to advance the Orang Asli in Malaysia.

Notes

[1] Bumiputra is a noun used by the Malaysian government to collectively mean 'the sons of the soil' (Brown,
2005). The term not only refers to the Malays, but other indigenous groups such as the Negrito, Senoi, Proto-Malay, Penan, Iban, Bidayuh, Orang Ulu, Kadazandusun, Bajau and Murut (Andaya & Andaya, 1982; Lee, 1999).

[2] Schools in Malaysia are classified into various types. These include: national primary schools (including Orang Asli schools), Chinese national-type primary schools, Tamil national-type primary schools, daily secondary schools, national-type secondary schools, residential schools, technical secondary schools, national religious secondary schools, premier schools, centennial schools, smart schools, special model schools, special education schools, and international and private schools

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COMPETING ROLES OF THE NATIONAL LANGUAGE AND ENGLISH IN MALAYSIA AND THE PHILIPPINES: PLANNING, POLICY AND USE

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ABSTRACT: *This paper examines the impact of language planning and language policy in the competing roles of the national language and English in the educational system of Malaysia and the Philippines. These countries have emphasised the national language (i.e. Malay in Malaysia and Filipino in the Philippines) to foster national unity, and the international language-English for global communication. Educational expansion as documented with globalisation has also repositioned the role of the English language. While English has become a necessary tool to increase competitiveness in the global market, calls to 'switch back' or 'retain' the national language to instil a sense of national unity has also been equally advocated. Although planning and policy may have specific objectives, these may not be reflected in actual language use. The findings of this study reveal the social reality of contrasting language planning and policy initiatives in Malaysia and the Philippines and the actual use of these languages.*

Language Policy and Globalisation

Educational expansion is documented globally in line with the rising call for internationalisation and globalisation of services (Symaco, 2011; Shoefer & Meyer, 2005). Relevant to this expansion of educational services is the rise of globalisation which similarly dictates the circumstance besetting educational institutions. Globalisation is one of the more prominent features of the modern world and also relevant to the increasing access to educational services in the world at large. Various definitions of globalisation in general have been suggested and Beerkens (2003, p.130) summarises a few approaches in an effort to define globalisation. The different conceptualisations inherent in globalisation which are to be discussed are said to be distinctive through the points of reference of their 'past' and 'new' realities. That is to say a shift in 'type' from one stage to the other due to historical, political and cultural changes.

With reference to the above definitions, economic trade through capitalist growth provides the basis for the worldwide expansion which marks out the 'global' from the local. The nation state is thus viewed as part of a world system of nation states, and, in globalisation, the strengthening of this process of interconnectedness and the simultaneous evolution and erosion of the nation state can be observed. The second concept of authority or power informs the capacity of governments for international competition. The change of power or authority defines the "deterritorialisation" of states (Beerkens, 2003), which in their past realities are limited to clearly defined areas of regulated space. The third conceptualisation of 'global' in terms of culture associates globalisation with the integration of traditions and customs. A considerable argument has been made over the imbalanced

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pre-eminence of Western traditions over others (Huntington, 1996).The last concept provided in this definition is that of the institution and the achievement of a cosmopolitan identity. The main contention of this argument is that social interconnectedness is no longer dependent on long-standing national institutions, but rather on a broad-based and 'multinational' cohesion. Hoogvelt (1997) further refines and amends the geographical partition into 'social' core and periphery. The interconnectedness found between the global world and the individual society, and the social consciousness as illustrated, among other things, in the growing awareness of sustainable development as exemplified in the Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987) shows this.

Globalisation as described through the four concepts above also informs the continuing and altering interconnected relations brought about by changes in society through advancement in communications, knowledge and market transformations. This notion can be seen in the evolution of the education systems through internationalisation, cross-border education, and technical capacity—all of which bring to fore the use of the English language as a 'necessary tool' for the assumed interconnections.

Language planning, policy and use play an important role in an ever increasing knowledge-based society. Through language planning, a policy formulated can affect the language use of individual speakers. Language policies influence the behaviour of others, particularly in the acquisition, structure, or functional allocation of their language codes (David, 2009) and further influence the speakers' language choice and use in social, educational, political, or economic domains. This is particularly relevant in terms of achieving the cosmopolitan identity through the 'multinational' cohesion as exemplified by globalisation. This point is especially relevant to Malaysia, a country composed of three main ethnicities (ie Malay, Chinese and Indians) with corresponding 'local' languages, and the Philippines, an archipelagic state with an eclectic mix of local dialects/languages totalling to about 160, spread across over a hundred different ethnicities (Watson, 2011). However, the pre-eminence of Western standards as espoused by globalisation and reflected through language use (both the English language in the Philippines and Malaysia) is countered by rising calls of nationalism and the need to 'preserve cultural identity', the politics behind such agenda also imminent in some countries.

Language serves as a powerful tool and expanding further Bourdieu's 'habitus/ cultural capital' approach-- issues brought about by language policies in educational access, among others are evident. But despite the desired unification and interconnectedness that language policies (often time the use of a preferred language) are proposed to bring, inequity issues are present since language policies can possibly "cause a further divide among ethnic groups where the language of the dominant group (usually the formal colonial power) is preferred in modern business of technology" (Symaco, 2010, p.266). Watson (2007) further states that globalisation often aggravates the problem through the move to uniformity of curricula and "the adaptation of a universal rather than a multilingual medium of instruction" (ibid, 2010, p.266). Advocates of regional languages/dialects also caution of the failure to preserve local knowledge and culture on this move for uniformity. This is also of course reflected in educational policies which favour certain languages to be used as medium of instruction, some of which claim to promote 'better learning' over others.

Over time, the changing scenario on the national front in both countries and on the global scene and the resultant opening of national borders have influenced language policies. Nationalism through language use has to deal with competition and the need for proficiency in English as the language for global communication, science and technology. The use of English as international

language and language of globalisation and modernisation has brought a number of challenges in the language planning and language policy. The sections to follow will trace the historical background of the language policies in Malaysia and the Philippines and examine relevant language policies and practices in both countries in line with the issues discussed above.

The Philippine Language Policy: Top- Down Policy

The Philippines, as mentioned earlier, has about 160 languages spread across over a hundred ethnic groups. The Philippine Bilingual Education Policy in 1974 (revised in 1987) states that English and Filipino are the languages of education and the official languages of literacy. The implementation of the bilingual policy was to make its people bilingual, capable of communication both in English and Filipino. Consequently, such policy has contributed to the abandonment of minority languages in the Philippines (Jernudd, 1999; Grimes, 2000; Young, 2002; Kaplan & Baldauf, 2003; Nical, Smolicz & Secombe, 2004). Under the policy, the Filipino language was used as the medium of instruction (MOI) in schools at the primary level. In schools where Filipino is not used, the use of vernacular language is permitted in the lower grades (i.e. grades one to four, ages 7-10) and Filipino is used as MOI in the fifth grade. In this case, since Filipino and English are not taught in the lower grades, they are taught as double period subjects in grades five and six. At the secondary level (ages 13 to 16) both English and Filipino are used as the media of instruction (Fonacier, 1987, p.145).

In light of the need to give importance to the vernacular language, a new policy in 1973 was implemented wherein the vernacular language is to be used as MOI at the primary level (i.e. grades one to two). However, such an attempt was not successful and the policy was revised by allowing English and Filipino as MOI in all levels and using the vernacular only as an auxiliary language (Llamzon, 1977; Fonacier, 1987). The 1987 Philippine constitution (Article 14, Sec. 6) states that,

The national language of the Philippines is Filipino (…) the Government shall take steps to initiate and sustain the use of Filipino as a medium of official communication and as language of instruction in the educational system.

Further Section 7 of the Constitutions states that,

> For purposes of communication and instruction, the official languages of the Philippines are Filipino and, until otherwise provided by law, English. The regional languages are the auxiliary official languages in the regions and shall serve as auxiliary media of instruction therein (…).

It is evident from the Article Sections above that the Filipino language is to be used as the medium of communication and instruction in the country's education system at all levels (primary to tertiary). The vernacular language in this case shall be resorted to only when necessary to facilitate understanding of the concepts being taught through the prescribed MOI: English or

Filipino (DECS order no 25, cited in Sibayan, 1985). Given the variety of languages existing in the Philippines, this policy provides opportunity to enhance and develop the national language. Additionally, there is provision for the use of English and regional languages in the educational system, though Filipino is still given much priority. Allowing other regional languages to be used as auxiliary languages is also a wise option because it helps in the maintenance of ancestral languages.

However, of late, the Philippine government has shifted back to the promotion of the vernacular/mother tongue (i.e., not necessarily Filipino given the variety of languages/dialects in the Philippines) in schools when the Department of Education (DepEd) institutionalised the Multilingual Education (MLE) initiative in 2009 which aims to promote the use of mother tongue/first language over the second language, supposedly to promote better learning among the students. The government believes that students will learn better if such multilingual approach is applied. Under this scheme, two languages for instruction are used and policy enactment stems from the results of the Lingua Franca Education Project (LFEP) of 1999 and the Lubuagan First Language Component.

The LFEP was an experimental project for Grade 1 students (age 7) which aims at that time to "define and implement a national bridging program from the vernacular to Filipino and later English to develop initial literacy for use in public schools" (DECS Memo 144, 1999, p.1). The MLE was fully implemented in 2012 in all public schools with emphasis given to kindergarten and grades 1 to 3 (i.e. ages 5 to 9). This policy is also in line with the Department of Education's policy of 'Every child a reader and a writer by grade 1'. About 900 schools including those with indigenous peoples have been modelling the MLE prior to the full implementation order of 2012, which used 8 languages in the roll-out. It should be noted that in multilingual Philippines the mother tongue is not necessarily the Filipino language.

The MLE is featured in two modes: (a) as medium of instruction and (b) as a learning subject/school course. It further states that:

> The learners' mother tongue (L1) shall be used as the medium of instruction (MOI) in all domains/learning areas from Kindergarten through Grade 3 except [for school subjects] Filipino (L2) and English (L3). The L1 will continuously be used as MOI in a transition or bridging process through (L1-L2-L1 or L2- L1-L2) Grade 3. The L2 will be introduced in the first semester of Grade 1 (…) and continuously developed from Grades 2-6. Oral fluency in L3 will be introduced in the 2nd semester of Grade 1 (…) [other] macro-skills will be developed starting 2nd semester of Grade 2 until 6 (DepEd Order 16, 2012, p. 3)

Mismatch Policy and Practice: Bottom-Up

The Philippines places importance to its national language as exemplified, among others, in the inclusion of an annual nationwide celebration of "Linggo ng Wika" (Language Week) in schools to instil in students the significance of the national language for development.

However, the Sections in the 1987 Constitution as earlier discussed are not evident in practice in some educational institutions (basic to higher education levels). English is widely used and preferred in campuses despite the top down language policy in the Philippines which clearly advocates the need to promote and preserve the Filipino language. The 1987 Constitution (Article 14 Section 9) states that "the Congress shall establish a national language commission (…) for the

development, propagation, and preservation of Filipino and other languages." Countervailing the "Linggo ng Wika" celebration is the 'Speak English" campaign in schools. Instead of enhancing the Filipino language in schools, English appears to dominate. Mismatch between policy and practice is documented (Gonzalez, 2003) and despite the clear mandate of the Filipino language as the official language of instruction in educational institutions, its subordinate status when compared to the English language is apparent.

English continues to dominate in classroom instruction and interviews with students reveal the preference of the English language given its 'social and economic' benefits.

"If I master the English language, I will have more chances of getting a job after graduation … for example working in the call centre"
"If Filipino is given priority in school then I'll find another school that gives importance in English"
"I study to learn and to learn English so I can work abroad"
"If we can't speak English well we cannot find better job"
"Most companies hire applicants with good command of English"
"English is an international language and recognised all over the world while Filipino is only used in the Philippines"

The demand for the English language is supported by various stakeholders given that its acquisition would mean better opportunities for job securement, both locally and overseas. The massive migration of skilled and unskilled workers from the Philippines is documented by the 16.2 billion US Dollars as workers' remittances and compensation of employees in 2010 alone (World Bank, 2012). This explains why institutions offering training in English is favoured by the general public and draws in rough how the Filipino language is advocated to develop a stronger sense of nationalism while preference is given to the English language by most, given its ability to open doors for better opportunities.

The use of the English language as means to act as a tool for 'interconnectedness' is however pursued by some as constructed colonialism (Pennycook, 1998). English evidently in the Philippines is used as a social tool that enables economic advancement, and the feature of English-competent society where political-economic elites usually emerge (Tupas, 2003) all draw above in rough the colonial and imperialist feature of the language still advocated by some. The line of reasoning that development and nationalism cannot 'go together', though rather sweeping, was argued by Sta. Maria about a decade ago that the Philippines must "set aside at this critical period of our development (…) over-zealous feelings of nationalism, which deter our efforts at improving the teaching of English" (ibid p.12). This usual measure of nationalism to language use during the debate of the bilingual policy however now has been taken over by an overriding theme that cognitive development improves significantly if the first language is used in instruction, with the socio-cultural aspect of national pride evidently still emphasised in the discourse but not necessarily taking precedence. Despite the increasing call to internationalise and the move towards promoting the English language in the country, advocates of the effectiveness of using the mother tongue as the medium of instruction for schools are now reviving the call to promote the "local" language. The institutionalisation of the mother tongue based multilingual education (MLE) reflects this,

notwithstanding the costs to be incurred for promoting such policy. This is of course promoted with the intention, as always, of the Philippine government to achieve the Education for All (EFA) goal in 2015.

Language Policy in Malaysia: Top- Down

In colonial Malaya, English was the official language and Malay, Chinese and Tamil languages were deemed vernaculars. There were Malay intellectuals who rationalised that English in colonial Malaysia "produced a detrimental effect on the development of the Malay language [as it was] confined as the language of the home and the medium of instruction of a limited number of primary schools, Malay was deprived of the opportunity to develop" (Karim, 1981, p. 45). It would therefore be timely to "release the Malay from the shackles of British colonialism which was best represented in the vestiges of the English language" (Mitchell, 1993, p. 61). While there may be some truth to what the Malay nationalists and intellectuals felt about the development of Malay language and indigenous rights, the rationalisations remain rhetoric because the compelling reason for the accelerated use of Malay especially in education, according to Watson (1983), was to some extent based on the belief that the non-Malays had done well in English medium schools and at tertiary institutions. The English educated urban non-Malays had dominated major commerce/ business sectors as well as the professions while the largely rural Malay population had been by-passed.

With the coming of independence in 1957, the leaders of the major communities decided to accept Malay as the national language, a symbol of national unity. According to Omar (1997), Malay was chosen to fulfil this function because of

> Its indignity, its role as a lingua franca, its position as a major language, its possession of high literature, and the fact that it once had been an important language of administration and diplomacy in the Malay archipelago (p.15).

Malay was therefore accepted as the national language and a symbol of national unity although peculiarly, as Gill (2004) states less than 50 per cent of the population at that time spoke Malay.

Even before independence, political parties like the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) and the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) had agreed that Malay would be the national language via a memorandum in August 1953. Thus there was little controversy over the acceptance of Malay as the national language and this has been confirmed by Article 152 of the Malaysian Constitution. However, the Constitutional framers did not phrase Malay as the "official" language, a stamp that allows the language to be used for all official purposes. Consequently from 1957 to 1967, English continued to fulfil this official role and would have continued unabated but for the rise in linguistic nationalism among Malay nationalists.

After independence, the leaders of the country chose to progress along a pragmatic path, pacifying minority communities of the continued role for their languages and at the same time assuring Malay nationalists of a greater role for Malay. At this time it was apparent that the nationalists would not accept the notion of a multilingual nation. Discontented Malay nationalists were unhappy with the slow progress in the institutionalisation of Malay in the country and sought to champion Malay in political domains (vis-à-vis the official language, the language of administration, education and for all formal and official purposes) (David & Govindasamy, 2003).

The Malay groups, particularly the powerful Federation of Malaya School Teachers' Association and the Malay National Action Front, were also unhappy with the provisions of the 1967 National Language Act and criticised it as not enhancing the status of Malay as the primary language of the nation because the Act asked for the continued use of English (Mitchell, 1993). The opposition to the continued use of English is understandable as Chai (1971) observes,

> English came to be regarded not only as the language of colonial education but also, after independence, as an obstacle to the educational, social and economic advance of the majority of Malays (p. 61).

Their suspicion was confirmed by an important fact: there was a steady increase in enrolment in English medium secondary schools (Watson, 1983).

The *Ketuanan Melayu* ideology (or Malay supremacy), that spurred nationalists to promote and encourage Malay language was also highlighted in the former Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad's book, the *Malay Dilemma*- which is not surprising as Mahathir was a strong proponent of strengthened affirmative action for the Malays. Mahathir, in his highly one-time controversial book wrote that the Malays are the "definitive people" of Malaysia as they have a birth right guaranteeing them special privileges such as those outlined by Article 160 of the Constitution of Malaysia. The Article states that a Malay is one who professes to be a Muslim, habitually speaks the Malay language, adheres to Malay customs, and is domiciled in Malaysia (Shuid & Yunus, 2001). There were Malay nationalists who viewed that having other languages in educational domains were detrimental to the nation's unity. For instance, Syed Nasir Ismail, a Malay nationalist political leader during that period, insisted on closing down all Chinese schools in Malaysia as soon as possible, in order to make Malay the sole official language and to reduce competition (Lee, 2001).

The Malay language policy as a medium of instruction was implemented and vernacular schools at least until primary level were allowed to remain. In order to enable students from vernacular schools to effectively transfer to Malay medium secondary schools, transitional classes called Remove Classes were introduced in 1960 by the Rahman Talib Report. Pupils from Chinese, Tamil and at that point in time Malay medium primary schools, were required to undergo an extra year in these "remove classes" in the secondary school. This was to enable students from vernacular schools to become proficient in Malay or English as the situation required. With independence in 1957 and the consequent need for nation building, Malay was made the national language of the country in 1967.

The Malay nationalist leaders also took the opportunity to assert that Malay should be used as a lingua franca to promote unity amongst the ethnic groups as it is stated in the Federal Constitution (Article 153) that Malay is the national language of Malaysia. Malay thus was seen as an identity that is shared by all Malaysians; hence it was only appropriate to learn it in order to be considered Malaysian.

The leaders, spearheaded by the ruling government party-- *Barisan Nasional* (National Front), jointly agreed to reduce the influence of English as it was associated then with British imperialism. In the process, English schools were converted to the Malay-medium in West Malaysia by 1983 (Omar, 1993), while English schools in Sabah and Sarawak (East Malaysia) were converted by 1985 (Solomon, 1988, p.46). The conversion of the English medium schools to Malay medium

began in 1968 at a gradual pace and on a piecemeal basis (Solomon 1988, p.47). Initially, those subjects that could adopt the Malay language as a medium of instruction without difficulty were the first affected by the conversion process (Omar 1982, p.15). From January 1968, all English medium primary schools were required to teach physical education, art and craft, local studies and Music in Malay in years 1, 2 and 3. Most of the Arts subjects were taught in Malay before the shift to Malay occurred for the Science subjects. In fact for a short period of time during this transitional phase, some schools ran the same course in science subjects in two streams, namely, Malay and English. By 1976, all English medium primary schools were completely converted into schools where Malay was used as the medium of instruction and by 1982 all the former English medium secondary schools were converted to National Schools in Peninsular Malaysia (Solomon, 1988, p.46). The Education Act was extended to Sarawak in 1977 and the change of the medium of instruction to Malay throughout the entire school system was completed in Sabah and Sarawak three years later, i.e. by 1985.

To redress the imbalance, education was chosen as the primary mode for instituting changes. The language policy changes that came into effect in the country in the 1970s included:

- Malay replacing English as the medium of instruction in all English medium primary and secondary schools. This task was completed in 1978.
- all university education being conducted in Malay. This exercise was to be completed in 1983 but in actual fact took longer because of teething problems.
- the Higher School Certificate (A- level) and School Certificate (O-level) examinations as well as other national examinations being offered in Malay. The A- and O-level examinations were replaced by Malaysian Higher School Certificate (STPM) and the Malaysian Certificate of Education (SPM) , respectively.
- most importantly, students having to obtain a credit in Malay to be awarded the SPM certificate; the prerequisite to obtaining a tertiary education, government jobs, teacher training opportunities, among others.

In addition to the above mentioned educational policies, the setting up of other completely Malay-based institutions such as the MARA Institute of Technology, junior science colleges, a large number of residential science schools and almost unlimited funding for Malay scholars as well as the preferences in employment in the public sector can be classified as affirmative action designed to ensure the correction of the ethnic socio-economic disparity existing in the country. This wide-ranging affirmative action was expected to bring about outcomes that could truly empower the Malays vis-à-vis the other communities.

Mismatch Policy and Practice: Bottom- Up

As English proficiency deteriorated in Malaysia (as compared to the proficiency of those who graduated from English medium schools during the British era) despite the language being declared the second most important language in Malaysia, more and more local graduates found it difficult to secure jobs. Twenty years after the implementation of Malay-medium education throughout the schools and tertiary system, due to the processes of globalisation, the leaders of the country realised that the fortification of the Malay language at the expense of the development of English was detrimental to its people. In early 2002, it was reported in the major newspapers that

there were 24,000 unemployed graduates from the Malay community (The Star, 6 May 2002). It was also reported that many were unable to procure jobs because of their limited English language skills. Students' English language proficiency nosedived and graduate unemployment, particularly among Malays, peaked and was acute enough for some quarters to demand a re-examination of the language policy (see David, 2004). One such group was private-sector employers; for example, the Malaysian Employers Federation Executive Director, Shamsuddin Bardan, who explained, "employers were reluctant to hire local graduates because they were not able to communicate well in English…This is one of the reasons there are so many unemployed Bumiputra[1] graduates" (The Star, 2002a, p.4).

Fluency can result from inter-ethnic socialisation. Government policies must encourage such socialisation. Networking and socialising with Malays proved to be a useful strategy in acquiring Malay for many non-Malays. Similarly, interacting with non-Malays provided some Malays the opportunities to use English. If a community or ethnic group is not given the opportunity to interact, this can also limit the acquisition and use of a target language, be it Malay or English. In this regard, the New Economic Policy (NEP) that aimed to create a large middle class of ethnic Malays to some extent, helped in the acceptance of English. This is because as a result of the NEP, many Malaysians who were provided scholarships to study abroad were exposed to English and their acquisition of English increased in such settings. They studied abroad for a number of years and on returning to Malaysia still use/d English, especially in private sector jobs (David & Govindasamy, 2003).

Teacher and family support gives the target language a transactional value, thus creating extrinsic motivation to learn the language, provides a wider environment for target language use, and policies and practices which encourage cross-ethnic interaction, are all important factors which help in the acceptance of new language policies and help to minimise inequalities, which changes in language policies may cause.

Conclusion

The competing roles of English and national language in language planning and use in two countries, Malaysia and the Philippines is evident. Both policies emphasise the importance of the national language (i.e. Malay and Filipino) and mandate both as the medium of instruction in schools. However, in the actual use of the language, English dominates because of its economic and social benefits. Such competing roles can hardly be resolved due to the increasing popularity of globalisation where English continually dominates. Nationalistic groups in both countries have recurrently highlighted the significance of using the relevant national language to instil national unity needed for development. The re-examination of language policies in both countries that will balance the importance given to the national language—to instil national unity, and English—for greater involvement in the move towards globalisation is recommended.

Notes

[1]Bumiputra is a term used to describe Malays and indigenous people in Malaysia

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EDUCATION REFORM AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IN JAPAN[1]

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ABSTRACT: *Recently, there have been concerns that equality of educational opportunity has been lost and that this is leading to the stratification of Japanese society through the widening of income differentials, in a "gap society". In such a disparity society, secure full-time jobs are increasingly becoming limited to those who graduate from prestigious universities, and entry into those institutions is becoming connected more clearly with family income and investments. Parental attitudes towards their children taking extra lessons after school, going to cram schools, getting into university, and getting into a relatively highly-ranked university have influenced educational costs. This article examines the historical formation of the concept of equality of opportunity, which has been applied to the educational policy in Japan, particularly from the end of World War II to the new millennium. This paper also expands on the existing literature on educational policies in contemporary Japan by examining how the current educational reform efforts have affected equality of educational opportunity among children from different family backgrounds.*

Introduction

In many societies today, it is virtually impossible to read any documents on educational aims or goals without encountering phrases and terms such as 'equality', 'equal opportunity', 'equal access', 'equal rights' and so forth. The underlying assumption seems to be that 'equality' in some form is an intelligible and sensible educational ideal, yet there are different views about what sort of equality should be pursued. The issue of equality in education has been greatly debated, especially that of equality of opportunity served as a justification for much of the post-war restructuring of educational systems around the world.

In the 1960s and 1970s, equality of educational opportunity became an important subject in many industrialised Western countries. A number of definitions of the concept were developed by social scientists (Coleman et. al, 1969; Halsey, 1972; Jencks et. al, 1972). Compared with England and the United States, there was less research about changes in the understanding and use of the concept in Japan. Moreover, the previous researches dealt particularly with the shift of the concept during the American Occupation period, focusing on the process of creation of the new Constitution and the Fundamental Law of Education (FLE) (Suzuki, 1970; Duke, 1973; Horio & Yamazumi, 1976; Kubo, 1984; Tsuchimochi, 1993).

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It is therefore necessary to update the work of previous scholars concerning equality of opportunity. To do so, this article analyses the kinds of equality of educational opportunity Japan aims to achieve, especially since the Second World War and how decision makers and interest groups apply equality of opportunity to educational policies. This article also expands upon the existing literatures on education issues in Japan by examining how the current education policies affect equality of educational opportunity among children from different social background.

Arguing over Equality of Opportunity

In order to trace the evolutionary shifts in interpretation of the concept of equal opportunity and to explore the reasons for changes in policy, we should consider a historical approach. In this perspective, the studies of Passin (1965), Kobayashi (1976), Beauchamp and Vardaman (1994), and Marshall (1994) provide useful explanations of the general history of contemporary Japanese schooling in terms of its contribution to modernisation and economic development. Also, in selecting historical documents, it is important to focus upon public statements, particularly those which use the term 'equality' or 'equality of opportunity', and which were made mainly by the central administrative (Ministry of Education: MOE) and advisory bodies (for example, Central Council for Education: CCE). It is also significant to trace the major political parties' interpretations of equality of opportunity as reflected in their publications and in parliamentary debates, and compare them with one another.

To analyse the policy formulation process, there are several important studies. For example, Schoppa (1991) provided detailed analysis of the educational policy-making process by using the models of the many 'actors' (i.e. major political parties, bureaucracy, and industrial groups) during the Ad-Hoc Council's education reform of the 1980s. Schoppa described how the Japanese policy-making process in education could become paralysed when there was disagreement between 'conservatives' (the Liberal Democratic Party: LDP, industrial groups and the conservative bureaucrats) and 'progressives' (the Japan Teacher's Union: JTU and Japan Socialist Party) and argued that this 'immobilism' could become an element to delay the progress of educational arguments at the national level. Duke (1973), Thurston (1973), and Aspinall (2001) analysed the history of the Japan Teacher Union within the contemporary Japanese political system and introduced the various theoretical models which accounted for the roles of the JTU in the wider context of Japanese unionism and party politics.

In addition, of the various lenses to view equality of educational opportunity in Japan, this article is particularly concerned with the following two paradigms: 'meritocracy' and 'egalitarianism'. Indeed, throughout this study, we will see interplay between meritocracy and egalitarianism, which eventually caused a transformation in the concept of equality of opportunity over the period (Okada, 1999). It could also be said that the Japanese educational policies formulated to promote equality of opportunity reflected the attitudes of two distinct groups to education – the conservatives and the progressives, as categorised by Schoppa (1991). The concept's shifting meaning was always inseparably connected with the ethos, philosophy, and aims of the two groups. The conservatives had a tradition of encouraging the idea of meritocracy and insisting on allocating the nation's

children according to their different abilities within a diversified school system (Horio, 1988). On the other hand, the progressives, particularly the JTU, demanded a common secondary schooling for all children regardless of family background and children's different ability (Duke, 1973; Thurston, 1973; Aspinall, 2001). Their demand was generally characterised as idealistic and impractical by conservatives. Also, their ideological emphasis upon the egalitarianism of educational opportunity and their suggested policies were fundamentally divergent from those of conservatives during that period.

The findings of social scientific research provided a growing volume of evidence that the expansion of the formal and legal meaning of equal opportunity in Japanese education had a limited effect in bringing about equality for children in their adult life in terms of social mobility and income (Ishida, 1993; Tachibanaki, 1998; Yoneyama, 2002; Miura, 2005). It was also suggested that equality in education should be defined not only in terms of equal access, but in terms of equal achievement among children (Fujita, 1997; Kurosaki et. al, 1997). These arguments and findings have far-reaching implications for the efficacy of educational policies. Recently, there have even been concerns that equality of educational opportunity is lost and that this is leading to the stratification of Japanese society through the widening of income differentials in the 'gap society' (*kakusa shakai*). In the 'gap society' secured full-time jobs are becoming increasingly limited to those who graduate from prestigious universities and entry to those institutions is becoming connected more clearly with family income and investments. The CCE's education reforms since the 1990s, which were executed to give students more free time to explore their own interests (so-called *yutori kyōiku*), in reality, possibly led to the creation of children who could no longer see the point of working hard in school, and who then ended up unemployed or in casual work because educational success was so visibly related to family background; dropping out of the system altogether, or becoming disruptive within it (Genda & Kyokunuma, 2004).

Social Class Issues in the Debate over Equal Opportunity in Education

A key element in the debate over equality of opportunity concerns the inequality between different social groups in education. Terms such as "class inequality" or "social group bias" are widely used in industrial Western countries. In those countries, there is also a growing volume of evidence that the quantitative expansion of educational opportunity does not bring qualitative equality to children from the lower social groups, and social and educational reforms are introduced to tackle this problem.

However, in Japan the social background issue does not attract much attention in the official debates on education, although some educational sociologists revealed the existence of social bias in both children's academic achievement and in the proportion of graduates entering higher education. The Japanese government maintains a policy based on the meritocratic principle. Indeed, the issue of inequality between social groups fades from the educational debate, and instead concern increases about other issues such as "examination hell" or "*ijime*" (bullying).

Thus, although social inequality in educational opportunity exists in Japan as well as in Western countries, governments have taken different roads to reform the structure of their national education systems especially in the period between the 1950s and 1970s. Here another important question arises: Why has the class issue not attracted attention

from the general population of Japanese people in the official educational debate? Kariya (1995) attributed this phenomenon to people's sense of egalitarianism, which was probably the most significant variable that distinguished Japan from Western nations in the post-war period. It was further argued that Japanese teachers tended to treat all school children equally regardless of socioeconomic differences that might exist prior to schooling (ibid, 1995). In such a society, it was a taboo to treat them differently, and in that sense Japanese egalitarianism was the antithesis of the underlying compensatory education in England or so-called "head-start" programs in the United States.

Ideological Shift of the Concept of Equal Opportunity in Japan's Educational Policies

Pre-War Period

Equality of opportunity was one of the ideals which Japan developed in its educational policies during the last century. Since the latter half of the 19th century, when the Meiji government was able to transform feudal Japan into a fast-growing modern nation state, equality of opportunity as the underpinning rationale for mobilising the talents of the whole nation was applied to almost all domains of national policy, including education (Hunter, 1989; Linicome, 1993; Marshall, 1994). The need to catch up with western countries impelled the nation to move towards realising this ideal by fostering a national elite. Likewise the growth of liberalism, with its call for distributive justice, helped to bring equality of opportunity to the forefront as a national ideal. However, despite the fact that elementary/basic education was already universal by 1886, the principle had rarely – if ever – been applied beyond the post-primary education level until the American Occupation authorities scrapped the pre-war Japanese education system. In fact, opportunities in secondary education and above in part were dependent upon, and generally corresponding with, the contemporary patterns of social stratification, regional disparity, and different treatments of boys and girls. Pre-war secondary education was a complex and hierarchical system comprising middle schools for a (male) elite, and vocational, higher elementary and youth schools for the majority.

Education Reform under American Occupation

The post-war education system was introduced by the American Occupation aiming at the 'democratisation', 'demilitarisation', and 'decentralisation' of Japanese society (Duke, 1973; Kubo, 1984; Tsuchimochi, 1993). The new system was the American model: the first nine years were compulsory education, composed of six years of elementary school and three years of lower secondary school, after which came three years of upper secondary school. All higher educational institutions were integrated into either four years in universities or two years in junior colleges. The new system was thus called the '6-3-3-4' system. This system was simpler than the pre-war system and was aimed at providing greater opportunities to advance to secondary and higher education.

The general trend of the post-war Occupation reforms in Japan was originally to interpret the concept of equality of opportunity in an 'egalitarian' way, emphasizing

self-realisation, rather than as a justification for differentiation between children. This ideal of equal opportunity was incorporated into Article 26 of the post-war Constitution and Article III of the Fundamental Law of Education (FLE). In the general circumstances of the post-war period, the ideological emphasis was placed upon 'equality' rather than 'meritocracy' or 'efficiency', and the FLE's aims were fundamentally divergent from those supported by the state before the war – allocation of national children into different types of secondary schools in terms of their social function for national prosperity.

From 1950s to 1970s

The period of the 1950s could be described as essentially one of consolidation, but also a time when the implementation of the FLE began to be challenged. Towards the end of the 1950s, criticism of the new systems began to emerge, along with pressure to redefine the concept of equality of opportunity declared in the FLE. Once the American Occupation in Japan ended in 1952, the Japanese government began to undertake a revision of various legislative legacies of the Occupation and to modify them according to the domestic conservative ideology of the day. This process was known as the 'reverse course' (Schoppa, 1991). In education, the conservative government, together with the MOE and industrial interest groups, attacked some aspects of the Occupation reforms. Behind these criticisms, the philosophical basis of the concept of equality of opportunity in the Occupation's educational reform began to be eroded by a strong emphasis on 'efficiency' and 'meritocracy'. In this context, conservatives insisted that equality of educational opportunity should mean '*equal cultivation of different ability*' in order to foster a national elite (Seirei Shimon Iinkai, 1951; Yamazaki, 1986). The fiercest opponent of these conservative groups was the JTU. The JTU had emerged as a major force defending the 6-3-3-4 system, maintaining the system's emphasis on equality of educational opportunity as stipulated in the FLE. Strong obstruction from the JTU prevented any change taking place until the late 1980s when it split into two unions (Aspinall, 2001). Thus, from the 1950s to the end of the early 1990s, severe disputes frequently unfolded between conservatives and the JTU over the principle of equality of educational opportunity.

There was no doubt that post-war Japan made enormous strides in providing the nation's children with expanded educational opportunities covering the whole range of pre-school to higher education, particularly since the period of high-speed economic growth in the 1960s. The widespread popularity of the idea of equality of opportunity resulted from the belief that expansion of education would bring about greater social equality and at the same time a stronger national economy. The 'manpower policy' and 'human capital policy' provided a theoretical basis for this expansion (Keizai Shingikai, 1963).

Nevertheless, equality of opportunity was conceived in a specifically Japanese way at the beginning of the 1970s. During the long economic boom, Japan experienced rapid changes in its economy and became a leading industrial society. It was confronted with the task of adjusting the nation's industrial structure to emphasise industries on the cutting edge of scientific and technological change. In addition, the Japanese government was once again forced to look into its educational system. Even though it was successful in terms of past performance, it had been designed to emphasise examinations and to create a large number of quality workers for the catch-up phase of Japan's development. With the Japanese economy becoming increasingly dependent on international business,

fast-changing science, and technological industries, the government was faced with demands from many quarters, especially industrial circles, calling on it to reform its educational system in order to bring it into line with the growing need for more diversely talented and creative workers. Against this background, the concept of equality of educational opportunity became interpreted as the *same* possibility of access for each pupil to *diversified* schools, curriculum, teaching methods, and treatment corresponding to ability.

From 1980s Onward

Accordingly, the established 6-3-3-4 system began to be seen as failing in fostering talent at a national level, and also failing to provide various educational opportunities, "which suited each individual's abilities and aptitudes." Twice in the twenty-year period between 1970 and 1990, the Japanese government embarked on major educational reforms. The first was the CCE comprehensive reform programme in 1971, which sought to introduce a greater degree of diversity into the educational system capable of producing the type of workers required for the next stage in Japan's economic advance (CCE, 1971). The second, the Ad-Hoc Council on Education (AHEC) set up in 1984, similarly tried to achieve more flexibility by introducing 'market competition' into the educational system in order to restore the high standards of attainment that existed in the pre-war middle schools, effectively select national elites, and triumph in international industrial competition (Goodman, 1989; Schoppa, 1991; Hood, 2001; Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999). The AHEC also advocated the adoption of the notion of 'freedom of choice', which meant more choice for parents, and more emphasis on a child's 'individuality' to achieve these goals (AHEC, 1986). The CCE's reform proposal of the late 1990s to diversify the 6-3-3-4 system could be seen as essentially continuous with the aims of both previous initiatives of the government from the 1970s.

The liberalisation process first advocated by the AHEC developed gradually by the CCE reports during the 1990s in two main phases: first by individualisation and secondly by diversification (CCE, 1997). This process was based on market rules and the assumption that better quality would be achieved through freedom of choice, autonomy, and entrepreneurship, and that state schools should not expect to rely any longer solely on government initiatives, but also on their self-correcting and self-responsibility. Increased freedom in the curriculum, the 5-day school week, 6-year state secondary schools[2], grade-skipping, and relaxation of the school catchment area were justified under the slogan '*kosei jūshi*'(individuality). For tracing the shift in the major concepts of equality in education, the concept of individuality would contain significant elements, on the one hand, the repudiation of the popular logic 'equal opportunities of receiving education according to children's ability,' on the other, the reinterpretation of the meaning of equal opportunity, by proposing a new concept, 'opportunities for individualisation of each child,' namely using the term of 'equality of free choice' (Okada, 1999).

The CCE's series of reports in the 1990s would conclude an era of almost four decades of attempts by Conservatives to create an elite track in the present 6-3-3-4 system by introducing the 6-year state secondary school system as a step towards a new order by which state school standards could be restored. Yet, this proposal of the CCE raised the

question of whether real equal opportunity in education would be achieved. In fact, the 6-year state secondary school would be unlikely to bring about the extended freedom of choice, which the CCE desired to achieve, and would merely further promote social inequalities in educational opportunities which were already entrenched in the existing education system (Okada, 1999).

Thus, the gloss on equality insisted on by successive governments of the post-war period – *Nōryokushugi* (diversification based on children's different abilities) – was reappraised as the most important yardstick in evaluating equality in education for the coming new century. In other words, the diversification of the system together with the notion of freedom of choice was demanded and justified in the name of equality of educational opportunity. This represented the existing trend in official educational statements.

Current Disputes on Educational Inequalities

Since the mid-1990s in Japan, there has been extensive coverage in both the mass media and academic books and articles describing how low birth rate results in parents' excessive willingness to invest in their children's education, paving the way for extra instruction at cram schools outside formal schooling. Some observers have gone so far as to proclaim that this demographic shift would mean the end of Japan's examination hell or *shiken jigoku*. The so-called "2009 Crisis" was so named because it was thought that year would be the first when there would no longer be any competition to get into university since the places available at higher education institutions would equal the number of potential applicants. However, this did not mean, as some have intimated, that the competition to get into higher education would disappear.

Unequal Competition from the Start

Instead some educationalists and sociologists have suggested that examination hell would continue in an altered form and would be coupled with unequal competition from the start of children's lives (Kariya, 2001; Okada, 2011). Most troubling to many critics were the emerging fixed inequalities in educational opportunities among the different social strata through all stages of schooling (Kariya, 2001). Famous private middle schools, offering guaranteed access to a prestigious private high school and a high probability of getting into a top university, had been attracting increasing numbers of students. Students who began this process early commenced their preparations in elementary school. Indeed, richer parents had always been able to supplement their children's education with costly extra tuition and, to an extent, the education system therefore reproduced the class profile of Japanese people.

An editorial in the *Asahi Shinbun* on 21 May 2006 under the headline "Educational Opportunity Depends on Parents' Income" reported this tendency in the following terms: "21 million [Japanese] yen (about 200, 000 US Dollars) per child was needed to send them to a private kindergarten, middle school, high school, and university" and concluded that "[i]t is extremely difficult for an average family to send two children to private middle schools." The Asahi article additionally quotes the critical comments of Mimizuka Hiroaki, a professor at Ochanomizu University, concerning "unequal competition

from the start," as he expressed apprehension about generating inequalities of educational opportunities according to earning differentials of families:

> Nowadays, the difference between each family's economic situation and culture is greatly influencing children's academic ability. It is an unfair competition from the start. Data from a survey of elementary school children aged 12 years in a suburban city of Tokyo with a population of 250,000 showed that 14 percent go to cram schools. 22 percent of the children who attend cram schools scored over 90 points (scale of 100) on a standard mathematical exam. On the other hand, in the case of children who do not go to cram school, only 1 percent scored over 90 points on the same exam. The difference of academic ability between children who go to cram school and those who do not has been expanding even in the provinces, for example in the cities with the seat of the prefectural government where private junior high and high schools and prestigious cram schools are often found. (*Asahi Shinbun*, 21 May 2006, p.15)

Many social scientists point out that under the LDP, education policies for the underprivileged were being counteracted by policies to provide more educational choice (Fujita, 2007; Cave, 2009; Okada, 2011). This statement referred to the LDP government's policies which were aimed at protecting the educational interests of the least educationally advantaged and the most vulnerable to failure, on the one hand. On the other hand, there were policies for those already well placed in the market, aimed at broadening their educational options.

For instance, educational sociologists denounced the educational reform carried out by the MOE, including the revised Course of Study during the 1990s, on the basis of data about the number of hours children were studying outside of school (Kariya, 2001; Mimizuka, 2007). According to academic research data, the MOE's relaxation of educational standards, the introduction of so-called *yutori kyōiku*, had diminished children's interest in learning. Indeed, research found that the enfeeblement of the value of studying was especially pronounced in the lower social strata. The diffusion of the idea that competition based on examination *(shiken jigoku*) was a vice that had made it harder for those in the lower strata to maintain an interest in learning. Under the LDP government's educational policies, the widening gap between the upper and lower strata in terms of children's eagerness to learn and advance academically would cause Japan to turn into a fully-fledged "class society."

Educational Policies of the Democratic Party of Japan

The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ: *Minshutō*) won a landslide victory in the 2009 election in the House of Representatives, and Yukio Hatoyama was elected as Japan's new Prime Minister. Hatoyama underlined his resolve to challenge the ex-ruling LDP's structural reform drive and his adherence to the market principle in all aspects of social activities. He proposed a general shift to an "economy for the people," placing greater emphasis on citizens' quality of life. The reform of the Diet (i.e. Japan's bicameral

legislature) ,with the transformation of a bureaucrat-dominated government into one led by politicians as its core, was also noteworthy.

At the top of the DPJ administration's policy priorities was the proposed child benefit. The DPJ's campaign manifesto of the August 2009 general election included a child benefit that would provide a monthly allowance of 26,000 yen for every child of middle school age (15 years of age or younger) in the nation. Such an allowance required 5.3 trillion yen to be budgeted annually. In the initial year of the DPJ's pledged program, in which the allowances would be only 13,000 yen per child, the cost would reach 2.3 trillion yen with no income ceiling on households to receive the benefits. This outlay of funds was in addition to the existing child benefit system, where the national government, prefectural governments, and municipal governments funded a third of the 5,000 yen or 10,000 yen monthly allowances per child of primary school age or younger. For a more detailed explanation regarding the educational budget in Japan, see Yotoriyama (2012).

With no household income limit for the subsidy, the DPJ's envisioned plan provided families with an annual subsidy of 118,800 yen, which was equal to the standard cost of a child's annual tuition at a public high school. This sum would double for lower income families with annual income not exceeding 5 million yen. The DPJ's child allowance further granted matching amounts to families whose children were in attendance at more expensive private high schools. The DPJ envisioned this child subsidy programme covering 3.6 million students at a cost of 450.1 billion yen for the fiscal year of 2010, meaning the government would be supplying the essential subsidy funding required by high school operators such as the prefectural boards of education.

Another initiative on the DPJ's agenda was a tax reduction for families with dependent high school students—children 16 to 22 years old. The DPJ proposed to employ the savings resulting from these cuts in financing the free high school education plan. (This tax benefit reduced the taxable income of eligible households by 630,000 yen per child, cutting the total tax burden on households with high school students by more than 200 billion yen. The benefit was greater for higher-income families subject to higher tax rates.) The initiative's pivotal innovation rested in radically reducing the tax deduction while equivalently endowing tuition subsidies and thereby efficiently contributing superior financial support to lower-income families. Though the economic burden on more prosperous families would increase somewhat, the DPJ believed this new innovation served to supply equal education prospects to children regardless of their parents' income.

Yet there were high school education expenses other than tuition that required addressing. These included entrance fees, costs for teaching materials, and expenses for school excursions, beyond those the subsidy covered. For such additional expenses many lower income families still needed financial aid. To address these monetary needs of low-income families struggling to meet the costs of educating their children, prefectural governments offered high school tuition reductions or exemptions. Whenever possible, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport, Science and Technology (MEXT) and local governments needed to cooperate to figure out effective methods of employing the savings from the new DPJ child subsidy to augment financial support for these more disadvantaged households.

Difficulties to Implementation

However, critics pointed out that it would be difficult for the DPJ administration to implement its election promise concerning education in the coming fiscal year. Given the serious financial squeeze, a cut in the deduction was necessarily considered (Okada, 2011; Ouchi, 2011). For this reason, the Government Revitalisation Unit was established as a new organisation to work on eliminating from JFY 2010 (Japanese Fiscal Year 2010: April 2010–March 2011) wasteful or unnecessary budget requests, to total more than 95 trillion yen (about 950 billion US Dollars).

Moreover, media coverage of the DPJ's handling of the education issue brought to light problematic issues. First, though the DPJ proposed monetary assistance through its child subsidy programme that allowed for free public high school tuition, the media's questioning exposed the lack of a plan or even an outline for attaining its goal of expanding public assistance for children's welfare. Though the administration had committed to escalating measures to assist parents in child-rearing, they did not yet have a working model to attempt child care assistance, which should have been the central focus of its child policy. As a consequence, there were divided views within the government over whether central or local government had primary responsibility for administering child care services.

Second, although the DPJ stated its objective of a general shift to an "economy for the people" and "a major policy change" with its foundations in the child subsidy, it had thus far been unsuccessful in even producing the coordinator post in charge of resolving conflicting child policy views. With the DPJ government credibility at issue, more cabinet embarrassments and imbroglios were liable to ensue when child allowance deliberations commenced, unless this situation was rectified in advance of the Diet session.

Yet, any major policy shift was likely to induce divergent arguments. Lacking an effectual structure with which to implement new policy, no successfully efficient procedures could be fashioned. Unaided, the enhanced development of child subsidies would prove ineffectual against the increasingly severe shortage of day care centres. Moreover, the mitigation of issues such as child abuse and parental depression from child-rearing difficulties remained impossible, against which solely improving child allowances was ineffectual.

On 8 December 2009, the DPJ approved a policy package, which they depicted as offering emergency economic procedures to increase the Japanese people's sense of economic growth and personal security. Including measures to augment child care services, this package integrated the formation of a government panel to study procedures to assist the next generation of citizens. However, with the formation of such a government panel, the administration had to consider the urgent necessity of guaranteeing that the panel would effectively proceed to develop a general approach that included detailed methods to socialise child care tasks as well as engender scope for expansion of methods for potential future requirements.

Recent Signs of a Growing Sense of Unfairness in Japan

It seems reasonable to suppose that the dramatic nature of post-war political, social, and economic changes partly contributed toward establishing a society of

degreeocracy dominated by the lack of attention given to the issue of social class in the debate on equality of educational opportunity in Japan (Kariya, 1995; Okada, 2001). Despite this popular image of degreeocracy, cross-national comparisons by sociologists show no evidence that educational opportunities were more open in Japan than in England and the United States.

Certainly, after World War II, Japan experienced an expansion of its education systems. However, expansion of the system did not weaken the effect of social origin on educational attainment. The results of various studies suggested that educational opportunities were limited by the various resources with which an individual grew up; educational attainment was largely determined by the amount of the family's economic and cultural capital, not only in the other industrialised countries, but also in Japan.

In recent years, reliable nationwide surveys have indicated that a significant proportion of Japanese people regard inequality as the attribute that best characterized contemporary Japanese society (refer to SSM, 1995 for details).

Japanese people have become aware that opportunities for educational advancement are not open to all individuals and that various social background characteristics influence the attainment of education. Consideration turned to the inequality of educational opportunity at an individual level. People were not entirely satisfied with their education system, where degreeocracy was imposed as a priority upon them and the intense competition was the consequence of again giving advantages to those who were privileged to start with them.

In fact, social scientists have discovered signs of growing educational inequality in recent years. Some research findings show an increasingly large proportion of entrants to Japan's most prestigious universities coming from private school backgrounds. In particular, they emphasise the growing number of privileged students who have attended private 6-year secondary school as opposed to three years of lower secondary school followed by three years of upper secondary school. These private schools, similar to the Public Schools in England, which charged considerable fees and catered to the upper-middle class, not only offered a heightened possibility of educational success, but also passed on what Bourdieu calls the cultural capital of the elite to their students (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). Parents who could afford to send their children to more expensive institutions greatly improved those children's educational chances. This tendency (since the 1990s) has been increasing in an age when the birth rate is in decline.

Conclusions

This article has examined the historical formation of the concept of equality of opportunity, which has been applied to the educational policy in Japan, particularly from the end of World War II to the new millennium. Examining the case of Japan has given us the opportunity to arrive at a fuller understanding of peculiarities in the process of the transformation of the concept. Indeed, throughout this study we have seen interplay between egalitarianism and meritocracy which eventually caused a transformation in the concept of equality of opportunity over the period. The future remains uncertain, but the findings of this study suggest that this dialectical stress between egalitarianism and meritocracy will continue to plague policy-makers in Japan.

This paper also expanded existing literature on educational policies in contemporary Japan by examining how the current educational reform efforts have affected equality of educational opportunity among children from different family backgrounds. Japan had reached a critical point, facing increases in both inequality of outcome and inequality of opportunity due to poverty. It has now become necessary to halt the worsening trend and revise the approach to the issue. It was urgent for the current government to ensure that the planned educational policies are effective, not only in their overall approach, but also in the specific measures taken to reduce educational inequalities and socialise child care.

Overall, the results of this study suggest that Japanese people need to reconsider, and explore more deeply the various possible meanings of terms such as equality of opportunity, equality, ability, social class, and meritocracy and see how these have been treated and debated over in different periods in other industrialised countries. The issue of social class inequalities has disappeared from the official educational debate in Japan since the mid-1960s. It has not yet reappeared and/or been reconsidered under recent conditions. It might be said that Japanese people can gain many insights that could help to solve contemporary class issues from cases in other industrialised nations.

Notes

[1]This paper is developed to building on the book: Akito OKADA (2011), Education and Equal Opportunity in Japan, Berghahn Books, New York.

[2]The 6-year secondary school (est. AY1999) is a new type of school, a combination of traditional 3 year junior high school and 3 year senior high school education. There are various types of school, state and private. The number is growing but still accounts for a small portion of the entire sector.

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BOOK REVIEW

Confronting the Shadow Education System: What Government Policies for What Private Tutoring?
by Mark Bray (2009), 135pp. ISBN: 078-92-803-1333-8
Paris: IIEP/UNESCO Publishing.

While private tutoring has long been a part of the education scene in many countries of East Asia, during the past two decades private tutoring and other forms of supplementary schooling- what Bray calls 'the shadow education system' - have now become widespread throughout much of the world. They can now be found in most countries in Asia, the former states of the Soviet Union, Western Europe, North America, Australia, Africa and even Latin America. How should governments regard this phenomenon? Should they ignore it, regulate it or seek to prohibit it? All three have been tried, in different countries, with limited success. This book examines the whole issue of the shadow education system; what it is; who benefits; what are the implications for families and for mainstream schools; what policy implications arise and how should governments and planners respond? It is based on the discussions that arose out of a 2007 forum held at the UNESCO Institute for Educational Planning in Paris.

Bray's thesis is that so many issues and challenges are thrown up by the growth of supplementary forms of schooling that they need to be both recognised and challenged. They can create social and educational inequalities. They can undermine the regular state provided education system. If practising teachers are involved in private tutoring in order to earn additional salaries they might have divided loyalties. Private tutoring can also distort the lives of children by denying them a normal, healthy and varied childhood, simply because of the excessive pressure and long hours that they spend in studying or cramming. On the other hand they can enable students to cover the whole curriculum, they can encourage state schools to improve and they can occupy children outside normal school hours. This book addresses most of these issues and concerns. Although private tutoring can apply to pre-school children as well as to university students the scope of this book is confined to tutoring for primary and secondary school students.

There are essentially three main components to the book. The first sets out the scope and shape of supplementary tutoring. It highlights that the picture is confused and varies across the world. There is usually increased demand just before crucial examinations, boys are more likely to benefit than girls; delivery ranges from individual tutors through to commercial enterprises, from one to one sessions to large classes in lecture halls, from correspondence courses to TV and the Internet. The variety and scope make it difficult to regulate what is happening. The social, economic and educational impact on society is then analysed. Finally three very different case studies from Korea,

Mauritius and France are used to illustrate different policy responses. The second part examines some policy responses in general terms, recognising at the same time that data is often hard to come by. Whatever the context policy makers should begin by trying to map what exists, who the clients are, the size and shape of what is being offered, the issue of supply and demand. The chapter also looks comparatively at some national legislative attempts at regulation. A third chapter stresses the need for more comparative data to assess the best ways forward and a number of international surveys are cited.

The literature on supplementary education provision has been growing remarkably over the past twenty years as more and more countries experience the growth of this shadow education system. Bray's book, however, is an excellent summary of much of the known research in this area as well as being a synthesis of the 2007 forum discussions. It is full of useful insights and suggestions. It provides some valuable comparative data and if no other book on the subject was studied, a reader would have a good understanding of the complexity of the issues raised by supplementary tutoring simply by reading this one. It is a valuable addition to the literature.

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