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SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ASPECTS OF
EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ASPECTS OF EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

There are five related but separate sections presented for discussion as follows:

- I. Some Commonly Held Assumptions About Education and Development
- II. Some Distinctive Characteristics of Educational Systems
- III. Extracts from and Comments upon: Current and Projected Secondary Education Programs for Thailand: A Manpower and Educational Development Planning Project, 1966.
- IV. Some Suggestive Data on Education in Underdeveloped Countries
- V. Research on Educational Systems in Southeast Asia: Priorities and Potentialities

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I. Some Commonly Held Assumptions About Education and Development

- A. Formal education is somehow inherently beneficial both to the individuals who receive it and to the societies in which they live. Thus one of the major tasks of development is seen as providing for more and more educational opportunities for more and more persons as rapidly as possible.
- B. The numbers of schools and universities and the size of their enrollments are major indexes of educational progress and modern economic and political growth. The related problems of development will be overcome by expansion.
- C. Literacy rates are in themselves extremely important indications of both the efficacy of educational systems and the stage of modern growth.
- D. Manpower studies are the most reliable and perhaps crucial measures of the contributions of educational systems to economic development.
- E. Educational organizations have been and are especially effective agencies for purposefully stimulating desired change and for implementing and reinforcing national goals and programs.
- F. The formal aspects of the educational process (curricula, teaching methods and materials, examinations, organizational structure, administration and the like) are the most significant variables of schooling with respect to evaluation, reform and investment.

II. Some Distinctive Characteristics of Educational Systems

- A. Their great diversity, breadth and wide distribution within the total society with respect to:
 - 1. geographical coverage
 - 2. age groups
 - 3. sex groups
 - 4. social classes
 - 5. cultural groups (racial, religious, linguistic, etc.)
 - 6. physical and personality types
- B. Their great size and expansion with respect to:
 - 1. numbers of students, staff, teachers and schools
 - 2. capital outlay
 - 3. functions

C. Their extraordinary fragmentation with respect to:

1. school level by age grade (nursery to adult)
2. school type by course of study (vocational, academic, etc.)
3. diversity and nature of sponsoring organizations (public-private, secular-sectarian, civilian-military, mass media, etc.)
4. Multiplicity of professional associations (for primary teachers, professors, school administrators, psychologists, curriculum experts, art instructors, headmasters, etc.)

D. Separation from clientele (those who pay the costs and bear the taxes are not themselves in school.)

E. Difficulties in measuring return on investment for families, individuals and governments due to:

1. the long time-span between instruction and employment
2. influence of non-school agencies
3. inadequacy of present measurement technology
4. complexity and great number of variables

F. Their primarily conservative nature with respect to:

1. roles in cultural transmission and conservation
2. the conditions of employment for public servants (bureaucratic hierarchies, promotion by seniority, etc)
3. vulnerability to political elites with status quo motivations

G. Vulnerability to non-professional control due to:

1. financial dependency
2. parental concern for the immature--their children
3. close connections with elites
4. diminishing status of teachers, commonness of schooling and the competition for places as results of mass, public, relatively free education

H. The great extent to which status, prestige and power in combination motivate the uses and views of education by families and individuals.

III. Extracts from and Comments upon: Current and Projected Secondary Education Programs for Thailand: A Manpower and Educational Development Planning Project, 1966 (Thai Ministry of Education and Michigan State)

- A. "The...entire bureaucratic power structure is a complex blend of personal, aristocratic and official relationships.) (p. 18)
Comment: Yet in the chapter on Organization and Administration in education there are no data on this structure and its dynamics.
- B. "Another problem...is the rather high percentage of (vocational school) graduates, employed in fields other than those for which they were trained." (p. 26)
Comment: There are no data on the reasons for the above; remedies are suggested mainly in terms of better "effort in manpower forecasting to provide targets for educational planning." (p. 40)
- C. "It is important to note that the educational level of the Thai labor force, while rising, is still quite low for a country at Thailand's stage of development." (p.46,
Comment: Assumption here is although Thailand's economy is moving along fairly well, labor is undereducated. What then are the significant economic consequences of this low level of education?
- D. "Social and Philosophical Bases of Secondary Education"(Chapter 4) consists in total of 7 1/2 pages.
- E. "The secondary school seems to be a proper place for boys and girls to acquire a more accurate appraisal and knowledge about themselves, to learn social roles as men and women, to learn to respect others on the bases of competency and leadership as well as respect for age."
Comment: Note "proper place" without any data about the environments and social realities of secondary schools. Note mixture of normative values and social skill requirements.
- F. "It may be necessary to adjust certain instructional methods to harmonize the secular and spiritual elements in the Thai culture." (p. 47)
Comment: No data whatsoever on Buddhist education to which the above statement refers.
- G. " The schools can play a vital part in the preservation and improvement of Thai culture and society." (p.47)
Comment: No information on how this has been, is or might be done.
- H. "The educational system is expected to take over tasks previously assigned to families, priests, employees and government officials." (p.48)

Comment: Which tasks? Is there a shift or transfer and what data reflect this? Are these tasks appropriate or feasible for schools to undertake?

- I. It is necessary to specify and identify "educational goals that arise out of the hard social facts of life of contemporary Thai society." (p. 51)
Comment: But the "hard social facts" are hardly presented.
- J. "Social Imperatives of Present Day Thailand" (for Youth) examined under three headings: 'understanding, critical thinking skills, and appropriate attitudes.' (p.51)
Comment: The imperatives outlined are a melange of normative judgments, social necessities, hortatory statements, etc. -- for example:
1. "educational system exists to serve the community" --one might ask which community?
 2. "Society needs a free economic system". . .
 3. "Society needs a strong popular government" . . .
 4. "Society needs to develop loyalty to the principles of democracy" . . .
 5. "Society needs to be free from the danger of infiltration, subversion and aggression."
 6. "Society needs to preserve the basic institutions of home and family, school, religion and monarchy."
 7. "Society needs to develop ethical, moral, spiritual, legal and judicial values for its citizens, as well as a sense of patriotism, responsibility, perseverance and discipline."
- K. Listed below are "imperative needs of youth that may legitimately become objectives of secondary education in Thailand." (p. 55) There are 13 points and each point begins with the exhortation: "All youth need" The list includes every role, every goal, every skill, and every function that anyone has ever thought of with respect to education--hardly a discriminating list and one that reflects neither social realities nor the ability of the educational systems to undertake all this.
- L. Though for secondary grades (MS1-5) 50% of all students in academic streams are in private schools few suggestions about controlling, evaluating, etc. these schools (pp. 61-62) are made.
- M. "The most salient impression that is gained from a cursory observation of teaching methods . . . is the emphasis on learning for the sake of passing examination." (p. 104)

Comment: 20-year projections must be based on something more than " cursory observations." This is hardly a novel finding and could prevail generally regardless of the type of education and tests provided. One only need to look at Japan.

- N. The entire thrust of the report is in the direction of adjusting educational productivity to future foreseeable economic manpower demands. There are, however, no references to controlling output or to regulating placement and employment by manipulating educational opportunity.
- O. "The secondary school curriculum does not offer courses that are adequately geared to the student's aptitudes, interests and abilities."
Comment: No studies of students were cited to support this recommendation.
Comment: Typical over-emphasis on formal elements of schooling to effect reform.
- P. Consider the following stated as a "problem": "The secondary school curriculum is not meeting the economic needs of the country and is in need of revision and reorganization." (p. 169)
- Q. Consider the following "recommendation": "It should be the policy of the Ministry of Education to prepare individuals through secondary, vocational and higher education to meet the middle level and upper level manpower needs of Thailand." (p. 169) Yet the implications for substantial control of the educational and economic systems therein are nowhere treated.
- R. "The practical effect of the examination system (and its non-standardized instruments) has been to act as a highly restrictive factor impeding further educational attainment by a large number of students." (p. 181)
Comment: This suggests that standardized instruments would not have such an effect--and this is not necessarily so.
- S. In Chapter 10 there are highly generalized as well as specific recommendations for the solution of 23 educational "problems" All of these are charges upon the educational system for reform and none of these discuss or even reflect the possibilities or need for changes in the economic structure.

IV. Some Suggestive Data on Education in Underdeveloped Countries

- A. Literacy rates in the state of Kerala are the highest in India (on the order of 55%). Percentages of literacy are higher in rural than in urban areas. Perhaps 65% of the age cohort 6-10 complete primary school. There is a highly developed secondary school sector (over 50% of which is private and most of this percentage is sectarian). Despite this Kerala has few colleges and no high prestige universities, and over 80% of those of its residents who seek higher education do so in other states of India. Despite early (17th century) exposure to the West and all this education, agricultural productivity is lower and industrial growth is slower than in almost any other major state of India.

Compare this with the situation in Uttar Pradesh, India's most heavily populated and most traditionally Hinduized state. Here literacy is about 15% (with urban rates double those of rural), with a miniscule public primary education system, with one of the highest concentrations of students in public higher education (including three of the most prestigious universities in the country) and with relatively a very rapid growth in manufacturing and industry. (Data from forthcoming monograph on education and development in the various regions of India.)

- B. "In the course of urbanization social mobility into at least one specific stratum of Thai society has declined . . . This is due to a large extent to . . . occupational specialization, bureaucratization and differential fertility." Before the revolution of 1932 the "highest and politically most important positions were held by royal nobility" while at the same time "recruitment for the lower ranks of the civil service provided opportunities for many ambitious young men from the provinces as well as from Bangkok to move up the social ladder." After the revolution "competition for civil service position: became more intense and people from rural areas and low family backgrounds found it extremely difficult to get a civil service appointment." This is reflected in the following table:

Thai Civil Servants 1963
Inter-Generational Mobility N=60

Father's occupation of civil servants who
entered government service:

	in and before 1932	after 1932
Gov't. service	19%	51%
Professional	5%	8%
Business	33%	31%
Farmer	43%	10%

Three basic conclusions from this study are as follows:

1. "reproduction rate of the bureaucratic elite is still high enough to allow for recruitment of members from their own class."
 2. "the traditional Thai . . . status system has been replaced by civil service ranks and academic degrees from foreign universities. Scholarships for overseas education are, however, controlled by the civil service itself. Overseas education has thus worked as a mechanism to close entry into the bureaucratic elite and to give it a distinct sub-culture."
 3. the Thai-emphasis program of the economy since 1948 has given a share of the income from the largely Chinese-owned industry to members of the administrative elite. (Study of Hans-Dieter Evans reported in Journal of Southeast Asian History, September, 1966.)
- C. The political, social and cultural aspects of recruitment to and success in various levels and types of schooling in Southeast Asia are perhaps more significant for evaluation and planning than formal educational factors.
1. Programs (largely foreign-financed and devised) to establish special, standardized admission policies and procedures particularly for universities tend to overlook the advantages accruing to certain groups. Enrollment over the last ten years demonstrates that no matter what measures of achievement are employed, certain minorities increase their already high proportions in prestige in high schools and most universities. In most South and Southeast Asian countries English-speakers, the higher civil servants, the urban dwellers, and the foreign-educated have increased their representation in universities and their numbers and influence in high prestige positions. In addition to these in Burma there are the Anglo-Burmese and Christians; in Indonesia the Chinese, prijaji Javanese and South Sumatrans; in Thailand the Christian-educated and the Chinese; in Ceylon the urban tamils, the 'burghers' and the low country Sinhalese; in India the high caste Hindus, the Sikhs, the higher class Punjabis and Christians.
 2. UNESCO, IAU, AID, and some private foundations often operate as if the above differentials will be ameliorated by "objective" educational reforms. Local

governments while ostensibly encouraging such efforts have (often sub rosa) sought to negate the advantages of certain minorities through quotas and the arbitrary use of multiple selection techniques (school achievement, entrance examinations and interviews). In Thailand, Malaya, and Indonesia there are de facto quotas for Chinese; in Indonesia preference exist for the male offspring of veterans of the 1945-47 revolution; in Ceylon there are considerable barriers for Tamils; in India scheduled castes and tribes have certain constitutionally established privileges with respect to educational scholarships and admissions.

3. South and Southeast Asian educational systems regardless of their structure and formal content generally offer disproportionately high advantages to certain segments of majority ethnic and language groups (the Javanese, Burmese, Tagalogs) Hindi-speakers; Sinhalese) and to certain political and economic elites (the higher civil servant class in Thailand and Malaya; the French-educated North Vietnamese; upper class business families in the Philippines).
4. Occupational choice and performance are often governed by factors outside the school and aside from economic realities.
 - a. In Ghana despite the fact that many secondary school students perceived the considerable economic opportunities in rural areas and ranked business surprisingly high in status, they indicated government employment and urban residence in their future. Factors most often cited for this included the limitations of living in their tribal groups; of the lack of social, intellectual and consumer outlets in non-urban areas; and the traditional advantages of living in the political center of the country.
 - b. Certain groups have traditionally sought secondary and higher education without regard to social mobility and economic value (e.g. the Kayasth caste and Sikhs in India); some affluent groups (Parsees, Arab traders in Ceylon Indonesia, the Chinese of Cholon) have seldom used educational systems; and some religious groups (certain orthodox Muslims in Pakistan, the Philippines, Malaya and Indonesia; rural orthodox Buddhists in Burma and Thailand) have tended to under-use or under-value or show disdain for 'modern,' secular education.

c. An evaluation of the performance of chemists and engineers in Thailand and Burma (1962-63) showed a lack of professional commitment with respect to research, associational activities, keeping-up-to-date, and using their special skills; a relative unconcern with economic opportunities; and a general disdain for practical work. Most of these appeared to be related to status preoccupations, to the realities of advance in a highly hierarchical bureaucracy and to the state of political and economic flux in the country.

5. A survey of university students in Burma (1960), in Thailand (1962) and in Indonesia (1960,1964) indicated that the most important general problem faced by these students which affected their study was a lack of money. These students indicated that the most serious personal or psychological problem they faced that affected their school life was difficulties with members of the opposite sex.

V. Research on Educational Systems in Southeast Asia: Priorities and Potentialities

- A. Need for intensive field studies (before general surveys are undertaken) of on-going educational systems and extensive, well-documented case histories of their growth within particular societies.
- B. Major efforts need to be directed (before making long-range planning commitments) towards ascertaining the interdependent relationships between educational organizations and other organizations (social, political, and economic) within each country.
- C. First step would be a realistic census of all units of the educational system by:
 - 1. region, state, province, district, etc.
 - 2. enrollments by sex, age, religion, ethnic origin and language, race, social class, caste and home residence
 - 3. under social class data on education, income and occupation of parents and close relatives, education of all brothers and sisters.
 - 4. type and level of school.
 - 5. nature and extent of control of sponsoring organization.
 - 6. financing.
 - 7. teaching and administrative cohorts by type and level of school, sex, age, religion, ethnic origin and language, race, social class, caste, educational background, and associational membership.

- D. Survey of high school leavers and university graduates with respect to their past educational records and experiences, and their employment careers.
- E. Need for extensive research on the past and present relationships of education and growth of particular societies. Delineation of educational microcosms relevant to the dynamics of social, political and economic development in the larger society.
- F. Examination of schools as they are, not for what they should or might be. Necessity of using and testing the most promising and appropriate social science theories and methodologies. In this the professional concern with education as practice and technique must be distinguished from basic research on its structure and functions.
- G. Suggested categories for research on the functions of educational systems in developing societies.
 - 1. Educational systems as agencies of socialization.
 - a. communication (acquisition and uses of literacy, social content and style of language or languages)
 - b. learning of social, political and economic roles (attitudes towards and knowledge about authority, work, group, countries, sanctions, responsibilities, etc.)
 - c. peer groups experiences (school as a social system)
 - (1) physical and personality differences
 - (2) sex learning
 - (3) social classes (values, expectations, rewards, punishments, etc.)
 - d. non-familial adults (teachers, administrators--their values; models of authority, behavior, etc.)
 - e. non-school agencies in socialization (family, village, etc.).
 - 2. Educational systems as agencies of enculturation (transmission, preservation and learning of the particular cultures into which one is born: customs, mores, traditions, etc., that derive from special identities based upon race, religion, language, region, etc.).
 - a. cultural content of educational materials
 - b. languages of instruction
 - c. cultural identities of teachers, administrators and students
 - d. articulation with non-school cultural organizations, interest groups, etc.
 - e. literati.
 - 3. Educational systems as agencies of acculturation (exchange and

influence among members of various racial,religious,regional ethnic and linguistic groups).

- a. cultural diversity of school populations
- b. environmental aspects of schooling with respect to reducing,increasing or not affecting cultural cleavages. (the integrative role of schools with respect to nation-building in extraordinarily heterogeneous societies).
- c. dominance of certain cultural groups in educational materials.

4. Educational systems as channels of social mobility.

- a. extent to which cultural and social class criteria determine access to and success in various types and levels of schooling (examination of tests,entrance examinations,etc.)
- b. effect of segregation by sex on opportunity
- c. distribution of and accessibility to prestige schools for rural,versus urban children.
- d. samples of alumni career records and educational attainments and experiences.
- e. importance of economic resources.
- f. adumbration of changes in social class structure reflected in enrollments

5. Educational systems as agencies for the transmission,preservation and extension of knowledge and skills.

- a. methods,techniques of transmissions
- b. some measures of what is learned
- c. transmission agents
- d. distribution and accessibility of basic information
- e. skills taught,used in school,related to needs and practices in society.

6.Educational systems as centers for the training and recruitment of sub-professionals.

- a.technicians
- b. funtionaries
- c. teachers

7. Educational systems as centers for the training and recruitment of potential elites.

- a. political elites (politicians, military, police, judges, etc.)
- b. administrative elites
- c. technological elites (chemists, physicians, engineers, etc.)
- d. instructional elites
- e. intellectual elites
- f. entrepreneurial elites

Based on the functions, values, professional performance and social behavior of leaders with corresponding data on the extent to which any of these were significantly influenced by past schooling. Analysis of present university student populations with respect to attitudes towards profession, research, various political systems and ideologies, social values, certain occupations, etc.

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