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**Opportunities and Limitations of Migrant Education in the Borderland of Thailand:
 Perspectives of Burmese Migrant Parents and Teachers**

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Abstract

For more than three decades, migrants from Myanmar have settled down in Mae Sot, so children's education has become an important element in their life. For this reason, Burmese migrants send their children to school in Mae Sot, and there are many studies which mainly focus on the general characteristics of a schooling system about migrant education and the roles of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in migrant education. However, not many studies pay attention to Burmese migrant parents and teachers, particularly in the context of Mae Sot. This paper will focus on their perception with an aim to give an update on the situation and issues of migrant education in Mae Sot. This study adopts the qualitative methodology, by using in-depth interviews with Burmese migrant parents and teachers. Based on empirical data gathered from interviews, this paper argues that the motivation behind migrant parents and the idea of teacher illustrate the opportunities and limitations of migrant education in Mae Sot. Migrant children in Mae Sot have various opportunities for education such as Thai government schools (official school) and the Migrant Learning Centers (MLCs or non-official school), run by NGOs. However, Burmese migrant children still face uncertainty to access higher education in Thailand due to a lack of accreditation and Thai citizenship. Furthermore, the curriculum in Thai government schools is the core curriculum, so migrant students and teachers in the Thai government school face the difficulties of teaching and studying Thai class. In conclusion, by examining the perspectives from parents and teachers, migrant education in Mae Sot still requires further improvement, where Burmese migrants in Mae Sot have opportunities to study either at MLCs or at Thai government schools, and they are expected to contribute to both Thailand and Myanmar.

Keywords: Myanmar; Thailand; Migrant Education; Borderland; Transnationalism

1. INTRODUCTION

According to a report by the International Labour Organization (ILO), there are 3.25 million migrant workers in Thailand, and Mae Sot has one of the largest migrant populations in Thailand. The town and district of Mae Sot is located in the western part of Thailand, along the Thai-Myanmar border and can be described as "the town of migrants". Historically, Mae Sot has had a close relationship with Myanmar for many decades and is described as "the history of otherness"



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(Lee, 2007), which refers to Karen and other ethnic groups originating from Myanmar, China and Islamic countries who have settled in Mae Sot. Since 1898, Mae Sot has been Thai territory, but this area has a variety of people from different ethnic, religious and national backgrounds. This background was influenced from the British colonial period in that the British started to explore the wealth of this region, especially the teak forests, as well as trade routes connecting its colonies to larger markets in China, and then Mae Sot became a vibrant economic frontier (Nobpaon and Hayami, 2013). For many decades border trade has seen an influx of people such as Yunnanese Chinese, Muslim, and Burmese into Mae Sot. From this history, Mae Sot still has its own unique characteristic, being that the population is not only Thai, but includes migrants from Myanmar such as the Karen ethnic group, Burmese, and Muslims. They also created their own communities and this plays a significant role in getting information, maintaining one's own culture and socio-economic adaptation (Kuncoro, 2014; Kunnawut, 2016; Lee, 2007). Thus, border trade with others over many decades created an influx of various kinds of people and then Mae Sot became the borderland that affords population diversity as well as the creation of their own communities in this area.

Since migrants have stayed in Mae Sot for more than three decades, they have had families and children, so education has become significant factor for the children and their parents. For this reason, there have been various education opportunities in Mae Sot for migrant children such as Migrant Learning Centers (MLCs), Thai government schools, border patrol schools, and private schools. Since 2005 when Thai government declared "Education for All". Particularly, MLCs are one of the major choices for migrant parents in Mae Sot because most of the Karen migrant children cannot enter official schools, such as Thai schools or private schools, and children's parents cannot afford to pay for the education fee, so they go to MLCs (Ball and dim, 2016). MLCs are the unofficial or semi-official school set up by the migrant communities and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and provide the education for migrant children who have difficulty to access Thai government schools (Nongyao, 2012). According to the Ministry of Education (MOE) of Thailand, currently, there are 61 MLCs in Tak province (Shimizu, 2016). However, the Thai government does not recognize MLCs as the official school, so the Thai government avoids using the term "Migrant school" instead it is replaced with "Center". The reason is that they are not qualified to register as one of the many types of schools. For instance, if MLCs want to become a regular school in Thailand, the Thai government requires MLCs to register as an official school in Thailand and for its criteria (Lee, 2013). In spite of being an unofficial school, MLCs are the places in which migrant children can receive their education.

Furthermore, the feature of MLCs is different from a general school in Thailand or other countries in that most schools are established by migrant communities and NGOs (Lee, 2013). The education system of MLCs uses the Burmese curriculum, some part of the Thai curriculum or combines other countries' curriculum. This main point makes it different from other cases, where



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the migrant's education is integrated into the system of the host country, whereas in the case of MLCs they use their own educational system and maintain their curriculum (Lee, 2007). Therefore, MLCs are different from general schools in Thailand in that they are run by the NGOs and communities, and the curriculum does not strictly follow the whole Thai curriculum organized by MOE of Thailand, but applies Burmese, and just some part of the Thai curriculum or original curriculum.

2. STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

Since 2005, the situation of migrant education in Thailand has changed due to the new education policy. The Thai government launched a new education policy in the year 2005 where all children are able to go to a Thai government school, even for children who do not hold an identification card. Nongyao (2012) points out that Thailand has been committed to free basic education for all children regardless of nationality since 2005, but in fact, this commitment changed in response to the presence of a large number of migrant workers in the economy whose children did not easily fit into the government school. This change in the education policy has had an important meaning for migrants and stateless children in Thailand in that those Thai government schools should accept the migrant children when they apply to a Thai government school. Hence, the choices of school for migrant children have expanded since 2005.

As education opportunities for migrant children in Mae Sot have become more varied since 2005, the schools in Mae Sot can be categorized into three main types: MLCs (migrant school), Thai government schools, and private schools such as international schools and religious schools. First, as mentioned above, there are approximately 61 MLCs around Mae Sot and most of the MLCs are run by NGOs, therefore it is an unofficial school. The curriculum of MLCs depends on the NGOs and each MLC have different types of schooling, so they are unable to offer a recognized certification (Fraser, 2016). Second, Thai government schools are the official school where the curriculum follows the MOE, Thailand. In response to obligations to the "Education for All" agenda, the Thai government has adopted policies to widen access to the Thai formal education system for Burmese students (Fraser, 2016). Thus, migrant children are able to enroll for Thai government schools up to the age of 15. According to statistics from the 2014 Thailand Migrant Report, there are 49,677 migrant students (under 18) who enrolled in Thai government schools. Being enrolled in a Thai government school also gives them the social security, which is very significant for migrants who seek the social security in Thailand (Fraser, 2016). Lastly, private schools in Mae Sot refer to an official school like international school, faith-based school, and Chinese school. These schools are expensive compared to MLCs and Thai government schools. Thus, migrant parents in Mae Sot tend to send their children either to MLCs or Thai government schools.



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There are many studies which mainly focus on general characteristics of the schooling system of migrant education and the roles of NGOs in migrant education in Mae Sot. For instance, Nongyao (2012) and Lee (2013) worked on the migrant education, particularly in Mae Sot. Both scholars analyzed the migrant education from a structural level and focused on MLCs. These works are significant for the understanding of the migrant education in Mae Sot, mainly from MLCs and its schooling system. Meanwhile, we have to understand the migrant education in Mae Sot is not only just on a general characteristic of MLCs, but it should look from migrant parents' and teacher's perspective in order to improve migrant education in the borderland.

In order to improve the migrant education in the borderland, this study aims to find out the opportunities and limitations of each type of school that migrant children and their parents are faced with. Moreover, the situation of the borderland has been changing constantly. Thus, this study also attempts to update the current situation of borderland education.

3. METHODOLOGY

The research site of this study in Mae Sot district, and I stayed in this town for 2 months to collect the data. This town is located in the western part of Thailand, in one of the districts in Tak province and is 470km away from Bangkok (see figure 1). According to a National Statistics official, the population of Mae Sot is around 120,000 and half of the populations are the migrants from Myanmar. They cross the Moei River where there is a natural border between Thailand and Myanmar. Due to the characteristics of this town, there are many kinds of schools in Mae Sot such as MLCs, Thai state schools as well as various kinds of migrant communities. The schools (Thai government school and MLCs) were chosen because of the scale of the school referring to the number of Burmese migrant students and the schooling for Burmese migrant students. Based on these reasons, I picked 2 schools for Thai government schools and 4 schools for MLCs (details in 4.3).



Figure 1: The location of Mae Sot

Source: <https://karenchildren.files.wordpress.com/2008/01/map-copy.jpg>



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According to the research objective, this research used a qualitative research methodology for collecting data with the base of ethnographic research methods. Specifically, the methodology that I used is an in-depth interview, semi-structured interview, and participant observation. In terms of the interview, I conducted semi-structured with the teachers in order to seek the schooling and the issues of the migrant student when they attend school, and in-depth interview for migrant parents in order to figure out a motivation for choosing the school and their educational ideals toward their children. These 2 types of interview revealed ideas among Burmese migrant parents about what they thought about their children's education and whether they have a future plan or not. Moreover, interviews with teachers provided significant information for the research in that each school has different schooling and the situation of the migrant student is different, particularly for MLCs. On the one hand, in terms of participant observation, I conducted participant observation in the parent meetings at the MLCs and Thai government schools to understand the interaction between migrant parents and teachers.

The total population of whom I interviewed are 27 Burmese migrant parents and 6 teachers which include Thai government schools and MLCs. For the selection of Burmese migrant parents, the teacher helped to select suitable participants based on three criteria 1) Primary level; 2) Parents and students are living in Mae Sot; 3) Parents who do not have Thai citizenship. The parents of students in primary level was the significant criteria in that the children did not have a clear idea to choose, so when entering to primary school, the parents have a role to choose the school for their children. When it comes to the second criteria, in the context of Mae Sot, some migrant students cross the border to attend school in Thailand, so in the case of a migrant student who has crossed the border cannot be counted as a migrant. Thus, the target population in this study was Burmese migrant parents who sent their children to primary school, stayed in Mae Sot and did not have Thai citizenship.

This research intends to analyze the micro level which refers to the ideas from migrant parents and opinions from the teachers. The individual is the key point of this study, exploring the ideas of migrant parents and how they think with regard to sending their children to either the Thai government or MLCs in Mae Sot. Moreover, this research illustrates the idea for their future, whether they have a future plan or not. These ideas among migrant parents illustrate the opportunities and limitation of migrant education in Mae Sot from the micro level. Thus, it is necessary to explore more deeply to understand what they think about the school, their children's education, and the future.

The limitation of the research was language because some migrant parents could not speak Thai or English. I cannot speak Burmese, so it was necessary to use a translator in order to conduct the interviews. There was always a risk and difficulty in relying on interpreters for data collection. Therefore, I took a lot of time to explain what kind of information that I wanted and the objective of the research in order to prevent any possible misunderstanding.



4. **OPPORTUNITIES FOR MIGRANT EDUCATION AND ITS LIMITATIONS IN THE MAE SOT BORDERLAND**

This chapter will discuss opportunities and limitation of migrant education in Mae Sot from the perspectives of Burmese migrant parents and teachers with a concept of transnationalism. The context of Mae Sot and the situation of Burmese migrants has been complex because they have different backgrounds, social status, economic resources, and jobs. Most of the Burmese migrant workers do not have Thai citizenship and some of them do not have any legal documents, and it is the same for children. Moreover, their reasons to migrate to Thailand were for both economic reasons and escape from ethnic conflict.

4.1. The Arrangement Schooling for Migrant Student in Thai Government School

The characteristic of Mae Sot refers to the borderland influences of accepting migrant children into Thai government schools and there are a large number of Burmese migrant children who go to Thai government schools. Since 2005, the Thai government schools have accepted migrant children, regardless of the nationality of these children, so now migrant children are part of the Thai education system. It is estimated that around 300,000 to 400,000 migrant children are living in Thailand, of those, 34% are in Thai government schools (Paritta, 2016). According to a director of Mae Pa Tai School, there are 39 Thai government schools in Mae Sot and the number of migrant students was dominant in 15 of the Thai government schools. Therefore, it can be said that there is a large number of migrant children who go to Thai government schools.

Generally, Thai government schools use a curriculum from MOE of Thailand which is made for Thai students. Nongyao (2012) claimed that the Thai government school needed to prepare to accept migrant children as students into Thai government schools. In the case of Mae Sot, in Thai government schools where migrant students have become the majority number, preparation has appeared in the form of hiring a Burmese teacher in order to start Burmese class once a week. For instance, Baan Tha At School is one of the largest of the Thai government schools where it accepts Burmese migrant children. The student number in this school is 600 students and 90% of students are Burmese migrants, where the school has a nursery level up to primary level. In response to the large number of Burmese migrant students in this school, the school hired a Burmese teacher and opened a Burmese language classes. According to a teacher from the school, this school is located near the borderline between Thai and Myanmar, so there are lots of Burmese migrants who are living around the school. She continued that the school has one of the largest amounts of Burmese migrant students because of the geographical reason, so the school needed to hire the Burmese teacher in order to open Burmese class for the migrant students. Some Burmese migrant parents also said that they wanted their children to acquire the basic level of Burmese language at least. Burmese language class in the school was also reflected in the voice of Burmese migrant parents.

However, not all Thai government schools in Mae Sot have arranged the schooling for Burmese migrant students. For instance, Mae Pa Tai School is another Thai government school in



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Mae Sot and the majority of students are also Burmese students. Compared with Baan Tha At School, the scale of Mae Pa Tai School is smaller and it is located in the inner side of Mae Sot. Nevertheless, 90% of students are Burmese migrant students. According to the director of the school who was just appointed to the school last year, the school has accepted lots of migrant students from Myanmar, but the facilities and the schooling needs reform for both Burmese migrants and Thai students much like at Baan Tha At School. The director also mentioned that the school has also hired a Burmese teacher, and will open Burmese language classes for all students in the coming year. The objective for opening Burmese class is not only for Burmese, but also for Thai students in that Mae Sot is the borderland and this unique characteristic brings Burmese migrants into the town, so Thai students should think that learning Burmese is an advantage for the student, the director said.

4.2. Thai Government School for integrating into Thai society

Enrolling into a Thai government school has a significant meaning in that the Burmese migrant student is as legal like the Thai student. Burmese migrant students who are enrolled can get a pink-card which is an official identification card for a foreigner who stays in Thailand. This card is issued by the Thai government and for those who hold this card, they can stay in Thailand for 10 years. There are many migrant students who do not have any legal rights when they enter the school and this identification card will give them legal rights to stay in Thailand. However, there are some migrant parents and students that enter Thai government schools to obtain this card, so the teachers will give this card to the students and parents when they graduate from the school. The pink-card has a great significant meaning for children's future in that it gives them more opportunities to stay in Thailand for a longer period. Most of the migrant parents and their children come to Thailand under an illegal status and the illegal status of parents makes their children less likely to access public services like healthcare and treatment (Premjai, 2011). The illegal status or the lack of official documents gave migrants fewer opportunities for work, stay and study in Thailand. Moreover, their undocumented status makes them face the threat of arrest and deportation out of the country by police (Pearson and Kusakabe, 2012). They need to get an official identification card in order to reduce these risks and gain more opportunities. Moreover, the non-status ID cards (refers to pink-card) means undocumented migrant children can attend Thai schools which can request government support for the students (Paritta, 2016). One of the migrant parents who sent their children to Baan Tha At School and has lived in Mae Sot for 8 years said:

“The reason that I send my children to this school is I want my children to work in Thailand and get pink-card because our family will live in Thailand forever.”

Class teachers also said that getting a pink-card is one of the main reasons for migrant parents to send children to the Thai government schools. Most of the migrant parents who send their children to Thai government schools want to stay in Thailand and do not want to go back to Myanmar.



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Moreover, they want their children to stay in Thailand and get a job in Thailand. However, the director of Mae Pa Tai School said that there were some cases where migrant students disappeared after registration and after they got the pink-card. The school should keep the pink-cards until the migrant students graduate in order to prevent the disappearance of students.

Thai government schools also provide an official graduation certificate which MLCs cannot offer after finishing school. An official graduation certificate is important for the migrant student in order to continue to study in Thailand smoothly until secondary level. Thai government schools have issued official accreditation for all students who graduated and most of the migrant students have continued to study at secondary level in Mae Sot. I had a chance to attend the graduation ceremony at Mae Pa Tai School, all grade 6 students graduated and they will continue onto secondary school in Mae Sot. According to the director of the school, almost 100% of students will continue onto secondary school in Mae Sot every year. A migrant parent of a grade 6 student who was also attending this ceremony said that “I am very proud of my children to graduate from this school and can continue to study in Thailand”. Thus, the official graduate certificate can only be obtained in Thai government schools and it gives significant meaning for both Burmese migrant parents and students.

Migrant parents who send their children to a Thai government school expect their children to have good Thai language skills. Most of them are going to stay in Thailand for a long period and want their children to get a job in Thailand. In order to get a better job in Thailand, most migrant parents feel it is a necessity for the children to learn Thai. Thu Zeya (2006) states that migrant workers who intend to stay in Thailand for longer want their children to learn the Thai language, especially writing and reading skills because they believe that knowledge of the Thai language would enable their children to lead a good life in Thailand. A migrant parent who sends all their children to Baan Tha At School said:

“I want my children to speak Thai like Thai people to work in Thailand. If my children can use Thai fluently, they will not face difficulty in communication with an employer”.

Thus, most of the migrant parents who work in harsh conditions feel the necessity to learn Thai, but they do not have motivation to learn Thai to become fluent. As such, migrant parents want their children to become fluent in Thai just like Thai people for children’s future in Thailand.

4.3. Transnational Opportunities Provided Through MLCs in Mae Sot

MLCs have provided educational opportunities for migrant children in Mae Sot in many ways for a long period. Even though MLCs cannot be categorized as an official school in Thailand, MLCs provide various opportunities for a migrant student such as study abroad, continue studying in Myanmar and vocational training. This section will introduce four different characteristics of MLCs in order to explain what opportunities MLCs provide for migrant children in Mae Sot.

The first school is Children’s Development Center (CDC) where the school has provided education for migrant children since 1995. The school has more than 700 Burmese migrant students



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and the school provides education from nursery level up to the secondary level. The main feature of this school is that the school has collaborated with Thai authorities and does not have networks in Myanmar. According to the vice principal of the school, CDC has collaborated with NGOs and institutions in Thailand to encourage students to continue studying either in Thailand or in a third country. Moreover, the principal of CDC explained that an advantage of studying here is the student has the opportunities to study in the Thai informal education and can continue to study at university level.

Table 1. Grade 12 Graduation Achievement 2014-15 Academic Year at CDC

No.	Category	Male	Female	Total
1	Youth Connect Program	1	2	3
2	Leadership & Management Training College	1	-	1
3	Brighter Futures	2	-	2
4	GED (American High School Certificate)	-	4	4
5	Teacher Preparation Course	-	6	6
6	CBOs at inside Myanmar	1	-	1
7	Work	3	2	5

Source: the data is based on “brochure of CDC”

The table 1 indicates that there are various careers for graduate students. As this table shows, there are various channels for training in order to get a job. For instance, a teacher preparation course is for the student who wants to be a student in MLCs. A teacher of CDC whom I interviewed used to be a student of CDC. The thing that should be stated here is about the accreditation. While CDC cannot issue the official accreditation for those who graduate, some students are enrolled in Thai informal education (Kho So Nor) in order to get the official transcripts and accreditation. Thai informal education is the education for those who cannot enroll in an official school, but who finish the school at an age over 15. Moreover, for those who want to continue to university level, CDC also provides a pre-General Educational Development (GED) course in order to pass the GED test (see Table 1). The GED is set by the American Council on Education to replace the official accreditation of grade 12. When they pass the GED, they are then eligible to continue onto higher education in either Thailand or other countries, except Myanmar. Currently, there are 17 students enrolled in this course and the students who graduated from this course went onto university in Thailand, Hong Kong, Australia, and Bangladesh.

The second school is Has Thoo Le School where it is one of the biggest MLCs in Mae Sot. This school is run by a community-based organization (CBO) which is called Burmese Migrant Worker's Education Committee (BMWEC). This organization started to provide education since 2000. The major differences between Has Thoo Le School and CDC are that Has Thoo Le School has a network within Myanmar. For instance, BMWEC which is an umbrella organization of the



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school has been working closely with MOE of Myanmar, since 2012 in order to get recognition. Moreover, this organization had an agreement to support the following programs for migrant students: 1) Matriculation program (this is a grade of Myanmar high school and if passed this the student is able to enter universities in Myanmar); 2) Transfer the student to Myanmar; 3) BMWEC organizes the transfer of migrant students who are going back to Myanmar because some parents would like to return and want their children to continue studying in Myanmar. This school adopts a mainly Myanmar curriculum and the textbooks was brought in from MOE of Myanmar. On the other hand, this school has ties with Thailand. The school has also collaborated with MOE of Thailand, in order to provide a "teacher identification card" and has run as an unofficial school in Mae Sot. Moreover, MOE of Thailand has provided teacher training which trains teacher in both school management and Thai skills. Regarding the student's opportunities, this school has collaborated more with MOE, Myanmar, and provides more opportunities to study in Myanmar rather than in Thailand.

The third school Thuk Han Sa School is quite smaller in scale than the other schools. 97 students are enrolled in this school and 7 teachers are working at this school. This school has the support from NGOs which supports the link to Thai government schools for when the student graduates from here and for those who intend to stay in Thailand longer. On the one hand, this school has started to use a Burmese curriculum and Burmese non-formal education curriculum. This program is a non-formal education for those who cannot enroll into the official education system in Myanmar, but is officially recognized by MOE of Myanmar. The student who finished this program is able to get an official certificate, so the student can continue to study in Myanmar. In other words, it is a similar system to Thailand's non-formal education (Kho So Nor). This program applies to 10 MLCs in Mae Sot, 6 in PhoPra district and in Bangkok. It not only provides primary level (i.e. grade 1 to 4 in Myanmar), but the program also provides middle level (i.e. grade 5 to 8 in Myanmar) at the Thuk Han Sa School. This project will give more opportunities for migrant students and their parents who want to return and continue to study in Myanmar. They can learn basic education in a Burmese official system inside Thailand.

When compared with the case of Thai government schools, migrant parents of MLCs tend to expect their children to get more opportunities for the future, regardless of whether they are going to stay in Thailand or going back to Myanmar. One of Burmese migrant father who sends his daughter to Has Thoo Le School said that:

"I want my daughter to learn 3 languages equally not only focus on one language. If studying at Thai school, she will be able to use only Thai, so Has Thoo Le School is the school where my daughter can learn Burmese, English, and Thai equally. Moreover, I won't leave the choice for returning to Myanmar because our relatives are still in Myanmar, and I do not know what will happen in the future in Myanmar and Thailand. If my daughter studies at the Thai government



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school, she might be only good at Thai and she would face difficulty when our family decides to go back to Myanmar”.

There are many migrant parents from MLCs who think that leaning Burmese, English and Thai is very important for their children to expand on more opportunities for the future. Also, a 42-year-old Burmese migrant parent who sends her children to Thuk Han Sa School stated that “our family will go back to Myanmar after my son graduates this school, and if my son becomes multilingual (Burmese, English, and Thai) it will be an advantage for him in Myanmar”. Thus, Burmese migrant families tend to think of the importance of languages is not limited to only one, but more than one language. This idea is affected by the uncertain conditions for the future in Myanmar. These situations made Burmese migrant parents consider various choices for the future, whether to remain in Thailand or return to Myanmar. Consequently, regardless of remaining in Thailand or returning to Myanmar, Burmese migrant parents tend to think that they want to keep various options available for the future, and MLCs gives these various options.

4.4. Limitation of Migrant Education in Mae Sot Borderland

Migrant education in Mae Sot has improved more and more, but the limitation of migrant education still exists in Mae Sot. There are different limitations between Thai government school and MLCs.

In Thai government schools, the significant limitation is the language barrier that causes the gap between Thai students and Burmese migrant students in terms of Thai language skills. Regarding the agenda “Education for All”, the Thai government schools started to accept Burmese migrant children. However, migrant students and teachers are facing difficulty to study and teach in the Thai class. According to a teacher who teaches Thai class, the score of the nationwide test in the Thai subject is lower than average. As mentioned in the previous chapter, most of the migrant parents of Thai government schools expect their children to have a better education in Thai and good Thai skills (speaking, writing and reading). However, a teacher at the Thai government school explained that it took 4 years for a migrant student to speak Thai fluently, and the migrant student has little command on reading and writing. For instance, the nationwide test has a reading section and migrant students cannot understand the context of reading, and it causes a lower average score of the Thai subject. The level of the nationwide test is based on the Thai students who are living in Bangkok, so the standard level of the test became high for the migrant student. There still has a gap between Thai student and migrant student in terms of Thai subject. It should consider preparing the Thai subject not only for Thai students, but also for a migrant student’s perspective in order to enhance their Thai skill. At this point, the agenda "Education for All" still needs to reconsider the acceptance of migrant students and providing the basic education is not enough. Particularly, in Thai government schools where migrant students are the dominant number, there is a need for the basic education which gives assistance to migrant students in Thailand.



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In terms of MLCs, most of the MLCs are facing a financial issue which is a critical issue for running the school in Mae Sot. Shimizu (2016) raised the financial issue of MLCs and that many learning centers have also been cut off from financial assistance because of the loss of attention in Mae Sot. Of some 61 centers in Tak Province, which includes Mae Sot, 16 have lost financial support this year and 7 centers were closed in 2015. The international community has been directing assistance to Myanmar since the launch of democratic reforms in 2011. This loss of attention on cross-border work or the work with migrant communities from Myanmar in Thailand causes difficulty for Burmese migrants as well as for the NGO staff who work with them. Cutting financial support for MLCs affects migrant parents in that they have to pay for the tuition fee which used to be free. Through participant observations at the parent meeting in CDC school, migrant parents were concerned about the financial cost of schools and the price increases more and more every year. According to an explanation by the vice principal of CDC, in order to maintain a quality of education, the school cannot depend on the funder, so the principal has started to collect the school fees from migrant parents. Most of the migrant parents have limited economic resources and it affects migrant parents when applying to MLCs. For instance, the teacher of New Day school said that there are migrant parents who cannot afford to pay the school fee for CDC and change the school to New Day school for their children.

5. CONCLUSION

The opportunity of both Thai government schools and MLCs from the perspective of Burmese migrant parents and teachers indicates a phenomenon of integration into Thai society and transnational opportunities for children's future. First of all, for Burmese migrant children who go to Thai government schools, the school has become a way for Burmese migrants to integrate into Thai society. The school provides a basic Thai education, official accreditation and a 10 year pink-card for living in Thailand legally. Also, their family expects them to work or study in Thailand because most of the migrant families who sent their children to the Thai government school decided to stay in Thailand for a long period. These families want their children to learn Thai and get official certificates in order to avoid risks (language barrier and illegal status) in the future. In the same way, from the school's perspective, they also need to prepare to accept the Burmese migrant students, such as hiring a Burmese teacher and opening Burmese classes. Secondly, MLCs provide transnational opportunities for Burmese migrant children. In contrast to Thai government schools, MLCs did not become a tool for them to integrate into Thai society, but instead they provided various kinds of opportunities which are not only limited to Thailand, but also in Myanmar and other counties, so it becomes transnational. Also, the opportunities of MLCs illustrate the future plans of Burmese migrant families. Some Burmese migrant parents from the MLCs planned to go back to Myanmar in the future, so they are staying temporarily in Mae Sot. Moreover, some Burmese migrant parents who did not have any idea for the future plan wanted to live in Thailand, but also wanted to keep the option to go back to Myanmar. As MLCs are not officially recognized



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by the Thai government, MLCs can arrange their own schooling for Burmese migrant students depending on what they need. Thus, MLCs are able to provide transnational opportunities for Burmese migrant children and their families.

However, the limitation of migrant education still exists in the Mae Sot borderland. In Thai government schools, Burmese migrant students are faced with the language barrier when they are learning Thai. In the same way, the Thai teacher also faced difficulty to teach a Thai class. Particularly, the reading and writing skill is lower than the average Thai student. Most of the Burmese migrant parents expect their children to be fluent in Thai language and the school needs some tutorial class or additional textbooks for Burmese migrant students to support their learning of Thai class in order to overcome this issue. On the other hand, MLCs are faced with financial issues and many MLCs have been closed down because of a lack of budget. In order to prevent closures of MLCs, the international community, Thai and Myanmar government needs to consider this issue and support the financial continuation of MLCs in Mae Sot.

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