

A New Alternative for Community-Based Education: A Look at Education with a Postmodernism Paradigm

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This article analyzes 1) the recognized educational ideologies, practices and effects on community life in Thai society, 2) the conditions leading to reviews and questions over the educational paradigm, and 3) reveals a new alternative for community-based education in Thai society, through a postmodernism paradigm. The results of the study revealed that formal education has been controlled by the ideology of country development for the growth of economic and industrial systems. Educated people are designated to have an industrial worldview to serve the labor market needs while knowledge that serves community life is seen to have no value and pushed to the periphery making modernism knowledge from outside society necessary. The crises of education that serves the economic system reflect various problems. Reviews and questions over education are thus, posed by thinkers, academics and people with questions of who education serves and who gain or lose in the education system. The government sector has proposed and set rules to solve the problems but it has been technical rather than changing the frame of thought. Nevertheless, a proposed new alternative for community-based education can no longer look at education with the perspective that implies dependence but rather question education, and look at education with a postmodernism paradigm. This may help solve problems in three ways: to understand the myths about education and modern academic knowledge; to question education and modern academic knowledge and to change to a paradigm and knowledge that comprises education that serves people's lives, self-sufficiency, educational intelligence, creates knowledge and education for life.

Keywords: community-based education, postmodernism paradigm

In the modern world, education is used as one of the important international world standards to measure the level of development. For individuals, education is used as an indicator of the level of man's intelligence measuring with the score and level of education certified by degree certificate, which is used as a document paving the way to employment (Ball, 2012). In Thai society at the national level, the rate of people's education is an indicator of the level of the country's development that is considered concrete evidence, for example, the number of population receiving compulsory education and basic education, level of literacy, and nation's place of competence in international rankings. The aforementioned education and its importance is neither non-formal education nor informal education because these two types of education are meaningful only when they can be equivalent to the curriculums or qualifications of those in formal education. Thus, it cannot be denied that formal education is very important and highly valued in the modern world (Pipatpen, 2012).

From the above phenomena concerning education, it is nothing new if what we call "knowledge", "education", and "academic institutions" are usually all connected and almost without questions asked while these three matters are recognized as associated in the three following ways.

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Firstly, knowledge means understanding that corresponds with the actual condition, and is categorized, described, and linked with being specific academics and sciences. For example, knowledge about people's living conditions is commonly called social sciences while knowledge about living things in the world is called biology; knowledge related to education that can be divided into disciplines such as educational psychology, counseling, measurement, educational administration are called education while knowledge about objects in nature is called physics, etc. This categorization of knowledge reflects that facts are isolated, and when individuals discover these facts, they are regarded as knowledge or science.

Secondly, knowledge can help individuals to better manage the situation and problem. For instance, knowledge in biology can help us understand the nature of living things, plants and animals, which can affect utilization and maintenance of these living things while knowledge in physics can help us develop structures and buildings, and able to utilize more resources.

Thirdly, recognized knowledge refers to knowledge that is transferred in the modern educational system or school system with teachers as specialists to transfer it. People who finish different levels of education from educational or academic institutions such as schools, colleges, and universities are defined as knowledgeable or educated persons who are ready to work in the modern labor market system.

Understanding of knowledge, education, and academic institutions that are all connected as mentioned above, at first glance, it might seem a general matter. However, there are many questions about education and modern academic knowledge as seen in critiques on the Western school system, especially on the following three major issues. The first issue is the use of the school system area for dissemination of the capitalist ideologies and domination over people in the system according to the ideologies. Hence, teachers lack freedom-of-thought while students have to adapt to the framework of the rules and regulations that are social control measures. This implies that the school system does neither allow freedom nor give educational quality (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991; Freire, 1998). The second issue is that education is actually used as a tool to support the capitalist economy that promotes social classes of people and inequalities among people in society, which is obvious in the process of educational management focusing on competition for success in the world of industrial economy (Apple & Beane, 2007). The third and last issue is that education gives importance to producing graduates to increase manpower in the working age who have technical knowledge that is useful for entrepreneurs in the industrial labor market. Therefore, the curriculum, the content, and the subject matter of learning and teaching are not relevant to real life and cannot be used to manage problems and situations in life but rather focus virtually on only teaching or transferring technical knowledge (Giroux, 1991).

In Thai society, there are critiques on knowledge and formal education at various levels on the paradigm of education and knowledge pointing out that knowledge or science transferred from the Western culture has dominant power over thought and people's lives (Wasee, 2010). Thus, if learners only copy and depend on them, they will become part of the dominant power system. That is the knowledge will obstruct the opportunity for learning and adapting the knowledge from a different culture to suit and corresponds with the nature of the society where they live. It can be seen clearly that receivers of knowledge are instilled with economic knowledge emphasizing industrialism, and consequently, there are rural and environmental crises. What is necessary after this is that educational and academic

institutions have to review the economy that is in line with the nature of the community in order for people to exist with freedom and dignity (Chammarik, 2003). Critiques at the level of the actual phenomena in Thai society are that education reflects failure in that it cannot lead individuals from rural and those from urban societies to success, which means that they are employed in the industrial labor market.

The actual phenomena can be seen from inequalities between the two groups of people in terms of opportunity to further their studies at a higher level. Learners from rural communities who come from the agriculture sector usually have less opportunity for the access to data and modern equipment. They do not even have opportunities to learn more knowledge that is necessary for taking examinations to compete in the modern society due to the important condition that is the economic problem of their family. What follows is learners who lack educational opportunities are usually those who cannot enter a higher level of education at the same time. Learners who are abandoned cannot use the knowledge they have learned, which is in line with work and life in modern society, in their living in the agricultural society. As a result, they have to head to the industrial workplace that is usually located in the city and cannot return to live the way of life they used to. Nevertheless, unemployment happens continuously because in the labor market system, competition for the highest benefits for entrepreneurs is necessary. Hence, if laborers cannot cope with and cannot pass the competition system, they are considered inefficient, and have to become unemployed. For those who can pass the competition system, even though they are highly educated but if not in the disciplines needed by the labor market, they will be classified into the work types and work positions inferior to those who graduated in the specific disciplines required by the labor market. Another large group of laborers is those who have only basic education. They are classified to work as laborers receiving low wages because their incomes and wages are determined with their levels of education and specializations required by the entrepreneurs. The classification of people to different statuses and positions is based on their levels of education, therefore, it can be said that education is dictated by the industrial economic system (Pipatpen, 2013).

The problems and failures in education including a series of description for problems in the framework of thought in education lead to a review of the education paradigm, which is a belief behind education. In particular, a review of the issue that education is not aimed to serve people's lives in the community who are the majority but rather to serve the industrial economic system. Therefore, an outlet of the education crisis is necessary.

A process of creating a new alternative of community-based education is a significant challenge in the age when people are still hopeful of education. However, it is not easy, if the society is still overwhelmed with the mainstream education. Therefore, knowing and seeing the intention behind formal education is the first priority, followed by the fact that formal education makes community knowledge marginal, and the fact that the community has to depend on knowledge from outside, which are important to understand and to pose questions over as the next priority. The emergence of these two conditions is the drive that moves the new process of creating an alternative for community-based education, for which a thinking method in education and methodology in creating all dimensions of education that are suitable and in congruence with the nature and context of Thai society.

Significance of the study

The main issue of this article is a look at education differently from when education is used as a tool for making the economic system of the country wealthy. However, such a look at education requires deconstruction in education. Such deconstruction or dismantlement is to reveal that in reality, transformation of education and knowledge from the era when education belonged to the community to when education is managed by the state as the center of educational management can be looked at in two ways. The first way is to look at transformation of education and knowledge with steps and sequences, and with continuity as evolution in a straight line with a belief that it is normal for transformation of education and knowledge to happen. This way of looking does not prompt questions about transformation of education and knowledge formerly managed by the community because the community created knowledge according to its conditions and needs. Then it has been changed to education with the state as the center for operations and set the direction for integrated education and knowledge. In this sense, people in the community and society are receivers waiting for the result of education managed by the state. If such education affects people's living, according to this belief, the state is to take care and solve the problem. Therefore, there is no need to criticize and question over education that is managed by the state.

The second way of looking at transformation of education and knowledge is with a belief that the transformation is not based on continuity in evolution but on the contrary, it is based on authority with a certain belief that controls it. This way of looking can prompt searches for the authority and mechanisms that made the change, what characteristics they had, and what the intention for the change was.

This article does not look at transformation of education and knowledge according to the first way because looking at it that way; we cannot see the source of the change. The complications of the change are not straight forward, as it is known. However, what is interesting is deconstruction that reveals the logic behind the change. Therefore, persuasion and inspiration to re-think and review the transformation of education and knowledge that used to belong to the community to find out about the change to be managed by the state are important. In particular, a review of the issue of power and organization of all things that make academic knowledge carried out according to the education plan in formal education is recognized as more important, and with more power than knowledge created by the community. This way of looking requires a thinking method and methodology of looking at knowledge which is based on postmodernism paradigm, for which, this article employs discourse analysis presented by Michel Foucault (Foucault, 1972) as the base of the analysis and critiques.

The discourse analysis of education and knowledge will help unwind and reveal recognition and importance given to academic knowledge carried out according to the education plan of formal education that it was suitable replacement for former knowledge created by the community because it happened as a process. That is, it created a fact that made formal education recognized by society, and eventually has a status as a truth that nobody argues. When the truth related to formal education is recognized as important part of society, knowledge and education owned by the community is gradually rejected, and its importance has been reduced to only local knowledge with limited use. Finally, academic knowledge and formal education becomes the only one regime of truth (Foucault, 1980).

Objectives

This article has three objectives 1) to analyze the ideologies of formal education, educational discursive practices and the effects on community life, 2) to analyzes conditions that lead to reviews and questions over the educational paradigm, and 3) to analyze a process of creating a new alternative for community-based education through a postmodernism paradigm.

Results

The results of the analysis according to the objectives of this study are discussed.

The ideologies of formal education, educational discursive practices and the effects on community life

In Thai society, the center for education was officially moved from the community to school in 1961 when the government announced the implementation of the First National Economic and Social Development. The goal of the country development was clearly stated that it was to enhance the country's economic growth. Formal education, therefore, was designated as an important mechanism for producing manpower needed by the labor market. The number of workers in each type of workforce in each phase was assigned as important plans that the educational system as a manpower-producing unit had to specify in the production process to meet the needs. Thus, education was not independent from the economic system but was controlled by the ideologies of the country's development focusing on the economic growth system of the country.

The educational discursive practices that corresponded with the abovementioned country's development have been carried out systematically in order to make formal education and academic knowledge recognized by society that it was a truth. There are two educational discursive practices. One is the organization of academic knowledge as truth with certain specific characteristics to be sciences or knowledge about education classified into disciplines. Academic knowledge is designated as subject matters that are transferred to learners, and knowledge about social disciplines to make them modern man with industrial worldviews (Thanosawan & Pornprachatham, 2010). The other is building identities of the educated through educational institutions.

In modern society, schools are specified as special areas for transferring academic knowledge to learners by teachers who have self-identity linked with building manpower production, and the self-identity linked with building modern people. Therefore, teachers are like parts of a huge machine that functions to produce products with the design that has already been made. In this sense, schools are the field of power in transferring ready-made knowledge with students waiting to receive the knowledge (Pipatpen, 2014).

The results of educational discursive practices and effects on community life reflect the meanings of education and academic knowledge that are regarded as the tools that lead people to success in modern society. Thus, it is the duty of school; the community's duty is only to train new members and support them to obtain education in schools. When the value

of receiving education in the school system is seen with the real situation of having employment, income, and security in the economic status, the importance of former knowledge of the community is gradually reduced until it becomes undesirable knowledge with no value to the economic system, and inferior knowledge.

The conditions that lead to reviews and questions over the educational paradigm

The proposal to review and to question the educational paradigm has been considered seriously. Educational crises that are severe and continuous include unemployment among the educated and inequalities between learners from urban society and those from rural communities. Another problem is that learners cannot use the knowledge they have learned from school to improve their community. This is because the knowledge they have received from school is for industrial society. Migration of people from rural areas to work in town is often seen as well as unemployment that happens under limitations of the needs for labor.

According to thinkers and academics (Chammarik, 1999; Plainoi & Sirikwanchai, 2010; Wasee, 2010) in Thai society, the education crisis reflects academic misconception, and education that focuses on competition. What happens is the family's economic status dictates the opportunity of one's education. Poverty among people in the rural community makes people struggle to enter the education system, and to use education to upgrade their status in order to escape from being underdeveloped. Finally, they become losers because they have to spend their lives in poverty in urban society with their being underdeveloped, and poverty in the rural, too. As can be seen, existing knowledge has a problem in its paradigm because of reductionists who controls from behind resulting in learners who do not fit for real life, knowledge, and lives in the community (Chammarik, 1999; Ngamwittayapong, 2002; Wasee, 2010). Educational crisis connected to problems in people's living and critiques on education by thinkers and academics in Thai society have led to reviewing and questioning over education that cannot be looked at as a technical problem but a serious problem at the paradigm level, which is a way to look at the world.

A process of creating a new alternative for community-based education

During the time when Thai society has to face being a risk society as a result of education that is separated from real life, and so much so that people in the community who are the majority cannot be self-reliance (Wasee, 2009). Questioning over education can be referred to as a movement from facing the first stage of problem where people cannot yet see the problem of education to the second stage where the public begin to demand reviews of education and the paradigm of the country's development that is in control from behind (Beck, 1992). A new alternative for education that serves people's lives in the community must be created through common awareness of people in society, and awareness in building knowledge that corresponds with the context of the Thai community. A process of creating a new alternative for community-based education has the following two implications. One is adaptation of the look at education in order to see the ideologies that are in control from behind. That is to look at education as being made into a truth that is legitimate to control people through the school system. Knowledge that is transferred in school becomes mainstream knowledge that is significant and subjugates other types of knowledge. The other implication is opening a space for the community to take part as a joint-creator of knowledge. That is education in the school system and academic knowledge are questioned, and thus, their being universal knowledge believed to be useful everywhere is delegitimated.

A new meaning of education that does not limit its scope to only the school system has gradually begun. That is, knowledge built by the community and with the needs of people in the community begins to gain importance. Learning to define knowledge and give a meaning to a new type of education is a process that people in the community and different sectors work together freely to reproduce and adjust knowledge and goals for learning in order to allow knowledge and education to contribute to real life of the community, or to make it real community-based education.

Discussion

This article aims to propose a new alternative for community-based education that is not in a readymade format but is left open for further thought in order to review and adapt so that it could be used suitably. The proposed new alternative is made through analysis and critiques of data from research reports and actual phenomena related to all dimensions of education with theoretical sensitivity based on the author's experience.

Understanding education with the postmodernism paradigm, therefore, helps to review and look at education in a new way that dismantles the framework that is tied with the school system so much so that there is no space for other types of knowledge that actually exist in society. This is a proposition for the new alternative for community-based education in three dimensions as follows.

First is trying to understand the myths about modern education and academic knowledge that make academic knowledge according to the educational plan in the school system significant knowledge that competes for the system of thoughts, educational space, and people to occupational classes that eventually make community knowledge become the other. These myths, thus, only create an image that is recognized only in formal education while hiding other types of knowledge.

Second is posing questions over modern education and academic knowledge. The questions are at the level of educational goal, education management and educational production focusing on highest benefits for entrepreneurs and economic benefits for the country. As a result, such education and academic knowledge separate learners from their knowledge, relationship with their community, and employment.

Third is the paradigm shift in education and knowledge is a significant proposition with the implication of changes in the thinking method and the look at education from the way it has been to community-based education as the first part. This part focuses on participation of people in the community in setting the learning goals, building and changing knowledge according to conditions and needs of community life. Part two is education for self-reliance which is education that enables individuals to know and understand themselves, to be able to change their attitude in looking at the world as part of their real life. Moreover, this type of education is to enable individuals to take part in jointly building knowledge with other people. Part three is building intelligence in education that implies having knowledge about power of education according to the educational plan in the school system that subjugates other types of knowledge, and focusing on utilizing knowledge of the community that corresponds with real life. The last part is creating knowledge and education for life,

which is creating knowledge for living based on a new educational postmodernism paradigm to integrate knowledge, education with living.

The paradigm shift in looking at education in the postmodernist period, therefore, aims to solve educational paradigm problem that should correspond with the construction of learning society and sustainable society. This is the concept of life-long learning or education that is based on life, society and community rather than giving value to specialized academic knowledge. It is also the concept of holistic education that looks at education or learning to be in congruence and harmony with life and nature within the contexts of society where people live.

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