

# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background

As Keyes mentioned, indigenous people in Asian countries indicates both the national majority and minority groups (2002). This study, however, targets the indigenous minority people who have been regarded as an ethnic minority, typically the hill tribe people in Thailand. There is no exact statistic of the number of indigenous people in Thailand. When the highland population in Thailand is considered, it is estimated that they number around 1.74 percent (923,257) of the total Thai population (approximately 63 million) according to the survey by the Department of Social Development and Service (DSDS), in cooperation with UNICEF in 2002 (Nannaphat, 2015).

In the past, a large number of ethnic people in Thailand faced the problem that many of their children and youth were out of the education system, either because they didn't have citizenship or there weren't any schools in indigenous communities. According to Renard (2001), much less than half of hill people had citizenship until 1990 and another report, produced in 2006, assumed that about forty to sixty percent of hill tribe children were out of the school system due to the lack of citizenship (Park et al., 2009). Indigenous students without citizenship have severe difficulties in advancing or improving their life because of the obstacle of access to basic, quality education. Even though the Thai government has been eager to encompass all its indigenous people as citizens (and thus increase the whole population of the Thai nation state) since the early twentieth century, residents "beyond the reach of government officials were generally left out" (Renard, 2001: 55). In terms of the education issues facing indigenous students, the lack of citizenship is still the most problematic one.

The absence of facilities was also a significant factor for indigenous children and youth, particularly for the residents who lived in mountainous areas. The first public

education for hill tribe people was in 1935 in a Hmong village in Tak province operated by the Department of General Education (DGE). DGE gradually established schools in the highlands and there were 109 highland schools by 1966 (Buruphat, 1975 cited in Nannaphat, 2015). However, the more representative government agency providing education was by Border Patrol Police (BPP), founded in 1953 as a special agency for national security. The BPP set up its first school in the village of Akha in Chiang Rai province in 1956 (Nannaphat, 2015: 22) and taught the central Thai language to highland people. Their major purpose for setting up this school system was not only to teach them the Thai language so they could communicate with lowland people but also to keep watch on them. Preventing the highland people from being infected with communism was their main mission while creating a sense of Thai citizenship in the hill tribe (Kwanchewan and Prasit, 2009).

During the 1980s, the modern Thai educational system expanded into many remote areas but the ‘Thai hill tribe census’, conducted by the National Statistical Office (NSO) with assistance from the Department of Public Welfare between 1985 and 1988, showed that they were still few in number. Only 52.67 percent of highland indigenous villages had schools and only around 26 percent of indigenous people in highland area were educated (21.69 percent had primary education, 1.12 percent had secondary education, and 3.21 had other kinds of training). This situation impacted the illiteracy rate of the Thai language; thus, about 59.3 percent could speak Thai but only 22 percent could read and 21.1 percent could write Thai (Nannaphat, 2015: 24).

As time passed, even though accessibility to education for indigenous children and youth has increased, there have been other problematic points to consider, namely the condition of indigenous students’ education since the 1990s. Generally, Thai education has been criticized for its ideology which is seen a tool for nation building. Therefore, Chayan claimed that the public schools are “for the state’s legitimacy and with asserting ideological control” (1991; 153). The contents taught in class were also criticized because they were not related or linked to many students’ ordinary lives and only suitable for the students in a specific area, for instance Bangkok. This aspect is relevant to the diverse ethnicities in Thailand. As Keyes (1991) pointed out, the exclusive use of the Central Thai language in schools without no concern shown for

various mother tongues is a symbol of coercive education. In regards to the language issue, the Thai public education system has been instrumental in the loss of ethnic cultural diversity and identity and this was deeply related with Thai government policies that historically have marginalized indigenous people.

The establishment of the Hill Tribe Welfare Committee (HTWC) by the Department of Public Welfare (DPW) in 1959 was the formal starting point of Thai governmental policy for ethnic minority people (Wanat, 1989). At that time, the policy or action aimed to control hill tribe people for reasons of national security in the guise of the termination of opium cultivation, forest degradation (due to their traditional shifting cultivation system) and enticement to communism. As I mentioned before about BPP schools, the Thai government regarded hill tribe people as problematic groups so they repressed and controlled them.

But from 1976, the Thai government tried to implement a different approach and declared a Policy of Integration (Lee, 2016; Wanat, 1989). Wanat (1989: 18) summarized this policy as an effort by the Thai government to integrate “the hill tribes into Thai society whilst respecting their rights to practice their own religion and maintain their cultures”. It proclaimed that the Thai government would assist and help hill tribes become first class and self-reliant Thai citizens. However, when analyzed in detail, it had other aspects that proved troublesome. For example, the support for self-reliance was making them give up their traditional farming and find other jobs and the promotion of family planning was in order to reduce their population growth rate. It implies that the Thai government prohibited hill tribe people’s traditional and cultural lifestyle and forced them to adopt capitalistic ways, suppressing and controlling them in the name of integration (Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, 2012 cited in Lee, 2016). This integration policy has continued; therefore, the assimilation of indigenous people into the mainstream has been expanded and generalized in Thai society. For instance, in 1992, the National Security Council proclaimed the Master Plan for Community and Environmental Development and Narcotic Plantation Control in Highland Areas (Lee, 2016), emphasizing the development of hill tribe people in all the ways which the Thai government prefers. Subsequently, formal education, one of the items impacted by these government policies, has inevitably threatened various features

of each ethnic community and most people have gradually been assimilated into Thai education and society (Renerd, 2001).

This historical background is explicitly revealed the practical case of Khun Tae highland village which is a neighboring village of Huai Som Poi Village, Chom Thong district in Chiang Mai province. According to research of Huai Som Poi village done by Praty (2010), most of the Karen people who settled down in this area around 150 years ago were self-sufficient through rotational farming and raising animals, etc. until 1952. Around that time, they started cultivating opium thus, since 1959, the Thai government has strongly prohibited it and tried to control them. However, until 1985, the government only emphasized the eradication of opium without providing any development support. Finally, the promotion of cash crops and infrastructures in this region was started with a budget provided by Norwegian Church Aid and the United Nations Development Project (UNDP) from 1985 to 1993. Later, the construction of an unpaved road from Chom Thong downtown to Khun Tae village was done after they began the Queen's Project in 1997 and the Ban Khun Tae School opened concurrently.

Up to now, the situation has changed. The population of indigenous students in the public school system has been increasing so the enrollment number is about five percent of the eight million students overall (Park et al., 2009). Even though there are several public schools which have indigenous students, rarely is there any policy or program in place to support them. Students who attend school thus face another barrier to learning and they are blamed for their lower educational achievement rate (See section 2.3). And moreover, few of the NGOs until recently have shown much concern about the learning environment for indigenous students within the public schools. Recently, though they have begun suggesting new methodologies emphasizing the integration of indigenous knowledge as an alternative way for improving their learning condition. They contend that the reason why many indigenous students have difficulty and cannot adapt well in the public school system is related to the student's background (accumulated through their family or community before entering school) not being considered or valued.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Standing in the middle of the stage, a girl wearing pink Hmong traditional clothes introduces herself. "*chan chu... ma jak rongrian Huai Han. Suk sa*

*pi ti song. kru chuw... kru yai chu....*(my name is... from Huai Han school and I'm in 2nd grade. My teacher's name is... principal's name is....)" and then the girl starts out speaking loudly, telling a story in Thai and in her mother language. I don't know what the story is about exactly but from the drawing, I can assume that it is a short story about the daily life of students in the rural area. In the drawing, all of the people wear Hmong traditional clothes and the background is a mountainous area. When she finishes her reading, the audience claps. There are more than four hundred people in the hall and two thirds of them wear their own ethnic clothes so it is very colorful. Unusually, half of the participants are students! In accordance with their own customs, they are sitting respectfully, no playfulness (Field notes, IEN conference, 21 February 2015).

This occurred at an event celebrating the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on 'International Mother Language Day', which occurs every year on the 21st of February. It promotes worldwide awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity and was part of a two day conference titled "Mother Language: Gateway to Success of Indigenous Peoples' Education and Thailand Education Reformation". This conference was held on the 21st and 22nd of February at the 80th Anniversary Commemoration Garden in Chiang Mai to discuss indigenous peoples' education in Thailand. Particularly, the discussion was about the necessity of teaching and using an indigenous language in school for indigenous students. The students' performances proved that they are able to read well both in their first language and the Thai language. This event was mainly organized by a network, named IEN (Indigenous Education Network).

A careful consideration of this event indicates a social phenomenon happening now in Thailand. It shows that compared with the past, the indigenous people<sup>1</sup> and local

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<sup>1</sup> Many people including scholars usually mixed these terms - '(hill) tribal people', 'ethnic minority people' and 'indigenous people' - to indicate the group of people who have lived with their own culture and history even before the creation of the nation state of Thailand. The mixing of these terminological usages comes from the national political reasoning pertinent to security issues and also international human rights issues. Since 1989, ILO convention No. 169 has specified that indigenous people, in contrast with 'tribal' people, choose their own distinctive institutions and identity and this differentiates indigenous rights from (ethnic) minority rights. Besides, the UN adopted the international instrument UNDRIP (the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples) to strongly promote the indigenous peoples' rights as it pursues a constitution for "the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the indigenous peoples of the world" (UNDRIP, article 43) This international movement has led people to gradually change the use of this term from hill tribal people or ethnic minority people to indigenous people. Thus in this paper,

Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) are presently advocating educational improvements for the next generation. They are seeking to form a larger network to have a more powerful impact in society. Their major educational demand is about the active application of their indigenous knowledge to the public education system.

Indigenous knowledge is emphasized by the international extent of indigenous peoples' rights and the international interest in finding alternative ways of approaching them. Indigenous people have been regarded as the group most in need of an improvement in their human rights with a subsequent increase in respect for their culture. Several international agencies have tried to demonstrate this issue including the United Nations (UN), the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Education Scientific, Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Recently the claims and demands of indigenous peoples' rights have focused on the issue of education from a recognition of its importance and the inherent value contained in their own knowledge. Many indigenous groups have noted this international support and have taken up the call in Thailand which is well known for its ethnic diversity.

In addition, indigenous knowledge is often a contested concept to western, scientific based knowledge systems. The argument that indigenous knowledge can plausibly possess new possibilities to the negative results manifested by western epistemological tradition has been largely ignored, minimized or denied as an alternative (Ortiz, 2007). Education, particularly in the Southeast Asia region, is deeply affected by this western oriented and scientifically dominated approach. Therefore indigenous knowledge becomes minimized and plays a limited role in current learning systems. As a result, some international agencies and regional cooperation organizations point out that indigenous education is a major agenda that needs to be reviewed.

On the other hand, Thailand government has been facing criticism and demands for a change in Thai education. The education issue is now on the political agenda with the aim of developing power towards local education administrations rather than

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I also use the word 'indigenous people'. Most of all, the target group of this research - FAL and its network IEN - highly advocate the use of the term, 'indigenous people', so I will use it here. However, many references in this study use the term '(hill) tribal people', 'ethnic minorities' and 'indigenous people' interchangeably.

keeping it centralized in Bangkok. This is related to the economic crisis which revealed several problems and weaknesses including education (Baron-Gutty, 2009; Jones, 2008; Park et al., 2009). The government determined that reviving Thai identity while simultaneously fostering global citizenship are both necessary to recover from said economic crisis. The crucial sign of this change is the National Education Act (NEA) in 1999 and 2002. It includes an agenda of decentralization and empowerment of local communities and a proposal towards 'local curriculum policy'. This means that the core curriculum designed by the Ministry of Education shall combine with a local content provision of up to 30% from 2004 (Baron-Gutty and Supat, 2009). This new educational policy offers new room for discussion about locality and it might give a chance to Thailand's indigenous groups to reconsider their own local knowledge and negotiate with public school systems for its inclusion.

With these international and national changes providing a background for new discussions for indigenous students in public education, some local NGOs have begun implementing indigenous knowledge based education approaches in Northern Thailand. However, this challenge of new methodology is usually not easily applied because of opposition from local people. According to Ortiz (2007), when the Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE) program was being promoted for indigenous Mapuche children in Chile, it faced many barriers. Mapuche people, especially the non-elite people, opposed the teaching of the Mapuche language in schools and instead stressed the teaching of the dominant Chilean language, Spanish. This was because many non-elite Mapuche regard the schooling process as a mechanism for enabling social mobility through the acquisition of the dominant Chilean language. Some indigenous people recognized the importance of their knowledge, including language, so they supported mother tongue based education, but some still think that following the dominant nation state system is indispensable for their children. From previous researches (Dooley, 2013; Hillmer, 2013; Tan 2012), this divergent view has been observed in the Thailand context as well.

Hence, in this study, I focused on the local level of a public school of an indigenous community which has applied an indigenous knowledge based education program geared by NGOs. To examine the empirical case, I selected the Foundation for

Applied Linguistics (FAL) as a representative local NGO among the indigenous education organizations and focused on their major program, the aptly named Mother Tongue Based-Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE). The MTB-MLE program has proven to be one of the most appropriate educational models for indigenous children in formal schools (IEN and NIPT, 2015) due to its recognition that indigenous language is one of the key elements of indigenous knowledge. In addition, the practical implementation of the MTB-MLE program was analyzed with qualitative methodology in case study of Ban Khun Tae School of S'gaw Karen village in Chiang Mai Province. Through this ethnographic study, I argue that a NGO working for indigenous education faces different power relationships among languages, education and knowledge systems. It therefore needs to utilize various strategies to negotiate with local people and from this process, construct a new knowledge space about indigenous knowledge based education in a public education system setting, i.e. a kind of counter hegemony within Thai society.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

1.3.1 Why NGOs supporting indigenous students' education try to integrate indigenous knowledge into parts of the public school systems in Northern Thailand?

1.3.2 How does FAL negotiate for acceptance of indigenous language usage in public school classrooms?

1.3.3 What kinds of activities with local people are derived from FAL operations and what are the meanings produced in this process?

### **1.4 Research Objectives**

1.4.1 To gain a deeper understanding of the rationale and historical background of the attempts to negotiate with public education system by NGOs.

1.4.2 To find out how FAL's achieved MTB-MLE program implementation in schools and the limitation that FAL has overcome.

1.4.3 To analyze the contents of activities and educational products produced by FAL and their social meaning in relation to the indigenous education movement.



## 1.5 Review of Related Studies

### 1.5.1 Indigenous Demands for Education

Indigenous people have faced diverse difficulties all over the world and education especially is one of the main issues which these peoples have wanted to improve for a long time. There are some common factors which threaten or pressure indigenous people educationally such as colonial rooted Western educational system (Keyes, 1991), Missionary or International NGO based aid education which often force and/or promote a specific religion or subjects on the locals (Peshkin, 1986; Scott, 2004) and compulsory school systems based on a nation building agenda (Keyes, 1991; Mette, 1999). Each indigenous group has faced their own problematic situation in education but there have been similar demands from indigenous people.

This study aims to explore the NGOs' negotiation with public school systems in Northern Thailand; thus, I review the indigenous peoples' demands against the existing compulsory school systems that are based mostly on nation building purposes. China, one of the countries that most represent ethnic diversity, provides an excellent example of how a state educational system (along with its standardized compulsory education) is used to purposefully reduce or eliminate ethnic identities (Mette, 1999).

“Chinese education fosters in many students a perception of themselves as members of a ‘backward minority’ simply because it denies the usefulness (sometimes even the existence) of the minorities own languages, histories, religions, forms of education, customs, marriage practices, values, ethics and so forth. Sporadic attempts to introduce brief volumes about ‘minority culture’ (minzu wenhua) outside the common curriculum in local schools are insufficient to change this tendency” (Mette, 1999: 160).

It has already been clearly revealed through several studies which pointed out the problems of Thai compulsory education in various aspects such as teacher distribution and teacher training, instructional contents not related to local livelihood and so forth. Keyes (1991) mentioned that the coercive educational technique of teaching only through the Thai language without any concern for the students' mother tongue is a significant means of domination. The theoretical concept of Bourdieu's constitutive power of authorized language might be used for an explanation of the necessity of

bilingual or mother tongue education. Keyes (1991) also criticizes the aspects of teachers' attitudes, thoughts and social relationships that are both ineffective and negatively affecting rural communities and students. Most of the teachers placed in rural areas usually come from outside the village; they remain there only while waiting to move to city schools because most of them are non-rural oriented people. Lastly, as Chayan (1991) indicated, most of the contents which the students learn from school are not related to or linked to their ordinary life at all and are not helpful for students who will stay in their village after graduation. Even worse, students in rural areas do not learn farming or fishing which might be their basic life skill if they can't afford to pursue higher education.

Such formal education forced by the State inevitably poses a threat to communities who hope to retain their indigenous roots because most people regard school education as the only way to find better jobs and to get higher socio-economic status in society. However, historically, only few students have had the possibility of attaining that chance of higher education and socio-economic status (Chayan, 1991; Kwanchewan and Prasit, 2009). That is, most students do not have the chance of higher study outside the village. Besides, when they fail to get a job in the city (as often occurs), they have difficulties going back to their own communities because they missed the chance in the first place to learn the indigenous skills and knowledge essential for living in their community like their forebears did.

Contrary to this historical background, indigenous people's educational issues have faced a new phase in several regions. Due to the emergence of indigenous knowledge in the development field, there are new voices demanding resistance to national education based on universal knowledge only while also advocating the integration of IK in public schools. The study about Nama people's Traditional Life Skills Project (TLSP) in Namibia conducted by Klein (2011) and another study by Estrada (2012) about application of Maya indigenous knowledge to daily education in Guatemala illustrate the new trail which emphasize indigenous knowledge. The TLSP, initiated since 2003, is a successful case that shows how indigenous knowledge can be integrated into the schools by the cooperation of parents and grandparents and what kinds of positive outcomes are produced. Another study contends that indigenous

people who have been excluded by European traditions need to “reclaim and live by their distinct Indigenous knowledge” (Estrada, 2012: 19) in the education field. The Ministry of Education of Guatemala tries to do their educational reforms based on this Maya indigenous knowledge.

Like in these cases, IK has started being applied to education and it isn't ignored anymore. But another aspect has also been observed from indigenous communities. Indigenous language, which can be one of the best modes for expressing representative indigenous knowledge, has been applied to education actively to support indigenous students' learning and indigenous people have claimed its use and study as their basic right. For example, Ortiz (2007) studied the implementation of Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE) in Mapuche schools in Chile. From her research, it was discovered that the local indigenous people, who have been assimilated to Chilean national education, oppose the application of IBE for their children. Even though they agree about the need to preserve their own culture and identity for the next generation, they were hostile to this new educational program and this situation is revealed here in Thailand as well. The linguistic and education discipline-based studies, for example by Dooley (2013), Hillmer (2013) and Tan (2012) conducted at the pilot project schools in Hmong and Pwo Karen villages, demonstrated how local people reacted to MTB-MLE program for the first time. The parents, teachers and villagers who thought the role of schooling is to learn the Thai language and other nation-state designated subjects were opposed to the teaching of their mother language and did not wish to use materials based on their IK. In conclusion, this historic review of the indigenous people's education issue has been analyzed to some degree by academia but the emerging aspects of their education in terms of integration of IK (or the mainstream generation's ideology about new education methodology for their children) has only recently begun to be studied.

### 1.5.2 Current Studies about Thai Indigenous Education Issues

Even though Thailand is well known for its ethnic diversity in the world, the government has formally taken a different position which seems to ignore the existence of several indigenous groups or, at least, tries to merge them to the way of the nation state without considering their diverse historic, cultural and environmental backgrounds. For example, the government census in 1970 and 1980 depicts that “nearly 99 percent

of the populace is citizens of Thailand, 97 percent speak Thai and 94-95 percent adheres to Buddhism, the national religion of the country” (Keyes, 1997: 197). Moreover, the term indigenous peoples also has been rejected with the announcement that “hill tribes of Thailand are not considered to be minorities or indigenous peoples but as Thais who are able to enjoy fundamental rights and are protected by the laws of the Kingdom as any other Thai citizen” (UNHCR, 1992 cited in Erni, 2009: 443). From this Thai governmental perspective, it is probable to assume that there are not many policies or practical systems concern with indigenous people’s education. In consideration of this situation of Thai society, I explore some current related studies about indigenous people’s education in Thailand.

Firstly, there is a study about the decolonizing and decentralizing education movement. This Master dissertation, titled ‘Karen perspectives on schooling in their communities: Indigenous knowledge and Western Models of Education’ by Scott O’Brian (2004) reveals that the colonized education taught by missionaries or imperialist countries in the past has been continued into the present time by International NGOs (INGOs) in refugee camps. In response, there were demands to change their education in a way more suitable to a Karen perspective. This study has significant meaning because it discovered through an active research process the real demands from local teachers and parents for incorporating indigenous knowledge into the curriculum. However, it doesn’t touch on the exact efforts to transmit this indigenous knowledge through education. Also, its target groups are specific people in the refugee camp who had only had the limited opportunity of a non-formal education.

In respect of decentralizing Thai education, there is a quantitative research methodology study which mentions the imposition of the policy that required local curriculums beginning in 1997 (Baron-Gutty and Supat, 2009). It shows how much local knowledge was being encompassed in the formal curriculum over a decade but the exact details are not shown. This one evinces that even when the local curriculum has been promoted nationally and has a social meanings, its implementation has been difficulty. It is a very useful study for my research because it highlights that an educational policy promoted by the government, one that is not supported by specific expert groups and is not regularly monitored during its said implementation will be less

than successful. In this sense, NGOs which keep pursuing their major educational goal can be one of several important actors in the implementation and development of such a policy in all its diverse dimensions.

Another PhD dissertation by Jones (2008) mainly focuses on alternative educational forms like homeschooling and alternative schools based on Buddhism in Thailand. It is a rare case study which illuminates the demand of people for practical forms of alternative education in Thailand through its qualitative research with in-depth interviews. I benefited from the study's general information about the alternative education movement in Thailand and the perception of Thai people about such alternative education, which is considered as 'out of school'. However, it doesn't describe the educational programs for indigenous students as part of the alternative education movement and only analyzes alternative education forms which are physically separate from formal school.

The last existing relevant literature covers the alternative education promoted by NGOs and focuses on its educational impacts and social meaning. Satoko (2010) conducted a comparative research study recently in a Northern Thai context. She targeted three schools; an ordinary government school, another public school which runs a mother tongue class once a week and a non-formal school based on an ethnic minority knowledge and curriculum run by a NGO. This study emphasizes the impact of a NGO's educational support and also comments on the importance of cooperation between government and NGOs for improving indigenous students' education. However, the school that shows relatively meaningful results of indigenous knowledge learning is not the public school but the NGO oriented school. In addition, she took the quantitative research methodology and briefly compared the three schools; therefore, it is difficult to know the details relevant each school or hear directly the voices of those influenced.

The above studies contribute to show the impact or importance of certain programs which are usually promoted by NGOs to improve the indigenous students' education status or, moreover, used to depict tendencies towards decolonizing or decentralizing education in Thai society. However, they don't focus on the roles or strategies of NGOs to implement these policies. Hence, this research mainly concentrates on a specific NGO, FAL and its MTB-MLE program to discover its way of

negotiation and construction a new knowledge space about this issue. Additionally, in terms of methodology, previous studies are lacking in ethnographic qualitative research thus my research is designed to fill this gap.

## **1.6 Theories and Conceptual Framework**

I suggest that the current phenomenon that NGO-gear educational programs promote in Northern Thailand public schools covering the indigenous people's education issue is necessarily viewed and analyzed through the following selected theoretical concepts - Knowledge Space and Indigenous Knowledge.

### **1.6.1 Knowledge Space**

Knowledge is a lense to see the world and it “come[s] from very specific social, economic and cultural milieus” (Wright, 2005: 904). Knowledge is regarded as having two kinds of power; one is universal and the other is local. This characteristic of knowledge implies that it is linked with the concept of space or scale (Wright, 2005). Space is defined as a social product by Lefebvre (1991, cited in Schmid, 2008). As Schmid summarizes Lefebvre's idea, space is in correlation with time and both are “not purely material factors” (2008: 29) and “beyond geography” (2008, 27). Therefore, as a social product, space is a historic term and it consequently indicates social practice and social relations. Moreover like knowledge, space exists not only universally but also specifically (Schmid, 2008).

From this relationship between knowledge and space, David Turnbull first introduced the term ‘Knowledge Space’ in 1997. This concept suggests that knowledge production can be and should be considered within more diverse spatial dimensions and that it is a process for making assemblages and linkages that create social spaces whereby certain knowledge becomes acceptable and discussable.

“All knowledge is both performative and representational. It is historical, contingent and is coproduced with society. This means we can reconceive the social history of knowledge in a variety of intersecting and overlapping ways which move beyond simple contextualization” (Turnbull, 1997: 553).

This idea has also been elaborated to include two perspectives: one pertains to the places of knowledge and the other is how knowledge produces power through social

relations (Anan, 2007: 5). It is quite important that this theory has moved beyond the oversimplified views of ‘situated knowledge’ as ‘local knowledge’ and now shows us the existence of contestation in constructing and maintaining knowledge in power relationships (Wright, 2005: 904). Hence, the concept of knowledge space is helpful when analyzing the situation or examining the process by which people try to change the order of knowledge or to move beyond previously dominant information. (This can be represented as ‘discourse’). In most cases, the production of new knowledge might be a tool for contesting existing ones as Turnbull elucidates that;

“universality, objectivity, rationality, efficacy and accumulation cease to be unique and special characteristics of techno-scientific knowledge; rather these traits are effects of collective work of the knowledge producers in a given knowledge space” (1997: 553).

Then how can people construct this knowledge space? According to an analysis from natural resource management cases, there are some common elements which can also be representative in regards to constructing knowledge space. Firstly, the clear collective identity of the group is essential. The Puno farmers in the Philippines have the ability to redefine and reproduce their indigenous knowledge such that it “absorbs, rejects, resists, embraces and overlaps with Western knowledge spaces” (Wright, 2005: 907) through the improvement and recovery of their own local, traditional practice of rice cultivation and conservation of seed. According to an analysis by Yos (2004: 119), this kind of redefinition and reproduction is revealed as cultural image. In the case of Karen in Thailand, they tried to make a new cultural image of themselves and this constructed image has been spread throughout Thai society. It indicates that in order to construct the knowledge space, we need to deconstruct the fixed discourse, such as the negative stereotypes of hill tribe people in Thailand. Developing a new cultural image might be effective in this process of deconstruction. The other element is that NGOs play a key role for the formation of new knowledge space. As Li (1999: 356) mentions that “in their work on behalf of tribal and indigenous people, NGOs have also articulated their positions to engage quite specific fields of power”, NGOs play the initiative role in many cases. Local people have their own abilities derived from their indigenous knowledge and environment but they often don’t know how to organize or effectively communicate with outsiders. In such cases, NGOs’ cooperation is crucial.

Furthermore, broad social network is also important. For example, due to the efforts of the Northern Farmers' Development Network (NFN) in Thailand, the government has been encouraged to involve local communities more and more in decision-making and NFN has also been instrumental in changing the public's perception of hill tribe people. Since 1994, hill tribe people are increasingly seen as coexisting people (Isager and Ivarsson, 2002: 410). This network has been working with the media, academia and the pertinent religious circles; thus, the counter discourse or new image can be promoted in a more powerful way.

In this study, I situate the concept of knowledge space to analyze the position of 'indigenous knowledge based educational programs' among the issues of education and knowledge systems. Anan (2007: 5) expresses knowledge space as "a strategic package of contestation and negotiation". It seems that FAL also constructs new knowledge space in the form of MTB-MLE and using this issue in their discussion with diverse people throughout society. The MTB-MLE program is based on the indigenous language but also emphasizes its educational effects through scientific educational theories. FAL's task is interpreted as an alternative approach to solve the problems of indigenous students in public school and a basis for negotiating with diverse people in the promotion of indigenous knowledge education.

#### 1.6.2 Indigenous Knowledge

'Indigenous Knowledge (IK)' is usually interchangeable with the terms 'local knowledge' and 'traditional knowledge'. The distinct meanings of these three phrases have been discussed animatedly but IK is the broadest concept and reflects a holistic view that includes the other concepts (Bohensky and Yiheisu, 2011: 2). This paper will use the term of IK as an essential one.

IK has a wide spectrum of definitions that often depend on the fields of discussion. In this section, I explore its sub-kinds and general features so I can define the concept of IK. First of all, IK encompasses "language, systems of classification, resource use practices, social interactions, ritual, spirituality" (UNESCO, 2015(a)) and also "agriculture, health care, food preparation, education, environmental conservation and a host of other activities" (Warren, 1991; 1). It is an integral concept that reflects and



includes all daily practice taken by self-determining action. A significant feature of IK is its method of production; it is “people-derived science” (Ulluwishewa, 1993 cited in World Bank, 2015) and “developed by society” (UNESCO, 2015(a)). Besides this, its manner of transmission is through ancestral inheritance, passed down from generation to generation, so that accumulation and preservation is highly reliant on people. To sum up, Ellen and Harris summarize the ten characteristics of IK conclusively as...locally situated in a “particular place and set of experience”, “orally-transmitted”, “consequence of practical engagement in everyday life”, “empirical knowledge”, repetitive, “constantly changing”, “shared to a much greater degree than other forms of knowledge”, fragmentary distributed, “directly applicable” and “situated within broader cultural tradition” (Ellen and Harris, 1996: 5-7).

Meanwhile, to explore IK, it is necessary to consider the issue of indigenous peoples’ rights, too. Indigenous knowledge implies the “knowledge of indigenous” as its circular term (Klein, 2011: 82). Even though IK doesn’t only confine itself to indigenous peoples (it includes all communities’ knowledge developed through their own body of knowledge in specific place and situation) (Gorjestani, 2000), not all “put their indigenous knowledge into practice, or that all practices of indigenous peoples are indigenous” (Estrada, 2012: 59). It cannot be denied that IK is deeply related with indigenous people. The importance of indigenous peoples’ rights and the conservation of their knowledge has to be accentuated with the importance of IK. Indigenous people have generally been regarded as groups which need their rights improved and their productions more respected. Several international agencies have tried to promote this including the UN, ILO and UNESCO. The claims and demands for indigenous peoples’ rights have recently focused on the issue of education and it has been underpinned by international common agreement. For example, UNDRIP (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples) which was adopted by the UN as an international instrument to strongly promote indigenous peoples’ rights, explicitly declares the right of indigenous peoples’ education. It implies that the international movement of indigenous people acknowledges and ratifies the importance and value of their own knowledge. This international rising of an indigenous people’s movement helps the concept of indigenous knowledge draw attention and illuminates its usage.

The concept of IK is used more broadly as a “contested concept” (Ferradá, 1998: 239), too. According to Mkosi (2005), IK is differentiated from western knowledge. It is developed by a specific group to solve their own problems so it is different from western knowledge which follows prescriptive methods or regulations. Dei (2000) conceptualizes IK as a body of knowledge associated with the long-term occupancy of a certain place so it is diverse and not absolute. It is possible to interpret western knowledge as the universal, international knowledge for the modern era, so Warren (1991) mentions that IK is in “contrast with the international knowledge system generated by universities, research institutions and private firms”. In this sense, some scholars formulate it as a “counter-hegemonic narrative” (Giroux and McLaren, 1996 cited in Ortiz, 2007) which is against a dominant knowledge system, a part of the indigenous world. However, the overemphasis on IK as distinct from western, scientific knowledge has led to its criticism. Agrawal (1995) summarizes that this dichotomous way of thinking between indigenous knowledge and western/scientific knowledge is a major barrier to understanding. He contends that all knowledge has diverse power and multiple dimensions for a specific group of people; thus, we need to think differently about the dichotomous value or distinction between IK and scientific knowledge. Others may suggest that an integrated knowledge system is the best means to achieve real enhancement of diverse sectors’ development (Folke, 2004 cited in Bohensky and Yiheisu, 2011; Agrawal, 2009). I will therefore clarify my operationalized concept of IK in this regard.

My research is investigating the IK applied to the education field so I address about IK in relations to its aspects pertinent to the education field. IK and education are in a vital relationship because education is the core deliverance method of knowledge. Educational systems are becoming increasingly similar all over the world. The dominant paradigm is a top-down process that functions primarily for individual nation-state building and for producing skills suitable to the international marketplace (Wang, 2014). Most of all, this kind of formal mainstream education is based on an Euro-centric, techno-scientific and formulaic knowledge system that has been critiqued in the following manner;

“children spend much time learning passively in classroom settings, rather than engaged in hands-on learning on the land. Teachers replace parents and elders as the holders of knowledge and authority. National languages become the medium

of instruction, while vernacular languages are sidelined” (UNESCO, 2015(a)).

Therefore, modern education which doesn't admit or integrate indigenous knowledge is largely responsible for a loss of tradition, an evanishment of cultural diversity. Klein (2011: 81) mentioned that “IK is becoming more pertinent in the educational discourse” while Dei (2000) argued that the inclusion of IK as a requirement of development and as one of the central elements in the academic field might be the essential factor that promotes real educational and social change worldwide. For a long time, knowledge production has been from a western context and people have regarded it as universal knowledge. It seems quite difficult then to change the world to consider specific indigenous groups' knowledge as their educational ground but Dei (2000: 71) emphasized that “indigenous ways of acting, feeling, knowing and making sense of the social and natural worlds have significant implications for development” and IK is a very natural base for human beings.

There is an educational theory which deeply links with IK in a practical way. The concept of 'Fund of Knowledge' (FoK) is a representative anthropological and educational one and is defined as “to refer to the historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (Greenberg, 1989; Tapia, 1991; Velez-Ibfaez, 1988 cited in Moll et al., 1992: 133). A number of scholars (Irvine, 2003; Rosebery, McIntyre, & Gonzalez, 2001; Velez-Ibanez & Greenberg, 1992 cited in Hogg, 2011: 667) assert that;

“many disadvantaged students, from ethnic minority families with lower socio-economic status, are actually more correctly disadvantaged by a fundamental lack of alignment between their own FoK and those of the teacher”.

It implies that a discussion about the status of indigenous students in the context of formal schooling and the dominant educational system must also include an examination of the teachers' pedagogy, the curriculum and all learning methodologies in the following context; does it consider FoK or not? Until indigenous students receive an education based on the concept of FoK, education will continue to play its role as a tool of reproduction for inequality.

In this sense, IK can influence experienced and accumulated knowledge. It needs to be merged into the curriculum and classroom practices so as to enhance the students'

adaptability and learning ability in their learning process and environment (Ortiz, 2007). In the Thai NGOs case, The Life Skills Development Foundation (TLSDF) is promoting livelihood skill-based education; Inter Mountain People Education and Culture in Thailand (IMPECT) is emphasizing local wisdom; and the Foundation for Applied Linguistics (FAL) is applying the MTB-MLE program whereby they help public schools integrate IK. And their assertion is that IK is an important factor for the improvement of indigenous students' adaptability and learning ability in school rather than just a way of maintaining their ethnic identity.

In light of all of the above, I operationalize the concept of IK in education as an alternative methodology for indigenous education. Taking into account the fact that IK has a contesting meaning to the existing knowledge systems composed as they are with de facto scientific, westernized, and universal knowledge, it seems that IK is a symbol of opposition to the current education system and its contents. Estrada, studying about the Maya knowledge and Guatemala education, validated that IK is "the central decolonizing tools of resistance against domination and colonization" (2012: 68) but I would rather not use IK as a tool of refusal towards the existing education system. I highlight features of IK such as an alternative, situated, bottom-up approach that in particular includes the indigenous people's perspective.

### 1.6.3 Conceptual Framework

Herein I illustrate the conceptual underpinnings that guide this research. The concept of IK and Knowledge Space is deeply linked because IK itself has the feature of contestation to existing knowledge systems and knowledge space is also a kind of new attempt to change the order of knowledge - to move beyond the dominant knowledge. Therefore, according to previous research, IK is used as "tools to negotiate against [government's] hegemonic policy" (Prasert, 2007: 39), i.e. to form a new knowledge space and it has a similar aspect in this study.

Although I refer to the previous remarks of correlation between indigenous knowledge and knowledge space as a theoretical concept, I would like to reinforce it by taking into account a feature of education. In the Thai context, indigenous knowledge has hardly been discussed in the education field and many in today's parents' generation

have already experienced struggles in school and society due to being mainstreamed when young. Thus, even though they practice their indigenous knowledge in daily life, they have difficulty in considering it as a tool for their children's education. For this reason, regenerating and redefining the indigenous knowledge from local people should precede its inclusion in the development field. Moreover, as Figure 1.1 illustrates, local NGOs play a crucial role in this process, particularly as an intermediary.



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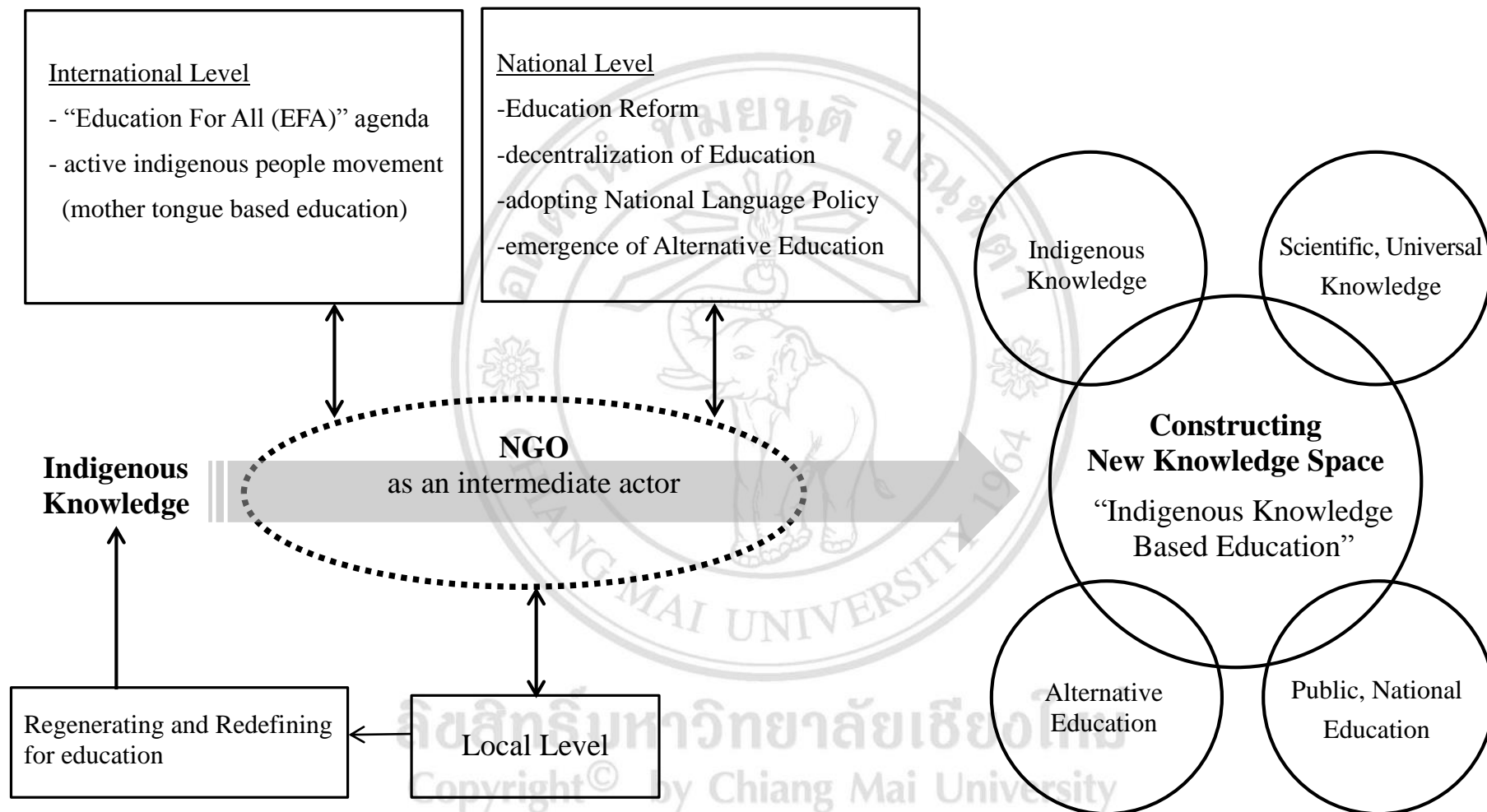


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework

## **1.7 Research Methodology**

### **1.7.1 Research Epistemology**

The purpose of my study is to search for the ways that NGOs who work on indigenous people's education issues negotiate the inclusion of indigenous knowledge into the school system. My rationale for this topic has come from a long period of personal uncertainty and consideration. I used to work as a manager of International volunteer programs and education development projects in a Korean NGO. While I was working, I often doubted whether the education programs run by outsiders were suitable and effective for the local students. Most of the classes run by outsiders were in the arts, mathematics or English, thus local language was not a fundamental factor for the students. But even though the subjects needed little usage of the students' own language, they all have their own local spatial, social and cultural contexts. There must be limitations learning from 'outsider' teachers.

These questions re-occurred to me when I faced the indigenous students in a Thai public school. Many Thai indigenous students are born and grow up in their own community but when they attend formal school, they face a totally different world. They have to use a different language, learn new knowledge which is usually not related to their daily life and be forced to become a person who is perfectly Thai. There seems to be a similarity between the education in international development projects and the compulsory education system for indigenous students in Thailand.

In this context, there are some local NGOs working to solve the difficulties indigenous students are experiencing. They are developing education methods that take into account the indigenous knowledge and are negotiating with diverse influential actors such as government, civil society and international agencies for meaningful changes to the practical school system. My epistemological position influenced my selection of this research topic and to gave me a perspective for observation, too.

### **1.7.2 Research Scope and Level**

The aim of this study is to examine the negotiation process and strategies for implementation of a program in a local public school by a local NGO working for

indigenous education. Although this study is mainly focused on the current program implementation in my target school, in order to understand the social situation in a Thai context, it also touched on related issues such as Thailand's public education system, indigenous peoples' movement and the network of indigenous education organizations.

The level of analysis for this study was based at the local level and researched the interaction between a NGO and a local community including one public school and the village. To understand the holistic working process, I briefly touch on my target NGO's diverse working levels but mainly focused on the program implementation at the local level.

### 1.7.3 Research Target and Site

This research focuses on the negotiation between a NGO working for indigenous education and a local public school, thus the research target was divided into two major groups: (1) The Foundation of Applied Linguistics (FAL) as a specific target NGO in Northern Thailand and (2) the Ban Khun Tae School which incorporated the FAL's major program, MTB-MLE in 2015. These research targets were selected according to the following criteria.

Under the IEN, there are three organizations actively working to implement their specific programs in local schools and FAL is one of them. Furthermore, the salient issue discussed within IEN recently is the MTB-MEL program. For instance, the topic of a conference which occurred on the 2015 International Mother Language Day and the major agenda of the paper submitted to the UN ESCR in June of 2015 was about the MTB-MLE program. For this reason, I assumed that the MTB-MLE program is regarded as a key program among the IEN members and FAL is the NGO which has been primarily working with the MTB-MLE program. Thus, I selected FAL as a representative NGO among the organizations for indigenous education issues in Northern Thailand. In the process of determining this target, I had conducted interviews with the directors of several major IEN members; TLSDF, IMPECT, FAL and Pestalozzi Children Foundation (PCF) through its operational partner in Thailand.

The selection of a school was done by analyzing the FAL's MTB-MLE project status and pre-visiting schools. FAL provided twenty schools with the MTB-MLE program in 2015 and these are categorized into three types, depending on the type of



sponsors. The first type is called ‘pilot project schools’ sponsored by PCF through its operational partners since 2006 and there are six schools in this group. The second group has eleven schools that are managed and sponsored by OBEC since 2013 while the last group has three schools supported by Child’s Dream. In the case of the second group sponsored by OBEC, FAL has guided and helped to implement program management but doesn’t have any decision rights so I excluded them. Among the nine schools which have carried out the program with deep cooperation with FAL, six pilot project schools have been involved for a long-time, at least seven years, whereas three schools are at the initiation stage. I did two schools pre-visits in May; one to Ban Rak Phaen Din School in Chiang Rai, a pilot project school, and another to Ban Khun Tae School in Chiang Mai, a start-up school.

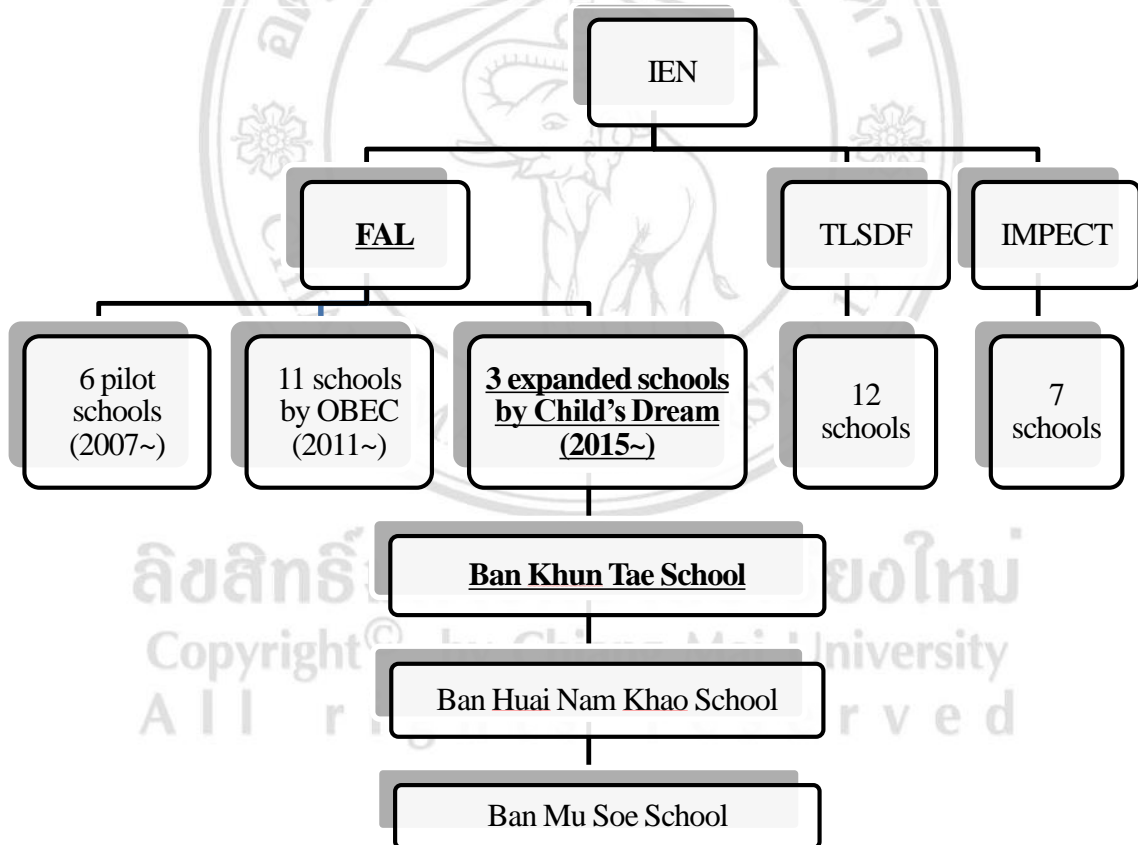


Figure 1.2 Structure of Target Selection

From the pre-visits, I thought that it would be better to conduct a case study of one of this year’s start-up schools because my purpose for this research is to observe the negotiation for acceptance of the MTB-MLE program with local people. The three new

schools seemed to me, at least, to be better able to show current activities and dynamics at the local level rather than those that had already been well established since their data collection might necessarily rely on peoples' memory. Actually the six pilot project schools faced the stage of their last project year with FAL in 2015. I assumed that the experiences from the six pilot schools might influence FAL's strategies and know-how for negotiation and program implementation, thus one of the new expanded schools which started this year was chosen as my target.

When I attended a local teacher training for the first time on the 16th March 2015, I met the local teachers from the three expanded schools. I was able to analyze the different conditions of these start-up schools. I found out that the Ban Mu Soe School involved in the MTB-MLE program is an unusual case because its teachers and parents contacted FAL voluntarily; the initiative to apply came from them. This school is the first school which started the program with their own willpower since FAL started MTB-MLE in 2006 and, in my opinion, is not a suitable case study to examine my research question. Both Ban Khun Tae and Ban Huai Nam Khao School students are S'gaw Karen and the initiation of MTB-MLE in these schools was similar to the process in previous schools; only the surrounding environment was different. Ban Huai Nam Khao School is located in the downtown of Om Koi District and it is not just one ethnic community thus it seemed quite difficult to observe the negotiation process between FAL and a school surrounded by one indigenous village. To look into how indigenous people in Northern Thailand react to a new educational tool and also how they consider their ethnic identity, it was better to choose Ban Khun Tae School. Taking into account my selection criteria, I chose FAL and Ban Khun Tae School in S'gaw Karen village as my case study target.

My research site was in Chiang Mai province. When I collected data from the informants who are related with FAL or other relevant people for my topic, it was mostly conducted in Chiang Mai downtown such as at the FAL office or at various hotels or educational institutes where FAL opened trainings sessions and conducted meetings. Other times, I visited Ban Khun Tae School in Tambon Doi Kaeo of Amphoe Chom Thong in Chiang Mai. Khun Tae village is so called *bon doi* (mountain area) at an elevation of 1,200m within the Obluang National Park area and it is about 25 km from

Chom Thong downtown and around 85 km away from Chiang Mai. In the Khun Tae village, 774 S'gaw Karen people (381 males and 393 females) and 174 households live together according to last year's survey. It facilitates one Primary school, one Clinic, one Catholic church, one Protestant church, one temple and six shops. There are three religious groups: Buddhism, Catholic and Protestantism. From the 2014 survey, 297 people (74 households) are Buddhists and 471 people (105 households) are Christians (only around 20 people are Protestants and the rest are Catholics).

Most of the people farm and sell their produce at Chom Thong market for living expenses. Their income seems variable according to the market situation. In the village, there is a Queen's Project<sup>2</sup> farm and around 100 people work. Their daily wage is 100 baht (3USD) for sowing, watering and packing but, if it is hard work such as plowing the soil or moving heavy stuff, it can be up to 150 baht (4.5USD) a day. There are six Karen office managers and five Thai soldiers who stay near the farm. During the year, some villagers work building roads and their daily wage is 300 baht (9~10 USD) and about half of these workers are women. Many households raise pigs and chickens for generating extra income too.

Khun Tae villagers apparently keep their traditional life styles. For example, they wear Karen traditional handmade shirts (married female adults wear the sarong), dwell in wooden houses which facilitate the fire system inside the homes and by eating all their foods from a big round tray together with all family members. And not only this visible life style is perpetuated but also their ordinary family relationships remain strong as well as their relationships with their fellow villagers. However, like other ethnic groups, Karen people have also faced the situation that "the [indigenous] knowledge has decreased since 1980, at least among the younger generation and especially among Christian converts" (Prasert, 2007: 36). Many Khun Tae villagers have adopted Buddhism or Christianity, thus less and less people practice the Karen rituals in the traditional way such as for weddings and funerals.

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<sup>2</sup> Royal's Duty of the Queen Project Farm has been operating since 1997. A magazine introducing Khun Tae village said that after eradication of drugs, the villagers of Khun Tae needed new jobs so when the Queen visited there in 1997, the villagers asked her to help therefore the project started (Tabtim, 2015).

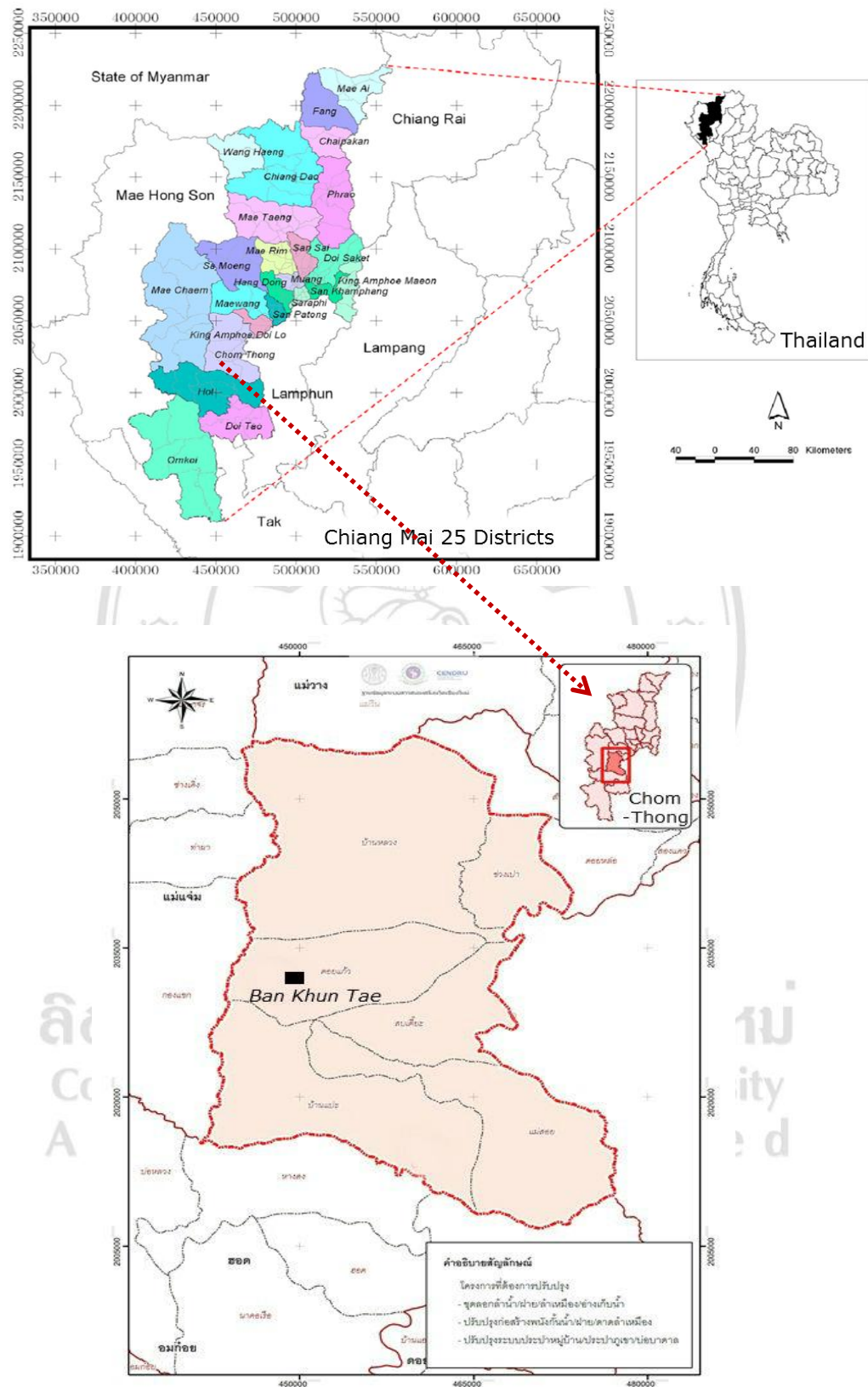


Figure 1.3 Map of Chiang Mai Province, Thailand and Ban Khun Tae in Doi Kaeo, Chom Thong District

In this research, the major targets were the FAL staff (including a director), the teachers and also the parents of Khun Tae School. I was targeting all of the staff of FAL in order to observe their working style and to know their opinions. But my essential information was gathered by the middle-grade staff who have been working at least six years at FAL and are veterans of MTB-MLE program management. The target group of parents was mainly from the KG1 students' parents group. Their ages were from twenty-five to thirty-five years of age. Particularly, I focused on the local teachers group because their role in the implementation of the MTB-MLE program seemed crucial. I observed the other schools' local teachers when I had a chance to meet them at FAL's training sessions, but I mainly targeted four of the local teachers of Khun Tae School. In addition, to get a broader perspective and a deeper understanding of this topic and its proper context, I did interviews with people from IEN member organizations and staff for the MTB-MLE program in the Office of the Basic Education Commission as well.

#### 1.7.4 Data Collection

My data collection depended greatly on attending diverse meetings and activities that occurred over a considerable period of time because I hadn't had any previous connection with any Thai indigenous people or organizations. To collect ample data, I needed to build comfortable relationships based on mutual trust, spending lots of time with related people. Besides, my research topic is more aligned to using qualitative research methods than quantitative research. As Creswell (2006: 40) categorized the case for when qualitative research is necessary, my research methodology for data collection fits within Creswell's parameters. According to him, when a problem or issue needs to be explored and studied within a group and certain identifiable variables which can be measured are present, it is better to use qualitative research methods instead of using predetermined information from the existing literature or by relying on results from other research studies. Also, qualitative research should be conducted when a complex, detailed understanding of the issue is required. This detail can only be established by talking directly with people, going to their homes or places of work, and allowing them to tell their stories unencumbered by what we expect to find or what we have read in the literature. Lastly, if we want to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationships that often exist between

a researcher and the participants, then qualitative research is the best approach. My research topic has rarely been discussed before and requires a complex understanding which can be found in peoples' thoughts and relationships. Therefore, my work has been designed with qualitative methodology in mind. For these reasons, I recognized the fact that spending time with people within my research scope was absolutely essential and this is what I tried to do.

My first chance to encounter the staff of related NGOs occurred at a preparation meeting for the International Mother Language Day conference by IEN member organizations in January of 2015. I joined this conference with my supervisor and as a result, I was able to acquaint myself and later keep in touch with some of the staff. My data collection was gathered through imperative searching for general information about the activities that focused on the inclusion of indigenous knowledge in public schools. I gathered this information from the major NGOs, FAL, TLSDF and IMPECT under IEN. Therefore, I visited their offices and conducted interviews with the main directors or program managers in March and April of 2015. Through this process, I became familiar with the issue of indigenous education in Thailand and designed the methodology with four data collection methods: participant observation, in-depth interviews, personal conversation and analysis of documents.

After I selected my research target, I proceeded into the fields. During this time, I met two key informants and one gate keeper. As I have noted previously, I had two research target groups: one being the FAL staff and the other being the local people of Khun Tae School and village. With regard to FAL, after I joined one of their pre-service training sessions in March and had an informal interview with the director, I was able to form relationships with other major staff members, no longer requiring a gate keeper for research about FAL. I usually contacted FAL staff directly through social media and I also personally attended any important occasions. I didn't have a gate keeper for FAL but there was a key informant, an individual who has worked for FAL since 2009. She shared her long term experience and gave me an invaluable, comprehensive picture of this organization and program. One of the reasons she became my key informant is that she speaks English fluently; she often tried translating or explaining situations for me, too.

Whereas in the case of Khun Tae School and village, conducting field research in the village was a different situation (I had previously met four of the local teachers at a pre-service training in Chiang Mai). Most of the people in the school and community were kind and open minded but I needed somebody who could introduce me to local people and particularly, who could guide through my interviews with the parents group. Fortunately, one of the local teachers who has taught Grade 1 students for seventeen years in this school (she was the longest-termed staff member among current staff) invited me to stay at her house from the very first of my visits. It naturally gave me a chance to talk with a lot her and she quickly came to understand my purpose well. Within the village circumstances, she became my gate keeper. She introduced me to a lot of people and, finally, I was able to decide who would be the most representative and proper interviewees from my target parents' group. She gave me a considerable amount of overall information about the Khun Tae School and village but my key informant from the village was another bilingual government teacher. His job is coordinating all works and relations between the school's principal and the parents. He is Karen and a government teacher, thus his position focuses primarily on explaining the MTB-MLE program to parents and to the other Thai teachers. After I met him several times, I found out that he was the one who best understood the overall background and could see the whole situation very well. I consequently relied on his information considerably.

#### 1) Participant Observation

After I decided FAL as my target NGO, I tried to observe their diverse activities, such as teacher trainings, workshops for principals and meetings with other networks or partner organizations. This continued for a period of eight months (March 2015 ~ October 2015). Whenever I attended these activities, I received translation help from FAL staff but sometimes it was just too difficult. I ended up recording the speeches and conversations. These recorded files (and several handouts) were analyzed and translated with my translators and, if the contents were important, have been included in this study. Moreover, to experience the daily working cycle and to understand the relationships and dynamics among the staff at FAL's office, I visited the office frequently, taking care not to disturb their work. I used to be a NGO staff member in Korea so it was interesting to observe the Thai NGO system and to compare it with my own working experience. I

was able to provide some help to them as well, particularly at the busiest times, so my experience often included full participant observation. Most of the time, the MTB-MLE program staff met the local people at their office so, thanks to this fact, I had a chance to encounter local people naturally.

Since I had met the local teachers of Khun Tae School at the teacher training in March, I had kept in touch with them through SNS and become friendly with them. I visited the school with FAL staff in May, 2015 for the first time and after the FAL staff had left on the first day, I stayed there alone for two days more (19th~21nd, May, 2015). Because of my prior relationships with the local teachers, even though it was my first visit, I was successful in my field entry and unexpectedly collected quite a lot of information about the school and village. Moreover, luckily, when I came back to Chiang Mai, I had a chance to accompany the principal of Khun Tae School. His house is located near Chiang Mai city, so for commuting purpose, he uses his motorbike from Khun Tae School to Chom Thong like the other government teachers then changes to his car for the additional hour's drive from Chom Thong to home. I rode on his motorbike for over one hour and was able to fully understand how teachers who live out of Khun Tae village commute every day and how uncomfortable and dangerous the road is (it will be depicted in more detail in section 4.3.1).

My second visit to the school was on the 10th and 11th of August. FAL staff visited the school for 'big book story development' for the KG2 for the next year. I accompanied them to a two day workshop and, during this time, followed the FAL staff and tried to focus on how FAL works with the local people. While doing the activities with the mothers, I observed the working process and some interactions between the village people. It was coincidentally Mother's Day so there was a big event at school. Usually, after finishing all classes, government teachers go home to the lowlands; but in order to prepare for the event on the 11th, all staff stayed together at school. FAL had already known this would happen so they had prepared some food and we had a big dinner on the 10th. On the day of the event, thirty to forty mothers of Khun Tae students and the soldiers of the Queen's project farm came to school to celebrate Mother's Day. This fortunate opportunity helped me understand the relationships, interactions and practices in this particular Thai school. Moreover, I was able to be introduced to more villagers.



My third visit (8th ~15th, September) was planned to collect more complete information from the local people. Therefore, I conducted in-depth interviews with the help of a translator. Without any FAL staff present and with no formal activities, I just stayed as a visitor and a friend. For five days, I stayed alone in my gate keeper's house and everyday went to school and looked around the village during the day time. In particular, all of the staff including the principal of the school, kindly welcomed me; thus, I could mingle with all of the teachers. Every day I had lunch with school staff and observed their characteristic and relationship. In the evening, when the local teacher who provided a room for me had finished her work, we visited neighbor's houses where I more closely observed the Khun Tae people's daily life. I was invited to a couple of dinners and was able to have some personal conversations with locals about the village's history and current situation while, thinking about school and education and Karen identity in general. During the sixth and seventh day, my translator worked with me conducting in-depth interviews. During the previous five days, I had already arranged and asked for these interviews with the local people so I intensively did them..

My last stay in the village was for supplemental information. I visited there from the 15th to the 20th of November and, accompanied by my translator. I aimed to collect any data missing from the previous interviews and observations. It was shortly after school had had a one month break, around the opening time of the second semester of the 2015 academic year, therefore I could observe the leveled up class of KG1. During the vacation, local teachers had developed all their lesson plans for the second semester for KG1 and it applied directly from November. The big difference between the first term and the second term was the teaching of newly developed S'gaw Karen primers using the Thai alphabet. I paid attention to the KG1 class and also reactions from the parents because the first semester was mainly an adaptation period for KG1 and the only lessons had consisted of listening and speaking. From the second semester on, the teacher teaches reading and writing in Karen so it seemed a real change compared with previous years.

I conducted participant observation in these two target spaces and collected data whenever I had the chance to join in relevant lectures, study trips, seminars, etc. I attended and observed. It was tough to overcome the language barrier but these various

experiences gave me a broader understanding about this issue.

## 2) In-depth Interview

Since my research was conducted within Chiang Mai Province, I had an advantage when doing the in-depth interviews. I was able to plan the order of interviews according to the expected information and this became my process for conducting follow-up interviews. For example, when I interviewed FAL staff, I did informal interviews with many staff members and then decided that three of the veteran staff were worthy of more in-depth interviews over different days. And after finishing all these staff interviews, I met the director.

Table 1.1 Number and Time Spent in In-depth Interview

	<b>Target informants</b>	<b>Number of informants</b>	<b>Average time for interview</b>
1	FAL staff including a director of FAL	4	2 hours
2	local teachers at Khun Tae school	4	2 hours
3	government teachers including a principal at Khun Tae school	5	1.5 hour
4	parents whose children attend Khun Tae School	10	40~50 mins
5	Staff for MTB-MLE program in the Office of the Basic Education Commission	1	2 hour
6	other staff of NGOs under IEN	3	2 hours
	<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	

If my interviewee could speak English fluently, like the main staff members of FAL, I interviewed them in English. But if he or she could not, I depended on my translator. I worked with one translator who is a M.A graduate in a social science discipline and who continues to do her own research.

When I did interviews with parents whose children attended Khun Tae School, I relied on my gate keeper. My gate keeper was one of the local teachers. She has taught for 17 years at Khun Tae School and she graduated from it, too. She knows very well

about the villagers and the school's situation. She helped me do the interviews with the parents that I had intended to and guided me as I visited each house. From my first visit to Khun Tae School, she willingly invited me to her house and took care of me. Whenever I visited Khun Tae village, I stayed at her house so I spent much time in personal conversation with her.

I wanted to interview some specialists who are keen on Thai indigenous social movements, the MTB-MLE program in a linguistics discipline or the managers of some international agencies. Unfortunately, these people were out of the country so it was difficult to do face to face interviews with them. In this case, I emailed some specific questions to them and received answers that I used in reference data as well.

### 3) Personal Conversation

Before conducting in-depth interviews with my FAL target informants, Khun Tae School informants and those in the village, I attempted to establish personal relationships. Actually, I conducted the in-depth interviews with FAL staff after I had known them for 5 months and interviews with the school teachers were done after knowing them for 3 months. To facilitate a comfortable relationship, whenever I had the chance, I joined their activities or events and also kept in touch with them individually by SNS. In the process of building relationships with my informants, even though my Thai language was at a basic level and not sufficient for deep conversation, I collected some key information which could not be gathered through formal interviews. To check the accuracy of this information, I repeated the same question when my translator worked with me or I verified it with another English fluent Thai who knew the issue. I included some information collected from these personal conversations into this research.

### 4) Analysis of Documents

Studying in different contexts using different languages presented, as a researcher, is big barriers to me and required multiple efforts on my part. There are few documents in English related to my research topic; most of the papers in ordinary time are in the Thai language. Thus, during my data collection, I did joint work with another translator to review and analyze some related documents. Particularly, FAL and IEN had many

activities which I couldn't participate in so I usually collected related documents or spot pictures to follow up on this information. However, there were many limitations to this approach; it can be considered a weak point of this research.

#### 1.7.5 Methodological Limitation

What I found and learned from my study is that even as I tried to fully understand and collect my data, there were certain barriers and limitations. The fact is that I was not able to join in all the activities related to this study even though some of the ones I missed were quite important. The data from these missing activities might be covered through interviews and existing documents but there were other considerable barriers for me; namely, the language limitations.

Khun Tae School is located in S'gaw Karen village thus their mother tongue is definitely S'gaw Karen. Most of my research informants were the current students' parents' generation and school teachers so I could only communicate with them through my basic Thai language. However, to get a wider understanding, I needed to have conversations or interactions with all the generations in the village. But I couldn't communicate with the little children from KG1 to G2 and the grandparents' generation because they could not understand the Thai language. Particularly, in the school, I attempted to interview a few students in different grades but most of students answered very simply or typically in Thai. According to my translator, their Thai pronunciation tends to be timid compared with other lowland students so I decided to note their attitude or reactions in class through my observation and used the results of the students' interviews only for a broader understanding of the situation. I conducted interviews with a Thai and English translator but even some of the parents have difficulty in communicating in the Thai language. In this case, they couldn't fully understand the meaning of some of the questions they were asked and had to ask for help from my gate keeper. And since there were three language translations (English-Thai-Karen), missing or distortion of information must happen. I know that the more times questions and answers are translated or when the gate keeper already knows the intention or pattern of questions asked there is a greater likelihood the meanings or answers might be changed. But this was my reality and reflected on the other information I gathered so I accepted this situation as my research limitation.

The other consideration is a terminology issue. Some of the key words indicating the major concepts of this study are not applicable to the local level. Some are academic terms so they were neither shared nor informative to the local people and some are interchangeable terms. For example, local people don't use terms like '*chon phao phun muang* (indigenous people)' nor '*kwam ru chon phun muang* (indigenous knowledge)' rather they seem to be familiar with '*chon chatiphan* (ethnic people)', '*chao khao* (hill tribes)' or '*chon phao* (tribal people)' and '*phumi pan ya thong thin* (local wisdom)' or '*phumi pan ya dang doem* (traditional wisdom)'. Thus, my translator used these terms instead for interviews with Khun Tae people but, when I conducted in-depth interviews with FAL staff or other indigenous or education related people, I used the original ones. This situation in the process shows the reality of social and political background as key in terms of these terminology issues. These issues also exist within Thai indigenous social movements as well.

### **1.8 Structure of the Study**

This thesis has six chapters and it tries to answer my three research questions by dividing them into each chapter. In order to provide some background and enhance the understanding about the issues related to the research target, I will look at Thai educational developments, and indigenous education in chapter two. Moreover, to approach the MTB-MLE program which is implemented by the target NGO and represents a kind of indigenous knowledge, I will explain about indigenous language, the MTB-MLE program and its correlation with education. Lastly I will introduce FAL, the target NGO.

The third chapter investigates what kinds of elements lead to new challenges for Thai local NGOs that are promoting educational methodologies based on indigenous knowledge and establishing a network for indigenous education. Here, I will explore the international stream related to education and indigenous people then analyze the educational demand for improvement that originates from within Thai society.

The fourth chapter of this study examines some strategies utilized by FAL in the stages of acceptance of the MTB-MLE program in local schools. In facilitating this comprehension, I will detail explanations about the procedure, activities and features of

FAL's MTB-MLE program implementation. Essentially, the negotiation strategies of FAL are highlighted through my ethnographic data collected from a selected target school which just started implementing MTB-MLE program in the 2015 academic year. I have illustrated some background about the school and village characteristics as well.

The fifth chapter focuses on the major activities of FAL with local people and analyzes its results, impact and meaning. There are accumulated educational materials carrying out the MTB-MLE based class, which I have examined in terms of a kind of indigenous knowledge, and I also look at the process of training local teachers and villagers. This shows the changes that occurred in their perceptions and the expansion of their knowledge space.

In the last chapter, I apply all my findings to my conceptual frame and discuss this local NGO's new methodology, based on indigenous knowledge, as it tries to improve indigenous students' education. This goal hopes to be accomplished through the construction of a new knowledge space in the existing education field. Finally, I examine how it will affect Thai society in the future.