

CHAPTER 3

Emerging Indigenous Knowledge in Public Education

In this chapter, I explore the recent phenomenon that is emerging among local NGOs regarding indigenous education issues and examine the influential factors and grounds for its occurrence in Thailand. Before the 2000s, most of the NGOs who worked with indigenous people tended to focus on the issue of their rights for livelihood, identity and citizenship. Moreover, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, the formal Thai education policy didn't expend any monies or effort to improve indigenous students' education in public school. The only mother language-concerned schools for indigenous students were mostly community schools like, Jomaloluella School and Mowakhi Community School in Chiang Mai. These schools teach their indigenous knowledge through their own language. However, they cover only a few students and they don't follow the public curriculum. As a result, they have been regarded as falling under the alternative education or non-formal education sectors. This stream has not disappeared yet but some programs integrating indigenous knowledge into the public schools are appearing. These new education methods, observed in Northern Thailand, have been promoted by local NGOs and they have organized a network to make this demand more visible in society. To explore this, I examine the Indigenous Education Network (IEN) and one of its member organizations, Foundation Applied Linguistics (FAL), in detail.

3.1 The Advent of Indigenous Education Network (IEN)

All involved parties have come to share and learn best practices for alternative education and jointly prepared recommendations to policy at various levels. They discussed the issues relating to the education of indigenous peoples. It is the beginning of cooperation between the various networks of the local ethnic groups and Chiang Mai Provincial Administration Organization for co-driving the education reform in Chiang Mai area (Thai PBS, 2015).

This is a news article about the conference titled "Mother Language: Gateway to Success of Indigenous Peoples' Education and Thailand Education Reformation" held on the 21st and 22nd of February, 2015. The network mentioned in the article is

Indigenous Education Network (IEN). As this article pointed out, IEN had only started co-working visibly with the government sector in 2015, because this network's history is not very long.

The establishment of IEN was on the 19th to 21st December, 2011 when an operational meeting was held in which the leaders of knowledgeable people and youth from nine ethnicities gathered to exchange experiences about education management and their culture of ethnicity. It was organized by a local NGO, IMPECT¹⁸, which has taken a key role in the indigenous movement in Northern Thailand. Many indigenous leaders sensed there was a crisis present in their communities due to a lack of social space for mutual learning, support for solving problems and an inability to effectively advocate their positions under the existing globalized nation-state management development policy or within the formal education system. Therefore, they made a decision to form a network in order to share activities effectively, to develop clearer mechanisms, plans, and processes (IEN, 2015)¹⁹. After this meeting, the key people invited other groups to join which had similar working backgrounds or shared the same vision for indigenous people. Finally, IEN emerged, now composed of nine NGOs and non-formal schools and thirty-five communities in present (2015) state. The goal of IEN is principally to help indigenous people in general and most of all, help them have more power in regards to policy making. As a manager of IMPECT stressed;

“If there is any community which wants to use a project in terms of concerning their education in their school or community, IEN will try to find a way to support them but what we have as a final goal is that making them get the budget from government. IEN wants to have movement for policy making. Right now there is no budget for improvement of indigenous

¹⁸ Inter Mountain Peoples Education and Culture in Thailand Association (IMPECT) registered as a formal Association 16 March, 1993 and has been working for development of a network. Its member communities are comprised of ten ethnic groups mostly situated in Northern Thailand. It focuses on coordination and collaboration with other organizations of both the government and NGOs to encourage indigenous communities and networks.

¹⁹ The IEN's mission is to “enhance learning network, accumulate resources, promote to education access with quality and morality for indigenous people” and their three main objects are : “1) To strengthen learning network for them 2) To promote and support education management particularly for indigenous people by encouraging community organization can manage their education by themselves or real participation 3) To launch campaign or promote policy suitable for education of indigenous people” (IEN, 2015: 11).

education but IEN lobbies and advocates to make it” (Wilailuck, a manager of IMPECT, interview, 30 April 2015).

According to an email interview with one of the leaders who was influential in the formation of IEN, there were three significant groups for gearings involved in IEN from the start. “IEN started a few years ago, by various partners working for indigenous education particularly the partners supported by PCF for instance, IMPECT and others” (Prasert, previous IMPECT director, email interview, 30 October 2015). The ‘PCF partners’ are IMPECT, TLSDF and FAL, which have been supported by ‘PCF through operational partners’ since 2006 or 2007. These three organizations had already been working themselves for indigenous children before receiving support from PCF. But after beginning their collaboration with PCF, they have shared more time and worked together because PCF demands them to have regional meetings, trainings and vision sharing time. According to my observation of a ‘PCF partners’ program evaluation’ on the 28th July, 2015, they primarily reported the results of evaluation about their PCF supported programs. After that session, they discussed some IEN issues. They seemed to utilize the opportunity of this ‘PCF partners’ meeting for reinforcing their relationship while raising awareness of IEN’s major agenda, too.

“One of the advantages of IEN is that we are working as a team. We get more supportive energy from this network. We [feel that we] have friends and colleagues in something similar... we are empowering among us. But it’s ideal aspects. To make a concrete action, we need to wait and to see” (Kreangkrai, director of TLSDF, interview, 30 March 2015).

With this expectation, IEN has manifested some visible team actions in Thai society and internationally. Not only the conference introduced previously on the International Mother Language Day of 2015, but IEN also produced a report on the status of Thai indigenous education and made a request to the United Nation Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UN ESCR) to raise its concerns and give recommendations to the Thai government. The representatives of the member organizations of IEN had prepared the alternative report to respond to the 55th Session of UN ESCR’s Country Report of Thailand and they visited Geneva on the 4th and 5th of June, 2015. In this document, IEN strongly argued that the Thai government should give better access to education to indigenous and ethno-linguistic minority children, in

particular through the MTB-MLE program and a “more alternative form of education with sufficient financial and other needed support” (IEN and NIPT, 2015: 6). As a result, an article in *The Nation* represented this emergence as follows:

“while nearly every other ASEAN country has a national language policy and is moving towards collecting data by ethnicity, Thailand is lagging in both respects. The result is that Thai ethnic minorities led by the NIPT and IEN, and involving NGOs like the IMPECT, have begun to claim rights by themselves. They are actively lobbying, both in Thailand and internationally, for partial self-determination and human rights. One way they do this is by submitting their own reports to the UN CESCR but the fact they need to do this is awkward for a civilized country” (Draper John and Peerasit, 8 October 2015).

3.2 The Factors of NGOs’ New Challenge

As introduced in the previous section, there is a network working together on indigenous people’s education issues and there are three NGOs actively promoting new methodologies in the public schools under this network. Then what factors bring about these educational methodologies directly or indirectly?

3.2.1 International Agreement for ‘Education For All’ (EFA)

There are many researchers who study the correlation between international education trends and an individual country’s education development and, when it is discussed, the current international education agenda is usually ‘Education For All’ by the World Declaration in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990. This 150 countries’ delegates’ agreement stressed that education is a basic human right and thus it urged all countries to increase accessibility to primary education for every child. They set the target year 2000 for the fulfillment of this goal (UNESCO, 1990). However, it wasn’t achieved by then so it was reconfirmed in Dakar, Senegal in 2000 and its target year for accomplishing this goal was set for 2015. The agreement is now regarded as somewhat out of mode but it still plays a role in the implementation of various educational tasks and many NGOs focused on education have carried out their work under this slogan.

This international agreement has influenced Thailand, too. The Thai government has reported, through national statistics related to the school enrollment rate, illiteracy rate, years of schooling, etc., that the Thai education system’s expansion and distribution has

significantly improved compared to the last decade before EFA (Ambihadevy, 2003). Additionally, in 2015, the last year of EFA, the Thai National Commission for UNESCO informed how Thailand had made efforts from 2003 to 2015 to meet this EFA goal. Their report illustrated examples like the Thai Cabinet's decision, proclaiming the government would give more opportunities to migrant workers' children in Thailand territory in 2005, the hosting of the 10th Meeting of the High-Level Group on EFA in 2011 and their advocacy for diverse programs aimed at achieving EFA through "Learning Project for Disadvantaged Children; financial support of quality education from kindergarten through the basic education level and Community Learning Centers" (The Thai National Commission for UNESCO, 2015: 5). Moreover, the Thai government stipulates that every child has the right to a free basic education for a period of twelve years²⁰, guaranteed by the constitution, and sees this as evidence that ensuring all children have equal access to quality education is taken seriously by them (The Thai National Commission for UNESCO, 2015).

Despite of this public report of nation state, most NGOs working on education related issues have demonstrated that this goal cannot be achieved solely through the public education system of the nation state (Rose, 2009). They emphasize their role of alternative ways which have been developed by their experiences and efforts for a long time in grass root. The EFA gives more consideration to the children who are largely excluded from nation state educational provisions, for example; "in post-conflict areas, pastoralists, indigenous groups, ethnic, religious and language minority groups, the disabled, refugees, and child laborers" (Sayed and Soudien 2003; UNESCO, 2004; cited in Rose, 2009: 220)

Actually, many NGOs were taking care of these children before this global movement began. However, NGOs tend to utilize this international agenda as a basis for their work and have taken advantage of it. This phenomenon was discovered in my research too. The IEN and NIPT's document submitted to UN ESCR in 2015 expresses that the NIPT, IEN, Alternative Education Council, other relevant networks, and civil society organizations in Thailand will participate actively to "adopt and implement a rights based approach to

²⁰ The twelve years of free basic schooling corresponds to elementary, lower-secondary and upper-secondary courses but the Thai government has also declared, since 2009, that early-childhood level education is included in free education. Thus, the Thai government aims to provide a fifteen year free education policy but pre-school education is not compulsory (UNESCO, 2011).

education as guided in the UNESCO document entitled ‘A Human Right Based Approach to Education for All’” (IEN and NIPT, 2015: 6). From this fact, it can be stated that the international issue impacts on national and local situations in this globalized world and that the NGOs under IEN also operate and apply this international education agenda for their own purposes.

3.2.2 Indigenous People’s Movement and Limitations from Mainstreaming

In regard to the indigenous education issue, the indigenous people’s movement is influences in tandem with more general international education issues. The long history of the indigenous people’s movement has now reached a certain level wherein indigenous people have common agreement and power when negotiating with correspondent country governments. The representative result of the indigenous people’s movement is the Resolution adopted by the General Assembly of United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples(UNDRIP). UNDRIP was adopted by the UN as an international instrument to strongly promote indigenous peoples’ rights and to explicitly declare the right of indigenous peoples’ education as follow;

Article 14-1. Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning (UNDRIP, 2007).

It states that the international movement of indigenous people pertains to their education issues and there is now recognition of the importance and value of their own knowledge. Indigenous people in Thailand also use this international agreement as a guarantee and they formed a network, named Network of Indigenous Peoples in Thailand (NIPT) in 2007. This network proclaimed that indigenous people living within Thailand respond and join this global solidarity by making efforts to raise public awareness of Thai indigenous people’s existence. NIPT, most importantly, took a key role in the establishment of IEN.

However, the contexts of Thai indigenous people are a little bit different from the people who mainly lead the international movement because most of the indigenous people in other countries, for example, Australia, Canada, Chile, Guatemala etc., have a history of colonization by other countries. There can certainly be arguments made about the construction of the Thai nation-state, but it has never been colonized by an other

country. Thus, the core idea of global indigenous people which is well shown by the sentences below is not applicable to the Thai context;

“Colonialism should have been dead after World War II in 1945. While the world decolonization process is almost complete, it has not begun yet for indigenous people. Colonialism among indigenous people in the Americas began with Columbus in 1492, but it did not reach its height until the close of the nineteenth century...in fact, indigenous people are still being subject to it” (Yazzie, 2000 cited in Ortiz, 2007: 91-92).

For instance, there is still a terminology debate even among the indigenous people in Thailand. There are various terms indicating diverse ethnicity and not all indigenous people agree to use the term ‘*chon phao phun muang* (indigenous people)’ to call themselves or to be called by others. There was a consultation about these terminology issues on 31th October, 2015 by the Council of Indigenous Peoples in Thailand (CIPT)²¹ and, after a long persuasion led by indigenous organization leaders, people agreed to use the term ‘indigenous people’. A professor of the Social Science faculty of Chiang Mai University explained this debate as follows;

“The council producing Indigenous People’s Act is divided in two groups. First one is mostly from highland which wants to use the ‘*chon phao phun munag* (indigenous people)’ but the second group from mostly low land feels reluctant to use it and prefer to ‘*grum chatipan* (ethnic group)’ or ‘*chon phao* (tribal people)’. Either network or council, nowadays mostly are dominated by highland indigenous people and they prefer and promote the term ‘*chon phao phun munag*’. Finally the other low land people also agreed to use it even it is still not very comfortable to use. In the process for doing common action for instance, the paper for the ‘Indigenous People’s Act’ also use this term” (Prasit, professor of Social Science faculty of CMU, individual conversation, 3 November 2015).²²

²¹ In 2010, the Council of Indigenous Peoples in Thailand (CIPT) was established as a mechanism to support this goal of acceptance of indigenous diversity and rights. The first national assembly of the CIPT held in November of 2014, ratified the Constitution of the CIPT to serve as a joint agreement for action. The second assembly of CIPT was convened in August 2015, in which there were 190 members representing 38 Indigenous groups. Two indigenous councils were adopted at local levels and 15 executive committee members selected from the assembly (CS, NIPT and AIPP; 2015).

²² This situation was investigated from the perspective of my study target village, too. When I did an informal group discussion with four S’gaw Karen teachers (11, March, 2016), I asked them ‘which term is most suitable when you explain yourself or the Khun Tae village among *chon phao* (tribal people),

Most of the NGOs and leader groups which are actively working for indigenous people in Thailand promoted this term, too. It can be interpreted that they want to join the international movement that, since 2007, has been judged a great success through quadrating a term which has been supported by the global movement and to exert pressure on the Thai government.

Actually, this tendency is caused by the Thai government's attitude. Even if the Thai government also signed UN DRIP and thus adopted this treaty, they still keep denying the existence of indigenous people within their borders. This is confirmed by the government's rejection of the term '*chon phao phun muang*' and the continued pressure it exerts on all of its citizenry to be a Thai citizen only (CS, NIPT and AIPP; 2015). This non-recognition of indigenous people in Thailand has resulted in an absence of clear policies, programs and participating methods targeted for indigenous people (CS, NIPT and AIPP; 2015). Even though Thailand has never been colonized by outsiders, Thai indigenous people have had to resist against the governmental oppression for a long time. When it comes to the Thai indigenous people's movement, it has become famous due to forest conservation incidents. Thanks to the emergence of activists and social movements focusing on environmental issues beginning in the 1980s (Hayami, 1997), many indigenous people, especially those living in mountainous areas, confronted the national policies forcing them to resettle to other places or ruining their forests and were able to resist them. For example, the Northern Farmers Network (NFN), comprised of 117 villages, resisted and persisted until a new policy was made in 1994 (Pinkaw, 2001; Prasert, 2007, Yos, 2004). This holdout process protected their livelihoods, history and rights gave a significant opportunity to imprint their new image and existence to the public.

Via this process, many indigenous movement groups in Thailand have become

grum chatipan (ethnic group) and *chon phao phun munag* (indigenous people)?' Three of the females answered that *grum chatipan* and *chon phao* were most suitable. Regarding the term of indigenous people, they thought it was for the outside (*kang nuk*: ชาวนอก) people, such as those in Chiang Mai, because they seemed to be familiar with it as a term for city people (*khon muang*: คนเมือง). Whereas only the bilingual government teacher preferred to use *grum chatipan* or *chon phao phun munag* and, as he explained, the reason was that *chon phao* is the term developed by the Thai government with a certain ideology and many NGOs and academia has advocated changing the term.

more active and powerful within global network. However, on a practical level when it comes to the local indigenous people, they increasingly feel the need to focus more their efforts on thwarting the mainstreaming and assimilation of their ethnic groups. Indigenous knowledge and identity still remains but it is readily apparent that more and more indigenous young people are losing their culture and identity, including their mother tongue language. In addition, a professor from Mahidol University who has been working for a long time on an indigenous language revitalization project admitted that “Local communities have low self-confidence and no security; there is also fear that education is being used as a means to destroy their language and religious identity” (Suwilai, 2010: 1). This fear has been influenced by the expansion of the public school system. Indigenous people have embraced state education and taken it for granted that it is a natural way to bring up their children. This tendency is very obviously revealed in my target village, too. My target school’s parents in S’gaw Karen village mostly want their children to be proficient in the Thai language and English and want them capable of successfully getting good grades in school. However, this mainstreaming situation also needs to be considered in the context of these parents’ long personal struggles in school and society.

Due to all these situations and the historical background of Thai indigenous people, “the indigenous organizations; NGOs and POs which have observed the gravity of the situation try to work on alternative education as one of the solutions” (Prasert, previous IMPECT director, email interview, 30 October 2015). This is obviously related to the embarkation of new educational approaches based on indigenous knowledge in schools.

3.2.3 National Demand for Change in Decentralization and Alternative Education

“Current Thai system doesn’t help children to learn for next century” (Anek Maneedham, director of Ton Kla School, seminar at CMU, 20 September 2015).

While catching up on the indigenous education issue in Northern Thailand, I was able to listen to diverse voices from local people and found out that the core criticisms about the Thai Education system are summarized as the following; 1) a failure of public education, 2) educational lessons geared only for tests and greater competition, 3) a shortage of life skill education, and so on. These local voices are also heard in the

process related to the Education Reform of the Thai government. To respond to diverse voices, it covers many issues but the ‘decentralization’ issue is the one paramount to indigenous people and could lead to significant changes relevant to this research. As it delineates in section 2.1, the National Education Act of 1999 and 2002 (influenced by the Royal Thai Government’s constitution in 1997) stressed for “the incremental decentralization of Thai education” (Jones, 2008: 44). The educational manoeuvre springing from this political and economic change in Thailand buttresses the pre-existing activities of several groups and organizations. For example, there is a Lanna Wisdom School in Chiang Mai which has aimed to disseminate local knowledge since 1996. In 2000, they formed a network. This network fundamentally pursues the concept of ‘community is the answer’ and tries to spread community-based development through education. It has expanded its activities and this new policy has given solid ground for this kind of locally oriented educational institute.

Due to the criticism the Bangkok centralized curriculum, contents and administrative system have received, the new policy expresses flexibility for including up to ‘30% portion of local curriculum policy’ in each school context. But it hasn’t been applied yet in all the schools. UNESCO reported that some schools have used this as an opportunity to integrate some local contents into their curriculum whereas many of the other schools are “unaware of the revised policy, or have chosen not to take advantage of this flexibility in the curriculum” (Government Gazette, 1997 cited in UNESCO, 2007: 9). This reluctance to change comes from the long-term reality that each school used to follow only the standardized curriculum and that even those teachers who have enough authority to try diverse ways in the classroom haven’t been trained in the concept.

However, most NGO staff and alternative educators recognize this fact and try to use it as an opportunity. The director of TLSDF illuminated that one of the missions of his organization is to teach children not only from materials produced in Bangkok, i.e. the central education administration. In addition, the director of FAL (who thoroughly understands the Thai education policy) stressed that there is no fixed methodology for each class, in the case of following the national curriculum. She gave the following example;

“The topic is same as ‘measuring in mathematic’ but it doesn’t fix whether it should be by ruler or other resources. In community, they sometimes have their

own tool to measure some in traditional way” (Wanna, director of FAL, interview, 24 October 2015).

It has become clear that local NGOs and educators working on education issues noticed this feature of the new policy and have made full use of it in promoting their alternative approaches to the public system.

Moreover, the decentralization and localization feature of Thai education reform is complementary to so called ‘alternative education’, the other educational perspective prevalent in Thailand today. As Jones (2008) demonstrated in his extensive study on the status of Thai alternative education, there is an active discussion about alternative education in Thai society and alternative education has impacted Thai educational reform efforts in the way of,

“helping to activate democratic process through participation in the design of education, demonstrating the alternative and holistic education model, introducing new dynamic techniques associated with learning and defining some threats from globalization as well as Thai-compatible benefit etc.”(Jones, 2008: 262).

On the frontier of this new education methodology lies the secretary of the Thai alternative education council. He pointed out that “even though, only one system dominates in Thailand, Thai policy has room to facilitate alternative education” (Chatchawan, seminar at CMU²³, 20 September 2015). According to him, the national movement to change education has given new opportunities and space to what changes can now be discussed. However, it seems more time and effort is needed when it comes to seeking the public’s understanding and for achieving real change. The general perception about alternative education is still not beyond the prejudice of before, when alternative education was seen only as relevant for out of school students, perhaps for the children of a few rich families or for those parents who refused to allow their children’s influence in the formal system and so on. A real understanding of alternative education as a pedagogical and methodological new educational approach hasn’t been

²³ A student group of Faculty of Education in CMU has held regular seminars in 2015 and the main theme is alternative education. The special seminar titled as ‘Can alternative education can be an answer?’ revealed the active debate about Thailand alternative education status on the 20th September 2015.

promulgated yet. Moreover, according to many interviews with alternative educators by Jones, the reform hasn't met their expectations because the government still requires a "test-based emphasis" (2008: 273) and fosters English education only through "franchise alternative schools" charging expensive tuition fees (2008: 272).

An analysis of IEN membership proves there is a correlation between the alternative education issue and indigenous students' education issue. IEN is an open network for membership so it tries to keep increasing its membership. The current peculiarity of IEN membership is that it doesn't include the groups working only for indigenous people but also a wide spectrum of other groups such as alternative education movement groups. This cooperation is possible because alternative education generally contends that "everybody has right to choose for education so it should consider the diversity and suitability in the context such as individual, community and ethnicity" (Chatchawan, director of Lanna Wisdom School, lecture, 20 September 2015). Thus, there is a nexus between indigenous education and alternative education. When the director of FAL gave a lecture to more than two hundred university students of the Education Faculty of Chiang Mai University in October, 2015, she categorized the students who don't have opportunity in Thai society like this;

"the students who live far from city (in rural area), the students poor in terms of economic status, the disabled students, the students who live in conflict areas and the ethnic minority students" (Wanna, lecture, 24 October 2015).

She approached the necessity of improvement of indigenous students' education from the perspective of less opportunity people who need alternatives to the present system.

Besides, NGOs promoting the new methodology for indigenous students in public school argue that their programs and projects are different from the traditional approach but they are not only for indigenous students. All students in general, they argue, could benefit from alternative approach and they try to promote this agenda through their school teachers' trainings (Kreangkrai, director of TLSDF, interview, 30 March 2015). One of the IEN key actors, working as a PCF Thailand project manager, explicated the relevance of IEN's goal and alternative education issue like this;

"IEN is part of the alternative education. Alternative Education Network has 9 subgroups for example home-schooling, religion based school, and

community based school. Even though there are different approaches, they all promote diversity, variety of education, not just Thai public education system. One teacher is for everyone. No matters you are fat or small....you have to fit to one teacher in the classroom. Free-size! (laughs) So indigenous education, it's a part of alternative education, we need diversity, we need variety to think out of box" (Suraporn, interview, 2 March 2015).

The emergence of the alternative education issue allows indigenous students' education to be discussed on a new platform and IEN thinks that it might give them more legitimacy and greater possibility to raise their voice. Up to now, there are two types of groups which simulate the alternative educational approach among the members of IEN; one case are community alternative schools (which are not accredited) like Jomaloluella School, Mowakhi Community School and Seven Fountain Sponsorship Program and the other are some of the NGOs promoting alternative educational programs designed to be implemented in public schools.

3.3 NGO as an Intermediator: Integration of Indigenous Knowledge into the Public Education

The factors analyzed above have led the Northern Thai local NGOs to collaborate with public school authorities for indigenous education improvement. Now, the question is: what kind of role are they performing and how it can be analyzed academically?

Recently, many scholars have argued that it is necessary to illuminate the role NGOs play in the academic field, especially, "in anthropological attention" (Fisher, 1997; Forbes, 1999 cited in Delcore, 2003: 61). The NGOs have helped change modern, global society and moreover, studies of the NGOs' role as an important player have gradually increased. Even though the definition of a NGO is still not fixed in the academic literature, three unique structural features pertinent to them are generally accepted; they are self-governing and private organizations, non-for profit and involve themselves mostly in development project (Brown, 2012). In terms of their task specialty, 'involving development project', Lewis and Kanji (2009) categorized their role in the development field as "implementer, catalyst, and partner". Even if this categorization does not cover all types of NGOs, it provides basic understanding of the features pursuant to NGOs' tasks. The "implementation role" provides specific services or goods to people or groups that both need and lack them, thus, it is usually called a

“service delivery role” as well. Secondly, the “catalyst role” indicates their contribution to change or in improving people’s minds and lives. This task is sometimes invisible and/or time-consuming. For example, empowerment, advocacy, group formation and policy making are activities that could fit in this category. Lastly, the “partner role” is produced in the process of a project involving multiple actors or joint activities. Recently, quite a few of such projects were comprised of diverse actors such as international agencies, governments, donors and the private sectors and so on; thus, NGOs take the role of coordinator in these partnerships.

Then what is the particular feature of NGOs focusing on educational development? It is similar overall with the more general features of NGOs I have already explicated but it is necessary now to consider the uniqueness of education. Education has long been considered under the purview of the state; it has been viewed as the state’s responsibility and should be designed by the state to foster better nation-state building and produce greater economic and social development. From this understanding, the nation-state is regarded as the major education provider. However, given education’s size, cultural, social and economic dimensions, many governments, especially in developing countries, are either unable or unwilling to be the sole supplier of education (Rose, 2007). This has affected the NGO’s role – they are now significant providers of education in many places. Historically, education provision NGOs have developed their tasks, methods of approach and issues according to social demand and situation. Table 3.1 illustrates the international trend of the education issue by decade.

Najam (2000) argued that NGOs’ present approach to education is characterized as “complementary mode” because, after the global declaration of EFA in the 1990s, both governments and NGOs have made an effort to achieve the goal together. For the last two decades, NGOs have kept offering their alternative views and methodologies to support government provide education. In terms of indigenous education and the NGO’s role in a Thai context, Kwanchewan’s study²⁴, conducted in the Northern Thailand

²⁴ This study covers Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Mae Hong Son, and Lampang provinces and 116 NGOs in 2006. Among the 116 NGOs, 31 NGOs were established by indigenous groups and 69 organizations are religion based (55 Catholic, 13 Protestant, 1 Buddhist). In addition, most of NGOs receive funding support from Europe, Canada and the U.S. (Nannaphat, 2015).

region in 2006, proves that NGOs have strongly supported indigenous children's education since the 1950s. At that time, there were 116 NGOs in this area. Those NGOs had supported indigenous children and youth through diverse ways such as scholarship and boarding, non-formal and alternative learning activities, media projects, providing shelters, helping disabled children, etc. (Nannaphat, 2015).

Table 3.1 International Trends of Education Issue by Decade

	1970s	1980s	1990s~2000s
Approach	non-formal education	formal education with alternatives	complementary
Paradigm	Universal Primary Education (UPE)	Structural Adjustment Program (SAP)	Education For All (EFA)
Main Concerns	-criticized formal schooling -increasing access to primary education	-downplayed non-formal approach as 'band aid' and second best -increasing access to primary education	-aligning between government and non-state approaches -increasing quality of primary education

Source: Rose (2007 and 2009)

As for the NGOs' role in education provision, the members of IEN tend to show similar aspects. The increasing enrollment ratio isn't in accord with a better education environment and increased opportunities for indigenous people; rather, most indigenous students have continued to struggle and have dropped out of school. Hence, some of the local NGOs have tried to forge a complementary mode within the public education system and to solve the problems that most indigenous students face. For a long time, they have fought to solve the problem caused by indigenous children's lack of citizenship but, as time passed and the nation-state education system expanded, large numbers of indigenous students are presently attending public schools.

"10 years ago, many organizations for indigenous people focused on their rights and their way of negotiation was quite aggressive but FAL wanted to focus on their educational inequality issue only and wanted to make the first example succeeding negotiation with government" (Wanna, director of FAL, interview, 16 March 2015).

"To help the indigenous students, we should change the public system. Schools need to develop their own curriculum suitable for indigenous

students” (Suraporn, PCF Thailand project manager, interview, 2 March 2015).

According to Dech Sirinam, director of ESA Chiang Mai 6 office, there are 101 primary schools in area 6 which covers three districts; Chom Thong, Mae Chaem and Galyani Vadhana and 60 % of these schools have indigenous students. Some of the schools contain mixed ethnic groups but some of them consist of only one ethnic group. In regards to the total population of highland people, Chiang Mai province has the highest population, especially the three districts abutting Inthanon Mountain; thus the indigenous student population is high and NGOs working for indigenous education issues in Chiang Mai are naturally concerned for the students in these schools.

Table 3.2 Estimated High Land population in Thailand

Provinces	Village	Household	Population
Chiang Mai	571 (27.16)	58,245 (25.22%)	244,291 (25.32%)
Chiang Rai	290 (13.80%)	28,160 (12.19%)	130,054 (13.48%)
Mae Hong Son	322 (15.32%)	25,670 (11.11%)	109,119 (11.31%)
Others	919 (43.72%)	118,921 (51.48%)	481,452 (49.89%)
Total	2,102 (100%)	230,996 (100%)	964,916 (100%)

Source: Highland Research and Development Institute (2007)

To help indigenous students in the schools, NGOs need to suggest new programs or new methodologies to school authorities and it has become more feasible since the Education Reform because there is more latitude given to each school and teacher. As a result, the three key local NGOs in IEN have been carrying out their own specific programs in public schools and the features of each organization are summarized as below in Table 3.3. These three local NGOs’ main programs are similar in terms of their resources, i.e. indigenous knowledge. The IK includes mother tongue language, music, poetry, food and culture, art and craft, natural resource management, traditional healing and their own ethnic history. All of them value indigenous knowledge as an element to improve indigenous students’ educational quality and school life.

Table 3.3 Categorization of Three Local NGOs' Application of Indigenous Knowledge

	IMPECT	TLSDK	FAL
Major Educational Subjects	Local wisdom	Life Skills-Based Quality Education Enhancement(LSQE)	Mother Tongue Based-Multi Lingual Education (MTB-MLE)
Contents	mother language , weave, traditional food, poem etc.	local cultural and environmental context of the individual school based theme; “Know your Rights, Know your Roots, Know your World”	Indigenous language , songs, stories, drawings
Approach	Topic and approach decided in each local context by local experts	Developed lesson plan and contents through Participatory Action Research (PAR) about community by teachers	-Developed lesson plan and materials based on community background by local teachers and villagers -Co-teaching with Thai teachers and local teachers (or 1 bilingual teachers)
Implementation	1~2 times per week as a subject	1~2 classes with trained teachers, running the whole lesson	Kindergarten level~ Grade 3 rd , every class based on ML Grade 4 th ~6 th : Mother tongue as a subject

Number of School	7 schools ²⁵ in Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai	12 schools ²⁶ in Mae Hong Son	20 schools in 4 provinces
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They take into account the important relationship between indigenous knowledge and indigenous students' education, in terms of adapting to a new environment and also preserving their identities and community life skills. However, the Thai public education system has absolutely been tied to a Western education framework as to its pedagogies, units, curriculum, subjects etc. The actual application and assimilation of indigenous knowledge into the public education system, therefore, has not been easy. The implementation of the program requires cooperation between schools and communities and, above all else, each community's need to reconsider its priorities and freely seek their own indigenous knowledge. For example, as the director of FAL gave an example, life skilled-based education demands to come from the community.

“For example, if a national disaster which happens every year occurs, how communities and students can recover it should be taught in class. You can get it from own community to survive and to solve the problem in traditional, local way” (Wanna, director of FAL, interview, 24 October 2015).

This education methodology based on indigenous knowledge is contested against the globalized and scientific education system, but paradoxically, these NGOs obtain many of their program's contents from emerging international knowledge. FAL initiated the MTB-MLE program after it was promoted by NESCO and after having been trained in it by SIL. TLSKD's life skill-based educational program needs Participatory Action Research (PAR) in advance and this approach is a part of many international NGOs' methodologies. Lastly, IMPECT has been co-working with the indigenous community and relying on their community's leadership and skill but gained their strong rationale

²⁵ The seven schools' name are; Jao Po U Pa Tam School, Ban Pa Pong School, Ban Pae School, Huai Chom Phu School, Khui Saen Jai School, Ban Pang Kha School, Ban Mae Rae School.

²⁶ The 12 schools are all in Pangmapah district of Maehongson and the names are; Nong Pha Jam school, Pang Mapha school, Baan Huay Hang School, Baan Ja-Boe school, Mae Lana school, Baan Kued Sam Sib school, Muang Pam school, Huay Hung school, Pha Mon school, Nam Hu Pha Sue school, Baan Pang Bon school and Baan Tung Luang school. Their ethnicity is Shan, Pa'o, Lisu, Red and Black Lahu, Hmong, and Karen.

for this behavior from the international indigenous movement. Therefore, the local NGOs noticed the new issues and methodologies through the connection with international movements or academia and contextualized them to Thailand, fitting the local community situation.

The other important fact is that NGOs, the key actor implementing these new programs, gain the trust of the local people.

“They are working with their own heart and willingness. They want to improve ethnic minority students’ education really. I think it might be they are also ethnic minority people by themselves” (principal of Khun Tae School, interview, 23 September 2015).

“NGO understand the specific (school) context rather than the government’s linear way. Government education cannot practice in specific context but FAL understands and can implement better” (Aek, bilingual government teacher of Khun Tae School, interview, 13 September 2015).

This confidence from local people buttresses the activity of NGOs and helps them provide aid complementary to public education. It has cognate aspects demonstrated by Delcore’s study (2003) that a NGO plays a central role by engaging at the “complex intersection of transnational flows of people, ideas and resource” and “locally contested meanings and interests” (Delcore, 2003: 62-63). To sum up, the local NGOs in Northern Thailand working for indigenous education improvement fulfill a typical complementary role as education providers and are achieving their mission. They actively seek and learn new information available on the international level and find out solutions applicable to local contexts; thus, they are intermediating among the diverse actors.

3.4 Summary

Recently, some of the local NGOs working for indigenous people’s education attempted to integrate indigenous knowledge into the public education system with alternative methodologies. This situation has led to new demands for changing public education to be more suitable and helpful for indigenous students’ learning. These new demands were coincident with the increasing number of indigenous students in the system. These NGOs not only promote specific programs utilizing indigenous knowledge but also make policies and engage in social advocacy for sustainable support.

These NGOs and indigenous groups established a network in 2013 under the name of IEN. It is difficult to examine IEN categorically because it is fledgling network but their active cooperation and some of their activities during the 2015 school year have provided an important lens through which one can view the indigenous people's movement.

There are several international and/or national factors driving this new challenge. Internationally, the World Declaration of EFA has been accepted as a key goal for the education field and Thailand has tried to achieve this goal, too. The Thai government has taken some actions to follow this global issue and, at the same time, the international active indigenous people's movement's acceptance of UNDRIP has given a certain rationale to many indigenous movement groups in Thailand as well. There are national factors which have influenced Thai society. The most remarkable national factor was Thai Education Reform since 1997. It emphasized the decentralization policy that initiated the operation of local curriculums and the establishment of regional offices for each area's education. This decentralized education policy has given new room to discuss 'local curriculum' as an interchangeable one with indigenous knowledge education and to implement new approaches in each public school. Moreover, the alternative education sector has been expanding and increasing its demands in response to a public challenge. From these social factors, Thai NGOs working for indigenous education improvement have made use of this situation to strengthen their goals and to promote their new approaches.

This advent of local NGOs and a network for indigenous people's education has similar aspects with Rose (2007; 2009) and Najam's (2000) findings, in that education provision NGOs presently tend to take a complementary role to the government education system. These local NGOs under IEN also try to propose alternative ways and to cooperate with school authorities. What they suggest to schools which contain indigenous students are new education methodologies based on indigenous knowledge that can help indigenous students adapt to school life and improve their learning. Because those methodologies don't deal what is far from indigenous students' family and community life. Furthermore, NGOs correspond to different actors in contingent social and political contexts; they pay attention to globalization debates that provide

both important issues and solutions and also produce new information and methodologies (Lewis and Kanji, 2009) applicable to these Northern Thai local NGOs' features. Therefore, I would like to call this feature that 'NGO's role as an intermediary'.

In light of all of the above, the intermediating action of Northern Thai NGOs can be interpreted as an effort to construct a new knowledge space of indigenous knowledge based education, "a third space" (Anan, 2007: 6) that exists where the indigenous knowledge, scientific and universal knowledge, alternative education and public compulsory education systems intersect in Thai society. Starting in the next chapter, I will explore how a NGO develops procedure, strategy and know-how in order to construct this new knowledge space using my target NGO and school as an example.