

School Choices in Thailand Basic Education: International Parents' Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

This academic article aims to provide an overview of school choices in Thailand with different programs the schools offer. International parents moving to Thailand can choose from public, private, demonstrational schools, and alternative schools. The article introduces bilingual programs and their benefits in Thailand. Parents making decision on school choices could apply various methods. The paper will discuss briefly two common known decision making theories: rational choice theory and naturalistic decision making theory. Under the classic rational choice theory, parents' school choice would maximize their value; however, naturalistic decision-making theory focuses on the attributes of parents' previous experience or a decision according to the available situation. There are various determinants that influence parents when making school choice decision. The top factors that most parents consider include academic performance, school safety, quality of teachers, and school reputation. This article will cover several factors that parents across the globe have in common when it comes to school choice and lastly, end with recommendations for Thai educational school choices for international parents.

KEYWORDS: Bilingual Program, English Program, international parents, private school, school choice

Introduction

Most international parents in Thailand select a school for their children based on two choices; one is international schools and

another rising trend is bilingual Thai schools that offer English Programs. The main reason for enrolling in Thai English Program schools

is cultural integration and the local networks that the children obtain in Thai society.

In Western countries, where the school choice system is not a popular movement because public schools are available according to household registration, and more so, private schools are among the minority choices among families due to the financial concerns. However, in Bangkok, most Thai parents from the middle to high socio-economic status will practice school choice options for their children due to the lack of confidence in the public-school sector and the education quality it delivers. Therefore many of them opt for alternatives. If Thai parents have such a mindset about Thailand's education system, it is even more so for international parents. With Bangkok's rising number of international schools, one would automatically think it would be an optimal choice for international parents to enroll their children in an international school. However, parents living in Thailand have other factors to consider when choosing the best suitable school choice for their children.

According to the Thailand Migration Report, the number of foreigners coming to Thailand is steadily increasing. In 2014, the total number of foreigners was 3,681,245, and by the end of the year 2018, the number rose further to 4,898,461. (Huguet, 2014; Harkins, 2019). One significant contribution for this increment was the agreement of The Association of Southeast Asian Nations 12th (ASEAN) summit in 2007, where leaders of ten nations (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam) gather together to change their economies, politics, law, society, and culture policies for the more significant benefits and collaboration of one ASEAN Community. (Dunseith, 2018). Driven by the importance of economics' international trades, Thailand's government sets goals to establish the nation as a leading

ASEAN economic zone and wants to convert Thailand as the ASEAN Community's central hub. One crucial aspect of achieving this goal is to provide a substantial educational reform that ties politicians and stakeholders in working together toward supporting students to reach their full potential. This would allow Thailand to partake in a healthy human capital base to accomplish broad social and economic growth. (OECD/UNESCO, 2016).

Globalization puts pressure in the world to intensify nations' consciousness to come together in both economic and political terms in order to utilize the maximum benefits of the nation, including the cultural aspects. (Thupateme & Perrodin, 2018). Diversity of people is the product of the globalization process, which results in bringing assorted backgrounds of people into a nation. The diverse exchange of people enriches society, improves the educational organizations, and also influences individuals. (Milem, 1998).

The Thailand National Education Act of 1999 highlights the importance of Thai students' English competence development for a lifelong learning path in the 21st-century world. (Laksanasut, 2019). With this education reform, schools started implementing bilingual education programs offering subjects taught in Thai and English. These bilingual education programs offer international families an alternative school choice besides the international schools in Thailand.

This paper provides an overview of Thailand's education system with a closer understanding of bilingual programs offered in schools, especially the English Program (EP). Public Thai schools will be omitted from this paper with the underlying rationale assumption that international families have a slightly higher socio-economic status to choose from private Thai schools or international schools.

Thailand Education Overview

The Ministry of Education (MOE) is the main government agency responsible for overseeing education provision at all levels and types in Thailand, including basic to higher education and from formal to informal education across the nation. The Thai education system aims to build and support practical and academic skills and social, moral competencies with democratic values to shape an authentic national identity. (OECD/UNESCO, 2016). Thailand has three types of education: formal, non-formal, and informal, aiming to provide basic skills to ensure lifelong learning abilities. Non-formal and informal types are specifically designed for disadvantaged children and adults in rural areas or minority communities. Since 1999 education reform, formal education has been divided into basic and higher education. The compulsory education starts at the age of six to fifteen, which consists of basic education of primary (grade 1-6), lower secondary (grade 7-9), and upper secondary (grade 10-12). There are two parallel tracks to choose from once basic education is completed: academic education and vocational education. Vocational education is provided in three tiers: upper secondary, lower vocational certificates, higher vocational certificates, and the tertiary vocational education leads to a bachelor's degree. Higher education provides diplomas or degree levels, ranging from bachelor to doctoral degrees. (Ministry of Education, 2017).

Basic Education Options in Thailand

Despite continuous efforts from the Ministry of Education to improve education quality in Thailand, issues such as the school's environment, facilities, and quality of teachers are still on-going challenges presented among parents resulting in private sector establishment of various options to capture the rising demand of selective parents. There are five basic education options in Thailand, which will be explained furtherer.

Public Schools

Public schools are funded and operated by the government through the Ministry of Education, which follows core subjects and standard curriculum. The eight-core learning subjects include Thai language, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Religion and Culture, Arts, Occupation and Technology, and lastly, Foreign Languages. The basic standard curriculum prescribes a total of 67 standards of these eight learning areas. Education in public schools is free of charge from pre-primary to grade 9. The free education includes only uniforms, textbooks, equipment, learning activity charges, and the tuition fee of the student. Any other additional expenses beside aboved mentioned will not be covered by the government. (Ministry of Education, Thailand, 2008).

Private Schools

A school funded by private sectors using both standard curricula by government and alternative international curriculum under the supervision of the Private Education Commission of the Ministry of Education. Private schools under the Thai curriculum charge, on average 30,000 Baht per year compared to

bilingual programs that charge anywhere from 50,000 Baht to 150,000 Baht per year in Bangkok. (Kerdchuen, 2015; Shewaraksakul, 2016).

Demonstration (Satit) Schools

Demonstration schools are laboratory schools for education research and development and training programs by the universities. The majority of demonstration schools are considered public schools and established by public universities. Because they are considered laboratory schools, these schools have a larger degree of flexibility in operational and educational freedom than regular public schools, which result in higher academic performances and options of offering variety extra-curricular activities. (Shewaraksakul, 2016).

International Schools

According to the International Schools Association of Thailand (2014), international schools fall into four main types of the curriculum; American, British, International Baccalaureate, and other national curricula including Australian, Canadian, French, German, Japanese, Indian, Singaporean, etc. A foreign language is used both as the medium of teaching and learning process. Permitted by the Ministry of Education Thailand, students enrolled in international schools have no restrictions or limitations on nationality, religion, or government regime as long as they are not against the morality and stability of Thailand. International schools have much more flexibility and freedom besides school reputation and academic performance. The international school tuition ranges from 150,000 to 869,000 Baht per year. (Kerdchuen, 2015).

Alternative Schools

Alternative schools are officially similar to mainstream schools, providing education ranging from primary to tertiary education under MOE's Basic Core Curriculum. However, these schools differ from mainstream schools in philosophies, innovative teaching approaches, and school learning environments. These types of schools are influenced by educational philosophies such as Montessori, Summerhill, or applied Buddhism. Despite various perspectives, their fundamental concept is viewing humanity as heterogeneous by nature, and therefore education will be diversified and more focus on learner-oriented. (Fry, 2016; Tunmuntong, 2012). Most alternative schools conduct an outdoor learning environment emphasizing team collaborations to learn about subject matters. Another important aspect of an alternative school that parents prefer is the student to teacher ratio is relatively small compared to the mainstream schools. As a result, students receive more attention from the teacher. Tunmuntong (2012) stated an interesting correlation of sampled students from alternative schools on average received higher Ordinary National Education Test (O-NET) scores than those in mainstream schools.

The earliest form of alternative education in Thailand was homeschooling, and only in recent years it has grown to a popular school option. Homeschooling is allowed in Thailand under the regulation of the right to obtain basic education by the family; however, families must apply to the Education Service Area Office. Students are assessed and reported annually and required to pass assessments proctored by the Ministry of Education's sub-departments. Normally, families that adopt homeschooling alternatives have religious considerations, children's needs

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that could not be met in mainstream schools; or special needs children. (Ministry of Education, Thailand, 2008). In southern Thailand, there are numerous home schools in the Muslim-majority community due to the religious routine of praying five times a day; it would be more flexible under home schools than mainstream schools. Besides religious reasons or special needs children, homeschooling likewise can also serve extremely gifted children who may be demotivated in mainstream schools due to the slow pace of learning.

Bilingual Education

In a general understanding, bilingual education involves teaching academic content in two languages, both in native and secondary language with a various number of hours for each language. The main types of bilingual programs fall under one of these categories: (Hati, 2012).

a. Transitional or the assimilation model: This model aims to help minority language students transition to mainstream classrooms as quickly as possible so that only the main language remains.

b. Pluralistic model: Under this model, the minority language is not a problem but a societal attitude viewpoint. Therefore minority language has a value of its own and is equally important as the majority language.

c. Immersion model: The immersion model means most language students receive all or part of the schooling through another language medium of instruction. This approach assumes that a new medium of instruction is learned in a similar way to the majority language. The new language is best understood in a stimulating context that enhances the child to natural language forms. It is the goal to

teach students to develop bi-literate and bilingual individuals. Wager (2007) mentioned that bilingual education could deliver when carried out with proper financial backing that allows adequately trained staff and well-designed programs. It ultimately creates more positive bilingualism attitude on students' academic achievement and develops a global society of various cultures and languages. This type of model is used in many schools in Thailand.

Bilingual Education in Thailand

There various types of immersion approach to bilingual education in Thailand. Based on Laksanast (2019), the first bilingual education program implemented in 1955 on one of the affiliated school in Sarasas School. Sarasas Ektra School is one of Thailand's first and biggest private bilingual school. Ektra is one of 45 schools in the Sarasas Affiliated Schools since May 1995. The is the truly first fully bilingual (Thai-English) school in Thailand to be granted the license by the Private Education Commission Board Office, Ministry of Education.

Laksanast (2019) stated the three types of bilingual programs the school implemented; (a) mini bilingual program; (b) bilingual program; and (c) international Education program.

a. Mini Bilingual Program: The program aims to develop students' language ability in both Thai and English at the basic level while obtaining contents in every subject in a 20:80 ratio. It means only 20 percent of the curriculum is instructed in English, which includes Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Health Education, and Foundation of English focusing on grammar. All textbooks used for English classes are

translated from national standard Thai textbooks by the Foreign Department of the school. English teachers are qualified non-native speakers, mostly Filipinos.

b. Bilingual Program (BP) (also refer as English Program (EP) in many schools): This program tries to develop students' language proficiency both in Thai and English at a higher level, enabling students to obtain schooling content of 50:50 ratio. This means 50 percent of the curriculum will be in Thai, and another 50 percent instructed in English. The English courses comprise of Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Moral, Health Education, Foundation of English, and Phonics. Native English speakers instruct subjects that are in English.

c. International Education Program (IEP): This program's ratio is 90:10, which means 90 percent of the curriculum is instructed in English except for the Thai language subject. The textbooks used in IEP are all international-standard taught by qualified native English speakers. This program is somewhat similar to an international school. If one is enrolled as a Thai student, the child must learn a certain amount of Thai language to pass the Thai state exam for compulsory primary education level.

In conclusion, most Thai schools that offer English as a medium of instruction follow any of the above mentioned three types of models. One of the major critics of the Thai bilingual program is the lack of qualified Thai bilingual teachers due to a lack of professional training or improvement. If successfully implemented the bilingual program, the outcomes will outweigh the efforts put in. Lopez (2013) stated that the value and benefits of bilingualism, future benefits and opportunities; and the importance of maintaining bilingual, bi-

literate, and bicultural competencies salient out from her research finding. If a bilingual program is implemented in a country collectively and supportively, the student outcome results in greater metacognitive ability and greater mental flexibility. Bilingual programs provide children with more opportunities, cognitive benefits, and an increased ability to communicate. (Roberts, 1995). With the implementation of EP, Thailand would obtain quality human capital in achieving the ultimate goal of becoming an attractive economic hub among the ASEAN community.

Decision-Making Theories

Most of the decision theories are normative or prescriptive. Normative in that it assumes decision-makers being fully informed with gathered information will choose the maximum value option in total accuracy and entirely rational. The prescriptive approach understands how people should decide or, in simpler words, called decision analysis, aiming to find tools or methodologies to make better decisions.

Decision-making theories are concerned with one's choice, and it is positively linked with psychological behavior aspects. However, it is essential to first distinguish between "judgment" and "decision-making." Often, both terms are equivalent because decision-makers should choose an alternative if and only if it is more preferred than another. Lau (2003) summarized judgment as a single-dimensional fact or perception of a particular thing or belief, such as how heavy or light of an object. Thus, a decision involves choosing between two or more alternatives, such as whether to take drugs or who to marry. A choice implies a commitment to the selected option, yet

judgment suggests the judged entity and the reasons to justify the choice.

Any decision involves a choice, and an option requires at least two alternatives to choose from. Various decision-making theories are found in the literature; however, in this paper, only on the rational choice and naturalistic decision-making theory will be discussed.

Rational Choice Theory

Rational choice theory is interchangeable with economists called a market theory or economic theory. Lau (2003) mentioned that a rational choice is based on relatively fixed preference and follows a logical consequence, by which current actions are anticipated with future outcomes. What they do is that after processing all gathered information and evaluated alternatives, decision-makers are assumed to choose an option that maximizes their value. By applying rational choice theory, decision-makers are motivated to maximize their interests. Still, the theory omits what those interests are because interests included a high degree of personal preferences and value.

In contrast to the classical rational choice theory, behavior aspects were considered to study and understand how people make decisions. However, in the real world, it is relatively impossible to acquire all alternatives to evaluate from. People generally settle for options that are "good enough" rather than a value-maximizing choice. This good enough or satisfying view is known as bounded rationality, which was first coined by Herbert Simon in 1947. (Lau, 2003; Turpin & Marais, 2004).

According to Turpin and Marais (2004) quoted that "rational human behavior is shaped by scissors whose two

blades are the structure of task environments and the computational capabilities of the actor." The scissors can cut problems into smaller pieces that are more feasible to handle. The actions of searching and satisfying characterize bounded rationality; alternatives are searched and evaluated separately. If an option satisfies specific criteria, then the search is terminated, and the choice will be made. Several authors have posited that bounded rationality is the same as the classical rational choice theory. (Turpin & Marais, 2004).

Naturalistic Decision-making Theory

Naturalistic decision-making is a psychological prescriptive technique model in understanding how people perform complex cognitive decisions under natural context or real-world situations. The real-world problem includes uncertainty, limited time, unstable conditions, risks, constraints, and even experiences. The reason for developing this model was because researchers found out that people did not comply with the principles of optimal performance under rationality theory. What researchers did to understand more about this method of decision-making were to conduct field research, studying subjects in the natural surrounding to find out how people were able to make tough decisions under difficult conditions like limited time, uncertainty, and high-risk environment. Klein (2008) mentioned that there were more than nine models developed for this naturalistic decision-making theory, and his model called the recognition primed decision model, was one of them.

Even though researchers developed various models to analyze how people make decisions under certain

circumstances, they all reached a similar conclusion. It illustrated that people were using prior experiences to categorize situations rapidly. People relied on certain schema or filters to make judgments. Oliveira (2007) stated that schemata are used to organize interpretation of the environment, and once formed, there will be resistance to change.

Recognition Primed Decision model (RPD) focuses on the decision-makers' ability to acknowledge a situation similar to previous experience. Therefore decision-makers can mentally conceptualize the action implemented using these important cues before making a final decision. All these mental visual frames could happen in a few seconds. In short, Klein (2008) argues one of the key factors leading to good decision making is the number of rich experiences. RPD model supports the positive correlation of experiences and a person's ability to recognize a situation. It is a mixture of intuition and analysis of the decision-making strategy. An intuition part of the strategy is risky because it relies on pure instinct; yet, a full analytical part strategy is time-consuming.

Commonly, people make daily-life choices under naturalistic decision-making theories such as buying groceries or driving toward a destination. Such decisions are made in a relatively short period and based on prior experiences.

Theories in Practices

The rational choice theory being a normative approach to find alternatives to make the value-maximizing option, and yet, naturalistic decision-making theory serves as prescriptive in understanding how parents make a decision based on the external environment and their experiences. A combination of a two

theory aspect creates a well-thought framework for parents to apply on making school choices for their children. Parents automatically filter and interpret their surrounding environments during the process of collecting and gathering school information. In other words, some sort of bias could be created before applying the true value of rational choice theory.

School choice by applying rational choice theory, assumes that all parents are rational decision-makers when the time comes to choose the best suitable school for their children. It is a difficult decision-making process as parents need to comprehend all gathered information and match it to their children's needs. Parents would navigate through the school market in similar ways as they would navigate other complicated and expensive products such as houses or automobiles. (Erickson, 2017).

Some critics disagree with the idea of parents applying rational school choice theory. Some parents lack interest in finding the best schools for their children, especially low-income parents who would have a disadvantage in gathering information and limiting resources. School choice contributes to widening the gap between middle-low income and middle-high income parents. According to Erickson (2017), meta-analysis findings, besides teacher quality, safety reasons, academic performances that parents look for, class sizes, location conveniences, and extra-curricular activities, also influence parents' choice.

Thailand's school choices are applied based on market theory meaning parents can choose whichever schools suit their children instead of centralized governed by location. In Thailand, the private or demonstration schools are more flexible in their organizational structure

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and are less bureaucratic compared to the directed overlooked public schools from the Ministry of Education. Based on school choice theory, the demands of parents become the driving force for schools to push forth constant improvements in both teachers' quality or school facilities. More so, as the birth rate of children per family has dropped, with fewer child, parents could provide a better quality upbringing for the children. If schooling is supplied in a competitive market, parents would expect to see greater diversity in size, location, curriculum, after-school extra-activities that meet the interests of parents and the students. A free market for schools creates competition to attract demands from parents. Parents assumingly choose alternatives that they believe would maximize the utility of their preferences. Coleman (1990) stated that from a sociological perspective, rational choice theory focused on social systems' behavior, implying a two-way communication between the social system and individual levels of behavior. Rational choice theory suggests that individuals act out of self-interest; they act only in terms of their personal preferences and are rational in their methodical order of choices from most to least desired.

Researchers found out that when parents applied rational choice theory to school choices, three factors of the parental decision-making process emerge: information, available choices, and a cost-benefit analysis of the best option. (Berends et al., 2020). This decision-making process empowers parents to provide the best suitable education for their children. Typically, parents' main concern when choosing a school is to look at academic quality or performance, but safety, location, religion, and socio-

economic composition of the school are also important factors that influence parents' decisions. In the next section of the paper, several major factors that influence parents' school choice decision will be discussed.

School choice decision is a very complex yet hearty decision for every parent. It involves a lot of information needed to process and a large responsibility because education affects the children's future outcome. Parents have all incentives to invest in their children as much as for the reason to invest in any other expensive durable goods, as mentioned earlier. In many Asian parents' mindset, a well-educated child with good family bonding is more likely to become financially independent and a happier adult; and, therefore, is more likely to provide aid and comfort in parents' old age and produce healthy grandchildren. (Bast & Walberg, 2004).

Existing school choice studies were based on the rational choice theory that parents weigh all alternatives to find the maximum value of their choice. However, some studies illustrated parental background affecting decision making when it comes to school choices. (Bulman, 2004 & Dustman, 2003)

Under the naturalistic decision-making theory of the RPD model, it refers to the schema of parents' prior experiences or knowledge of the type of schools. It could be their own experiences, close family members' encounters, and even the current situations. Biases are formed when schemata have been developed and therefore influence how parents make the school choice.

Factors Influence Parents' School Choice Decision

Based on the eight research studies ranging from 2000 to 2019 across the globe, (Hsieh, 2000; Bosetti, 2004; Shewaraksakul, 2006; Goh, 2009; Dahoro & Ya, 2011; Dixon & Humble, 2017; Merga & Sofamo, 2020) there are very similar patterns of what factors influence the parent's decision making of a school choice. The top factors that influence parents' decisions on school choice are academic performance, school safety, teachers' quality, classroom size, location, religious issues, school reputation, and tuition.

Among all influential decisions of school choice factors of these article findings, students' academic performance or academic quality is shown to be the top factor because of parents' attitude toward the idea that better academic achievement would provide better opportunities for children to enter the career workforce with higher income. Hsieh (2000) reported a relationship between parental school choice and children's academic achievement. Many families make efforts to select a private school choice for their children to show a positive correlation to a higher level of academic performance. However, a case study finding from Greene et al. (1999) showed counter-evidence that students' academic performances in both private and public schools measured similar outcomes, hence no significant differences in the performances.

School safety weighs a significant value in selecting a school because of the parents' natural love towards children. It is crucial to provide children a safe and healthy learning environment. Not only school providing a safe environment, but also include aspects of children being looked after. Dixon and Humble (2017) reveal parents consider children being safe

and well looked after has a link to smaller class size for teachers to pay more attention to their children. However, in Dahoro & Ya (2011) research paper, the term school safety is related with a more severe social issue linked with child abduction. Therefore, among parents in Malaysia, the ultimate fear was the fear of losing their children. In general, school safety features often include CCTV on campus and employing security guards to avoid strangers on campus. Private schools tend to have better security systems than public schools resulting in an influential factor in school choice.

The quality of the teacher and the class size are worth noting as they relate to the academic performance criteria that parents consider. Parents believe with the better quality of teacher and smaller classroom size; their children will receive better teachers' attentive and therefore results better academic performances. Teachers can pay more attention to the child individually in both physical and mental aspects. In some countries, the allocation of teacher positions in primary and tertiary education for public schools is centralized by the government. With this system, the school would not recruit teachers based on the school's criteria. On the contrary, private schools can exercise this flexibility in recruiting better quality teachers inline with the school's philosophy.

Location, religious values, overall school reputation, and tuition of the school come in the second tier of criteria that parents consider. Shewaraksakul (2016) summarized Thai parents into three groups; the first group is parents that focus on teacher's quality; the second group is academically-oriented parents. The third group is the convenience seeker type of parents. Teacher's quality and academic-

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oriented parent group tell us that they are willing to trade-off with location and tuition for the best outcome for their children. In contrast to the convenience seeker group of parents who take all factors into consideration for schools that are at closer proximity to the home location.

With all the above factors that influence parents' decision, school selection is an essential aspect of parental engagement with their children's educational decision path. These studies' findings could only represent what majority studies on parents' consideration factors they have when they survey for school information; however, results of school choices could not be generalizable because school options vary by countries. Ultimately, all consideration factors are related to individual families' demographic, socioeconomics levels, experiences, and expectations in order to make the best suitable school choice for their children.

Conclusion

The search for the best school, using either rational choice or naturalistic decision-making theories, remains a big decision for parents because education implies not only acquiring basic knowledge and skills, yet also influences a child's future growth or orientation path into the workforce. It is essential to partake the personality of the child in consideration when making the suitable school choice. Every good school has laid-back or diligent, smart students, and rather than focusing on the best school, parents shall understand the difference between best and suitable school for the child.

Second point to mention is about the English program offered in Thailand.

While reading through articles about Thai bilingual programs, studies show many challenges that the program still faces. With a lack of skilled English trained teachers and scoring the lowest English grades among neighboring countries, Thailand's education still has a big room for improvement. However, such educational reform takes time and experiences from both the schools and educational government agencies to work closely together to build up successful programs. Ironically, top-tier international schools in Asia are located in Thailand, and maybe the Ministry of Education can learn from these schools as models to improve their strategy of fine-tuning a better English Program system.

Recommendations

From the gathered data and findings, the conclusion derives in selecting the best suitable school for the children is indeed a complex decision-making process that is not simple for every parent. All parents want to place their children in a safe school environment that provides an excellent curriculum to excel in children's academic performances. Parents are willing to sacrifice time and money to place a smooth track for their children's future development. This reasoning leads to eventually providing children better future job prospects.

Coming from an international parents' perspective, the paper provides recommendations of different school choices in Thailand.

Public Schools

Thai public school is not an ideal option due to the lower academic quality, lack of English taught in the core curriculums, inadequate school facilities,

lower social networking circle, and safety concerns. A research study from Shewaraksakul (2016) even stated that among middle-income Thai parents themselves will not prefer public schools for basic education, but rather focus on private or demonstration schools.

Private and demonstration schools

As mentioned earlier, there are Thai program and English programs offered in both these two types of schools. Both private and demonstration schools are somewhat similar because they share the same curriculum and structure except the management structure differences. Under these school options, solely Thai program option is also less likely to be considered since international parents having businesses and living in Thailand emphasize on the Thai language and society integration as prime concerns. On the other hand, the English program offered in private or demonstration schools is given a suitable choice to best optimize their value. Their children will be bilingual in the future, positive bi-cultural attitude, and school facilities and safety issues outperform public schools.

Giving the globalization that we are living in currently, the English language is still considering the international business language use in all industries. English Program that schools offer in Thailand fits well to develop students with bi-literate in both Thai and English. Thai culture and language must be kept to keep the authenticity of oneself and yet to master additional English as a business language that is as strong and solid as first-language will benefit students in future careers. A successful and complete English Program

will develop and maintain children's self-esteem and take pride in both cultures.

The networks in Thai private and demonstration schools are an added advantage for international families permanently staying in Thailand. Their children could easily fit and blend into Thai society yet also be able to keep their cultural ethnicity.

International schools

International school choice has always been the top choice for international families, especially those who do not have an extended tenure plan in Thailand. Parents could easily communicate and interact more with the school in acquiring information during the school years. Unlike Thai schools, international parents might face a language barrier in communicating with the school, especially parents that are unfamiliar with the Thai school system or the enrollment process. It is evident that international school indeed has the most current technologies, facilities, curriculums, better teachers' quality, and varieties of after-school activities. Top tier international schools place a high emphasis on aiming to send their students to top universities across the world. However, all these advantages come with high tuition pay off. Another issue to mention is the networking that parents consider when placing children into an international school, hoping that their children would be friends with similar socio-economic level backgrounds. Although all aspects of the children's education seem well under international school, the Thai language has been a weak point; therefore, extra tutoring is often required for teaching the Thai language and also the Thai moral standards and cultural ethnicity could vanish from the children that has authentic Western

educational background. Thus, however, according to MOE's requirements, if the child is of Thai nationality, he or she must pass the primary Thai educational level exam. Consequently, a non-Thai child living in Thailand who does not learn Thai could face society integration deficit. As an international parent, it might be a concern to close such a gap because they themselves are not very familiar with Thai social norms and cultural aspects and therefore by sending their children to learn Thai could benefit the family in the future.

Alternative schools

International families with some degree of religious reasons or parent that have a keen preference for sharing the same holistic education value as alternative schools offer or if their children can shine in a student-centered curriculum and do not wish to follow the mainstream school curriculum, then alternative school is an option for them. Once again, school choice decision also depends on the children's personality and interest. Homeschooling is an option for international families that requires substantial parents' involvement in their own children's education, in the sense that they could choose following their own nation's curriculum and thus, if transferred back to the home country, children would be able to adjust quickly into the home country's educational system. However, the drawback is the social skills that are developed in schools.

Lastly, some parents are also concern about being in the English program is sort of on a half-way of both Thai and English path. It means children in the English program obtain lower Thai language level as compared to a full 100% Thai program and lower English level as compared to International school students.

This results in children being non-competitive in both the languages of Thai or English. Thus, such concern leads to doubtful worries to parents. Still, education in the end result depends heavily on individual children, such as their attitude toward school, their motivation, their engagement in school activities or class chores, and also adaptiveness of the child. Every parent knows their children more than teachers or others. Since education is a life-long learning process, parents shall also take a child's development over time to choose a suitable school choice. Children change over time; different stages might need additional education strategy. There is no single best solution for all problems.

Once again, for international families who live in Thailand permanently, English Program could be an advisable alternative school choice for their children. Children obtain Thai and English language proficiency with academic achievements, yet parallelly gain positive cross-cultural attitudes and local social networks.

With these skills developed in a sound education environment, children will have better job prospects waiting for them in the future, yet integrate into Thai society with ease. Moreover, another added advantage for international families' children is their own ethnic culture and language, which results in the multiculturalism of their children.

In summary, the Thai government placed an important vision of implementing the English Program in the society that focuses on the current Thai parents' expectations for their children and future employers. In the long-run, the bilingual education system can yield more well-trained human capital for the nation's economic growth. With this English

Program, many children will learn English through subject contents in both languages without losing the Thai language and cultural aspect. Parents no longer need to send their children abroad for English.

Students being biliterate and obtain bicultural competencies will greatly enhance and advance the placement in the ASEAN community.

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