



Institute of International Education
Department of Education

A Comparative Study Between Cambodia and Thailand
On Basic Education Policies Toward Education For All (EFA)

Assignment for the course:
International and Comparative Education

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(October 2014)

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List of Abbreviation

ADB:	Asian Development Bank
EFA:	Education for All
ESP:	Education strategic plan
ESSP:	Education Sector Support Program
MDG:	Millennium Development Goals
MoE:	Ministry of Education
MoEYS:	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
NEA:	Thailand's National Education Accounts
NSDP:	National Strategic Development Plan
ODI:	Overseas Development Institute
OECD:	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNICEF:	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID:	United States Agency for International Development.

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1. Introduction and Background

There are still 57 million children out of school in many countries in 2011 so the concept of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education for All (EFA) framework is not likely achieved and all goals remained far behind the target in 2015. According to UNESCO report, Sub-Saharan Africa regions failed 22% of the primary school age population while Asian regions experienced the significant decline of dropout number in Goal 2: Universal Primary School (UNESCO, 2014). Some countries in Southeast Asian regions like Cambodia and Thailand are able to reduce the out-of-school rate by 85% including gender disparity but relatively low in universal primary school completion. Despite the fact that the enrollment number has increased in the region, there is still gap between enrollment and completion of students.

USAID (2011) indicated that the push for universal primary and basic education has a significant impact on school enrollment pulling children from disadvantaged area and marginalized groups that were excluded from school. The completion of basic education has dealt with larger number of vulnerable children and fewer resources faced by many countries that caused the children to leave school without acquiring basic skills and also their premature departure into the labor market. To review a case study on dropout, this paper will compare the two cases between Cambodia and Thailand effort in promoting EFA goals as universal primary school policies and reforms are increasingly important for these countries that actively involved in improving quality of basic education both enrollment and completion of the basic education cycle. Cambodia and Thailand have introduced a number of education reforms to increase the access to the quality of education for both genders. Also, this paper will look at the two education systems and compare the success scenarios and their challenges during the last decade

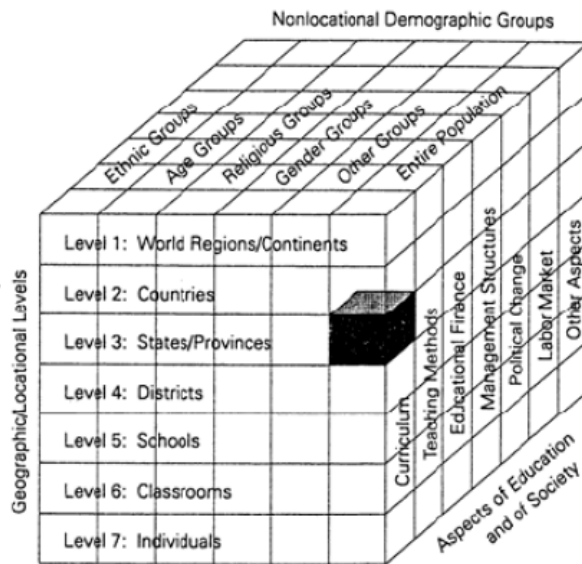
1.1 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are (1) to identify the challenging factors affecting Education For All (EFA) goals in Cambodia and Thailand, (2) to compare the education policies on the affected factors that help to promote the equal access in both countries.

1.2 Methodology

Firstly, document review was the main method in study to gain the information on the research area from journals, articles and reports from relevant sources. Secondly, to compare between the two domains of educational studies, Bray and Thomas suggested a Framework for Comparative Education as it has been extensively cited literature and used in wider domain of education studies (Bray, Adamson & Mason, 2007). In the framework, there are three main levels of comparison (1) Geographic/locational, (2) Non-locational demographic and (3) Aspects of education and of society. See Figure: 1

Figure 1: Bray & Thomas Cube



Source: Bray & Thomas (1995) cited in Bray, Adamson & Mason (2007, p.9)

For the geographic level, the countries were selected to compare between Thailand and Cambodia since they are located Southeast Asian region considerably a similar locations. In the aspect of education and society, this study chose other aspects that represented the education reform and policies on basic education in the selected two countries. Moreover, the entire population in nonlocational demographic groups was picked to compare the issues and policies.

1.3 Significance of the Study

This study will be a supplementary source for the literature reviews in the comparative education in two specific countries in the area of universal primary education that response to EFA goals.

1.4 Limitations of the Study

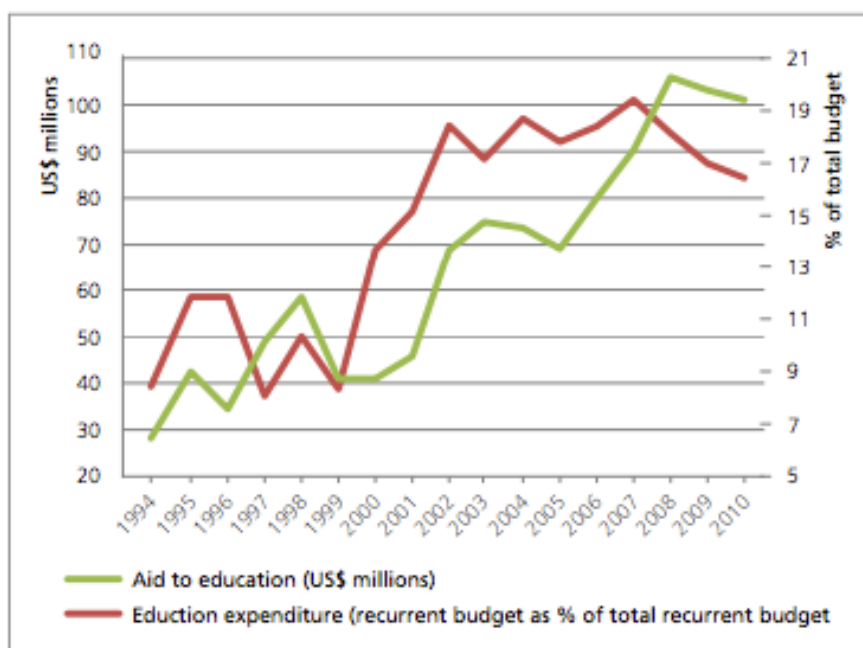
The lack of reliable data from the two countries is the main constrains when the review is taken mostly from the government and development party. The academic result and research work have not found much in the paper. The inconsistent and incomparable data from various sources is another limitation when this study relied on the existing research and online source available from international development organization and government source of data. Therefore, this paper cannot be generalized into the whole countries.

2. Cambodian Education System

2.1 Demography and Economy

Situated in Southeast Asia, Cambodia shares border with Lao, Vietnam and Thailand with a current population 14 million people known as Khmer. According to World Bank (2005), the poverty rate showed 20% of the total population with the GDP per capita is 950 USD considered the low-income country in the world. After the civil war and devastated genocide, Cambodia gained political stability in 1998 when the country has to restore the socio-economic development. Despite the economic growth, Cambodia is struggling with serious challenging issues such as shortage of skilled workers, low quality of education, human trafficking, and public health service (UNESCO, 2010). However, because education is the core sector of the country to promote the economic and social development, Cambodia has gradually increased the national expenditure with the development partners. See Figure: 2

Figure 2: Cambodian National Budget on Education



Source: Overseas Development Institute (2011, p.14)

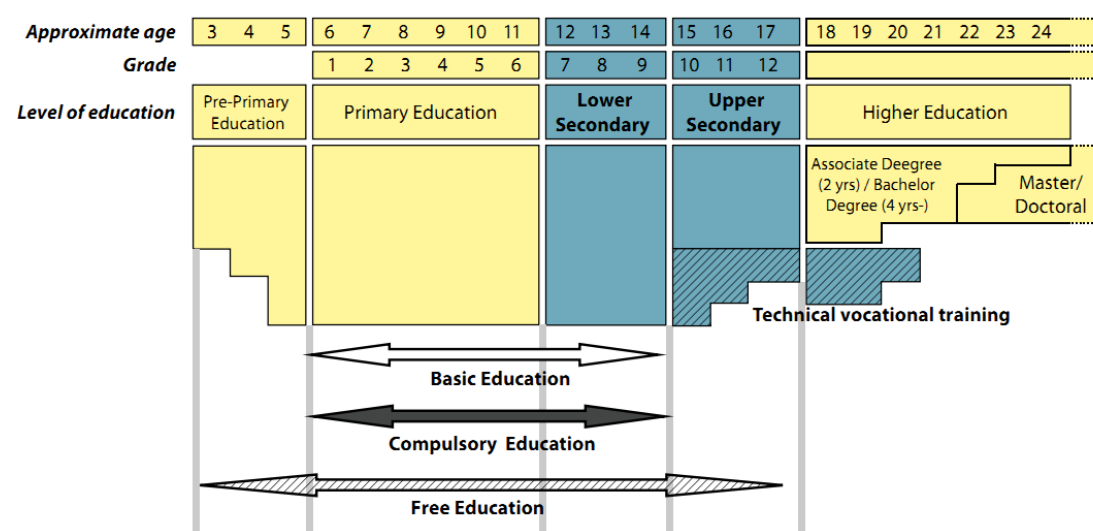
The graph showed the increased revenue has helped enable increases in education expenditure by the government, which has been complemented by increased aid to the sector. Between 1994 and 1998, government expenditure on education was 12% during the educational reform. However, it has increased gradually in 2000 from 12% to 19% in 2007 and it went down to 17% in 2010. This national budget was also aided by international development partners focused on the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) 2006-2010 – has been on primary education, which receives approximately 60% of resources (ODI, 2011).

The national expense has a significant on education improvement. Vuthy (2008) wrote that the education system has recovered by rebuilding infrastructure, schools, facilities, recruiting teachers, and teaching materials. In this context, Wada (2008) also explained that there were not enough schools, teaching and learning materials and there was lack of supplies in most of the classrooms across the country. The qualifications and pedagogical skills of teachers, who were urgently recruited after 1979, were very limited. There was a high rate of class repetition, dropout rate among students, poor learning and teaching techniques, and inadequate teacher training (Vuthy, 2002).

2.2 Education System in Cambodia

Education sector is operated by Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS). The government has endorsed nine years of compulsory education as their basic education. There are two types of education system both formal and non-formal education. According to MoEYS (2009), the formulation of formal education is 6+3+3 that consists of primary school (6 years), lower-secondary school (3 years) and upper-secondary school (3 years). The figure below shows the education system. See Figure 3

Figure 3: Cambodian Education System



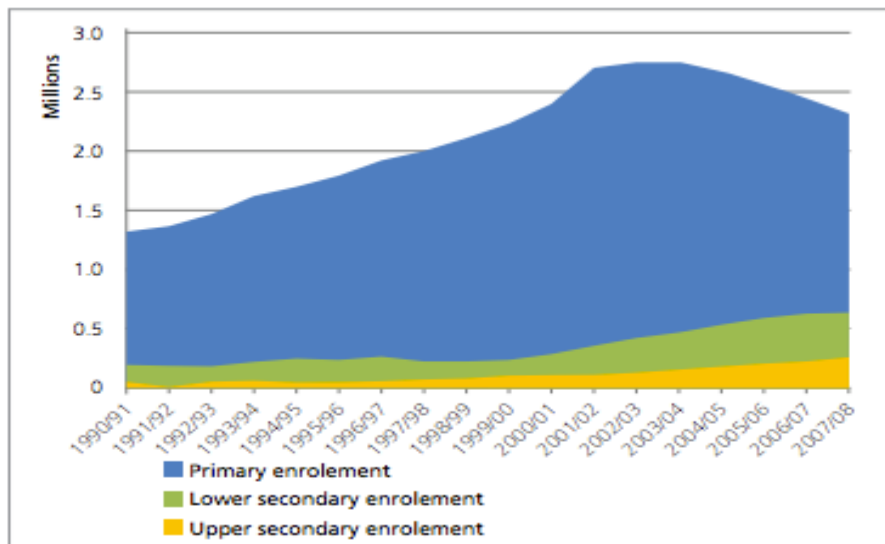
Source: UNESCO (2008a, p.1)

The education in Cambodia is free for all from pre-school to upper secondary school. Both public and private schools offered primary to secondary education under the national examination. The core subjects for the primary education included mathematics, science, geography, history, ethics, civics, drafting, language, and hygiene. Khmer language is the main instruction and English language also started in the primary schooling. The aims of these given subjects are to build children's knowledge of mathematics, Khmer language, aware of national identity, understanding morality and civic responsibility, learn everyday life skills with basic understanding of nature, scientific principle, and competence in foreign language.

Dy (2004) stated that Cambodian governments have made numerous efforts to provide accessibility for the nine years of compulsory and free schooling in accordant to Cambodian Law of Education in 2007. To improve the education quality and efficiency, a number of policies have been implemented: (1) education reform, (2) sector-wide approach, (3) 5-year education strategic plan (ESP), (4) 5-year education sector support program (ESSP), and (5) EFA National Plan 2003-2015. These policies aimed at providing equal access to education services, quality and efficiency of education services, and institutional development and capacity building for decentralization (MoEYS, 2009).

Cambodia experienced a major reform of education in 2001 in large-scale target in enrollment of 95% on basic education across the nation (Kheng, 2009). As a result, during the last few decades, the net primary enrollment increased from 78% in 1998 to 84% in 2001 and significantly reached 95% in 2010. The growth also showed the gender parity and children from poor families in the enrollment in which this increasing number required many primary school buildings in many remote areas. See Figure 4

Figure 4: Enrollment Rate in Cambodia



Source: Overseas Development Institute (2011, p.7)

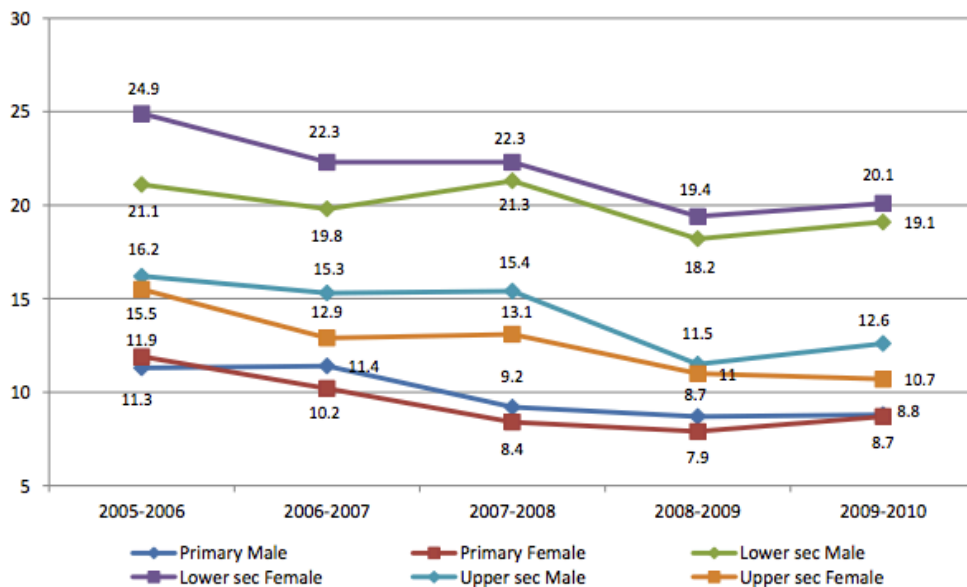
According to ODI (2011), the graph showed the expansion of access to basic education represents the biggest success story in the Cambodian education system. Over the past two decades, enrolment has increased dramatically, with primary enrolment doubling

between 1990 and 2000 and secondary enrolment increasing substantially from 2000 onwards. Although primary enrolment in absolute numbers began to decline in 2004 and 2005, the enrolment rate continued to increase constantly, aiming to achieve the equal access to education for all. Chet (2009) indicated that Cambodia seen as the success story of education reform in the recent history in relation with economic growth that allowed the country opportunities to realized the vital roles of basic education.

2.3 Cambodian Dropout Problem

Despite the growing in enrollment, the vast majority of children of secondary school age are not completing the basic cycle. USAID (2011) reported the net enrollment data at the national level has a steady increase in student for both male and female students. However, the enrollment rate between the primary and lower secondary cycle drops from about 95 percent to about 35 percent, suggesting that a high percentage of primary students do not enroll in lower secondary school. Both the primary and upper secondary cycle have low disparity in enrollment numbers between the sexes and the lower secondary cycle has higher number in female students. This has resulted in the percentage of dropout rate among lower secondary school both male and female was at 20% higher than the dropout rate in upper secondary school. See Figure 5

Figure 5: Dropout Rate in Cambodia



Source: USAID (2011, p-10)

The data showed the dropout rates decreased from 25 to 20 percent in both male and female primary school from 2005 to 2010. However, the number has a slightly increase in 2010 for both genders that mainly happened in the rural area (USAID, 2011). The dropout prevention has strategically worked on increasing children's access to school by focusing on quality of schooling and learning outcomes. However, the larger number of vulnerable children and fewer resources per child, the education system has encountered difficulties in retaining children through the completion of basic education.

Dropout rates for each grade in the lower secondary cycle exceed those in every other grade at the primary and upper secondary levels. The gender differences are minor. The high dropout particularly at the lower secondary level reveals problems in the internal efficiency of the educational system and the inaccessibility to the marginalized children in rural and remote areas. This high wastage rate results in many young people who are unable to progress further with their schooling, leaving them unskilled and reducing their chances for employment Kheng (2009).

2.4 Cambodian Policies for Dropout

Over the past three decade, Cambodia has seen the significant progress throughout the education system, particularly in promoting the equal access to education and quality of education. ODI (2011) indicated that Cambodian government has achieved some policies and action plan that brought solution to dropout rates below:

Fee abolition: the government started abolished the school fees in 2000 across the country together with extensive outreach the enrollment campaigns. This reform has pulled students from 2.2 to 2.7 million in between 1999 and 2002. Kheng (2009) wrote triple number has been increased in remote areas, mainly at the lower secondary level. It can be noticed that an average annual expansion was of 24.2% in between 1999 and 2004 to meet this achievement. The fee abolition has a significant impact on household schooling cost, for instance, in 2004 the households were meeting 55.6% of primary schooling costs, compared with 76.9% in 1998.

Teacher recruitment and deployment: the recruitment of teachers from high school graduates entry requirements to teach in the remote area and where the upper secondary school was not widely available. Also, it is now possible for the minority students from poor background or ethnic group students to access to teacher training scholarship so that they can help their communities. This supply of young teacher recruits has been expanding to the small isolated schools across the country.

School construction: New school buildings have been established over the last 20 years. There are 6,600 primary school and 1,500 secondary schools, which was seen 40% increase, nationwide have been built to meet the needs for increasing number of children. Mainly the schools have been intensively constructed in the rural and remote area to and the buildings have been improved to increase the access to education, particularly increasing the enrollment rate in the remote regions and decrease the number of incomplete children (MoEYS, 2010).

Scholarships for the poor: To address the demand for lower secondary scholarship for girls, some local NGOs have provided grants to the families of the children from disadvantageous background in order to decrease the household cost after the primary schooling. This tool was considered effective for some children to regular attend their classroom and the program support funded by Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction that offered 45 USD for the families of eligible girls to continue at secondary school. This program has been run at 93 secondary schools in the poorest communities across the country and it has benefit over 4,000 girls per year from 2002 to 2005. This was a part of effective tool that increased the enrollment rates by 31.3% among girls of 50% from the poorest background. In 2005, the scholarship for boys has been offered with Scholarship for the Poor was initiated with national plan that support the education development (ADB, 2003).

Child Friendly School Policy introduced in 2007 to improve the quality of education that focused on equal access, effective learning, health, gender, safety, community participation, and created an interactive system that promoted the new

policies. The special education for disability has been provided in some schools together with teacher training program and material development (UNESCO, 2010).

Lifelong education is encouraged in Cambodia to upgrade the citizens the knowledge and skills necessary for their creativity, productivity and professional development. Those who dropped out of school without completion of their basic education level still have chances to attend literacy and life-skill programs, as well as short-term vocational training offered by the Department of Non-Formal Education (Vuthy, 2002). After completing lower-secondary education, students have the option either of continuing to upper-secondary education or of entering secondary-level vocational training program offered by the Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training. After completing upper-secondary education, students may either enter vocational training (one to three years) or universities. Chet (2009) indicated that Cambodia seen as the success story of education reform in the recent history in relation with economic growth that allowed the country opportunities to realized the vital roles of education sector.

Current Policies Reform: there are 8 major education reforms as the most urgent issues: improving education quality at all levels (1) Teachers: incentives, qualification, and career path, (2) Students: healthy, nutrition, school attendance, (3) Quality curriculum: standards, student-centered, number of teaching hours, reading, numeracy and life skills, (4) Quality environment: budget, classroom, library, textbook, teaching aid, management, leadership, IT, safety, teacher attitude, pedagogy; (5) Services delivery: health service, community participation, parent's involvement, inspection, lifelong learning (MoEYS, 2014)

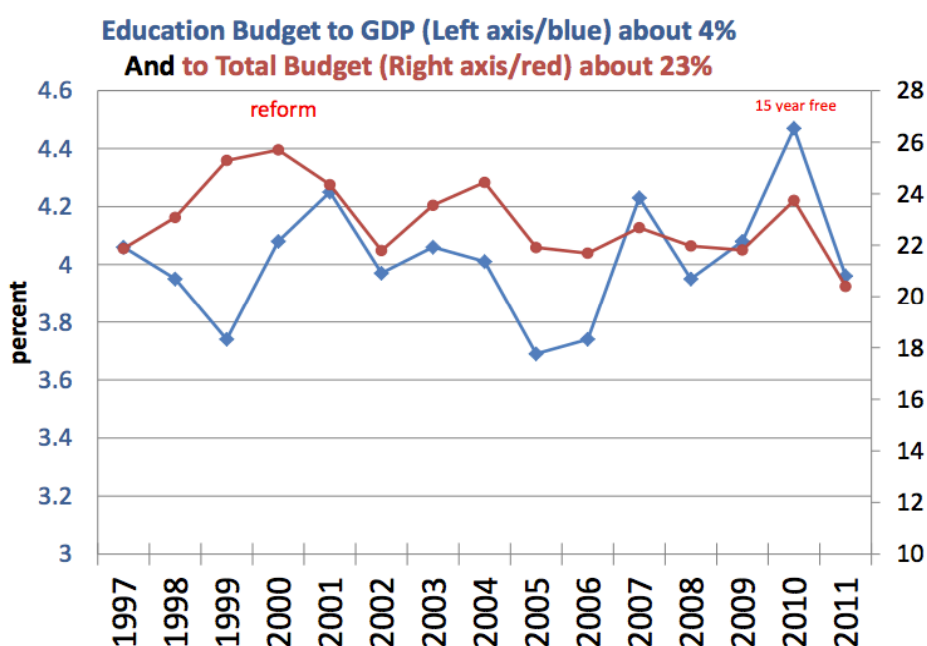
3. Education System in Thailand

3.1 Demography and Economy

Thailand is located in the centre of Southeast Asia with the approximate population of 69 million known as Thai people. World Bank (2014) reported the poverty rate of 13.2% and the GPD per capita is 5,370 USD counted as middle-income country based on industry, agriculture and tourism. Thailand has stayed in peace for decades and the constitution of Thailand in 1997 stipulated the basic rights to access to free basic education of 12 years and given the equal right to have free education (UNESCO, 2011).

OECD (2013) wrote that Thailand has faced challenges to improve the education, health care system, and environmental issues as a result from its economic growth. Despite of making a significant progress in providing education, the disparity in access still remained mainly in the poor household, rural areas and remote regions that have been addressed into the national policies. The improving the quality of teaching and learning has been the challenge for the current and future of Thai education. Thailand has increased the national budget for education reform and development that has a significant impact on the quality of education system. See Figure 6

Figure 6: Thai National Budget for Education



Source: Thailand's National Education Accounts (2013, p-6)

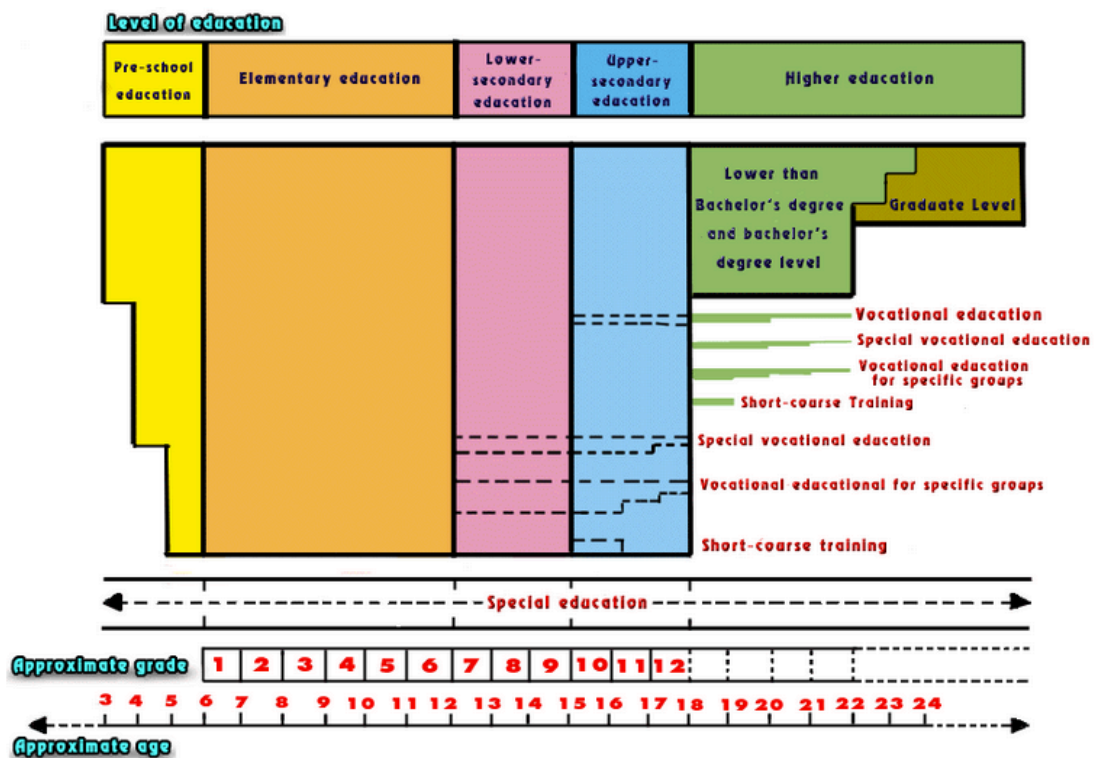
The data showed the fluctuated public expenditure of Thailand over the 14 years. During the economic crisis in 1997, the national budget was decreased to 18% of the total budget but it went up to 24% in 2001. Then it continued fluctuated over the last 10 years. However, Thailand experienced the highest percentage of the expenditure to 27% in 2010 but it went down slightly to 21% in 2011, which was about 4% of GDP. The public expense on education is expressed as a percentage of GDP in a given year included

the government expense on education institution both public and private, education administration, subsidies for private entities including students, household and others (NEA, 2013). This expense is mainly aimed at raising quality of education to the international standard level, education innovative technology and also the primary education that offer equal access for all across the country.

3.2 Education System in Thailand

Thai education consists of 12 basic and free education using the formulation of 6+3+3: primary school (6 years), lower secondary school (3 years) and upper secondary school (3 years) with 9 year compulsory education where the basic education begin by the age of 6 year old. However, the current education reform has implemented new organizational structure, promoted decentralization of administration, innovative learner-centered teaching practice (UNESCO, 2011). See Figure 7.

Figure 7: Education System in Thailand



Source: MoE (2008, p.2)

Under the constitution, the citizens have equal rights to receive free basic education up to 12 years. There are eight core subjects from the National Curriculum: Thai language, mathematics, science, social studies, religion and culture, health and physical education, arts, careers and technology, and foreign languages. The main instruction is in Thai and the overall aims are to integrate the curriculum with the local wisdom and culture consistent with set learning standards in each of the core subject groups. These subjects develop children's thinking skills, self-learning strategies and moral development in the heart of teaching and learning (MoE, 2008).

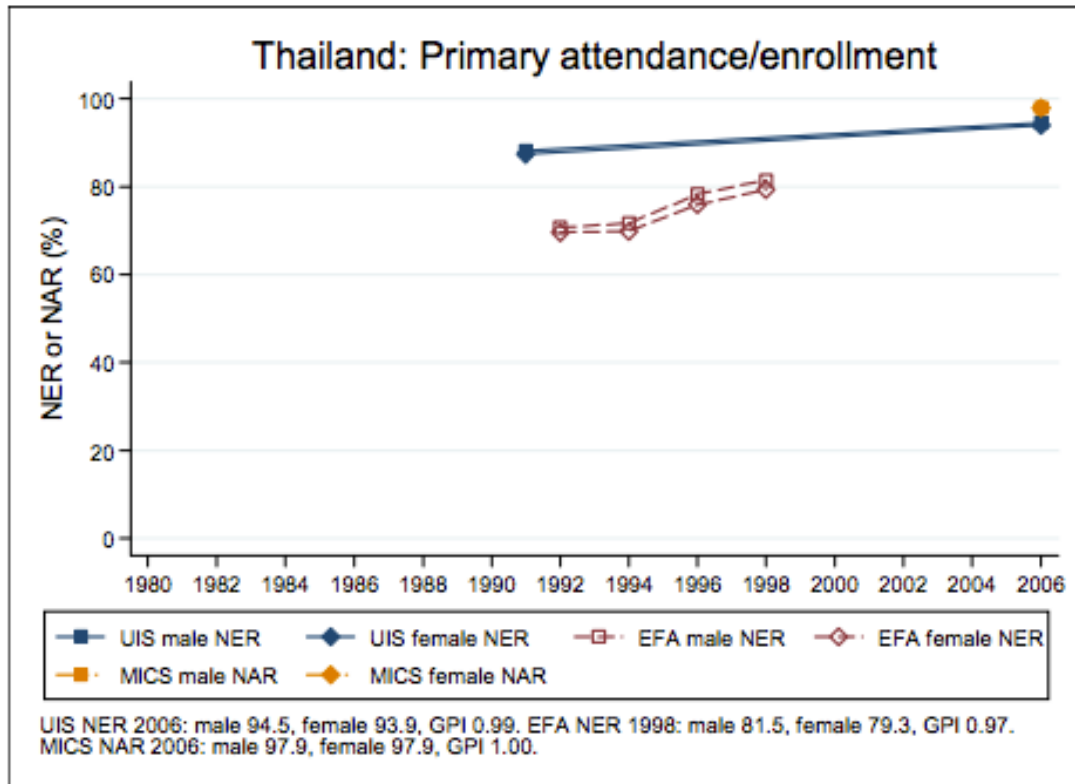
In 21st century of education, Thailand has focused on learning reform in accordant to the National Act 1999 that moved toward student-centered approach and student-centered classroom. These methods have been implemented to improve the education performance in a way that learning was arrange in line with students' interest, aptitude, individual differences, training student in critical thinking, organizing authentic learning experience, promote atmosphere where teachers and students interact. Regarding this issue, the attention and resource for promoting Thai teachers to reach their potential skills that effectively engages their student self-learning (MoE, 2008).

The government has tried to ensure the people equally get access to education by implementing the decentralization of educational management to the local institutions. It empowered the local decision making on education finance and administration, mainly on the basic education and core curriculum development (UNESCO, 2011). The access to pre-school, primary and lower secondary is still moderately high and the primary education is getting universalized. However, there have been a proportion in subsector from pre-school to non-formal and informal education who have limited access, specially children from low economic status, remote areas, migrant workers, urban migrants without house registration.

Recently, the government has prioritized the primary and secondary education in term of developing quality and standard. Also, the expanding basic educational opportunity to all Thai people and improving the quality of teaching personal were on the top prioritized policies. The goal is to attain the universal secondary school by dealing with shortage of

teachers, implementation of reading campaign, and strategy on “moral-based knowledge” in primary education (UNESCO, 2011). At the same time, numerous efforts had been made by the government to promote the basic education enrollment to meet the EFA goal by 2015. See Figure 8.

Figure 8: Net Enrollment in Thailand



Source: UNICEF (2008b, p-1)

This graph showed the primary enrollment from 1980 to 2006. The major reform of equal access to education started in 1990 with the 85% net enrollment and it has gradually increased to almost 100% enrollment in 2006. Also, the EFA enrollment for both sex increased by 20% from 1992 to 1998 showing no disparity on gender enrollment. The achievement was close to universal primary education showing the gross enrollment ratio of lower secondary over 90% and upper secondary education 60% in 2010 according to the report (UNICEF, 2008b)

3.3 Out-Of-School Issues in Thailand

Dropout rates have remained an issue in particular at secondary school in Thailand although the number is not too high in overall. However, UNESCO (2011) reported Thailand still face major challenges with out-of-school rate, mainly for vulnerable group such as children of migration workers, urban migration workers without house registration and ethnic communities in remote area to benefit from this universal policy. Moreover, the quality of education is a crucial concern when students consistently failed the national test from primary to upper secondary school in readings, mathematics, science and foreign languages. The national examination showed the unsatisfactory performance regarding the lack of qualified teachers, incentive for excellent performed teachers. Also, the lack of learning material for information and technology in remote areas and large number of small-class size in secondary schools was relatively high. This showed that the geographic location is the relation to wide disparities in educational success of students. Thailand was reported to be in the ten countries with highest increase in out-of-school rate among school children. See Figure 9.

Figure 9: The ten countries with the highest relative increases in out-of-school populations

	Out-of-school population		
	2006 (000)	2011 (000)	Change (%)
Paraguay	57	136	139
Colombia	206	435	112
Thailand	387	611	58
Nigeria	7 150	10 542	47
Eritrea	295	422	43
Gambia	65	86	33
South Africa	519	679	31
Liberia	325	386	19
Mauritania	113	131	16
Yemen	853	949	11

Source: UNESCO (2014b, p-54)

This table showed the 10 countries with largest relative increase in out-of-school rates from 2004 to 2006. Thailand was on the third nation in which out-of-school population

had grown even though it is in the region that has been performing better on average. OECD (2013) stated that current problem is mostly concerned with out-of-school number and universal primary education have encountered with unequal chances for the poor, children from lower income and especially with remote area. Despite of the active policy has been fostered by the government with education loans to the poor students, the short-term financial constrain is not able to eliminate inequalities. To cope with this, the government has introduced 15-year free education policy in 2009 as another good step toward better education solution. However, there are still many students living in poverty, not being able to attend schools and owing financial difficulties other than the cost of school enrollment.

3.4 Policies for Out-Of-School Issue

Achieving free education: free education fee of 15 years has been given in public education from primary to secondary education that was endorsed in 1999-2002.. However, there are some costs that are unavoidable in order to participate fully in education. For instance, some schoolbooks, writing material and exercise books but textbooks are being provided free of charge to the 30% poorest children in primary education. The funding is allocated to schools, where selection committees have to decide on the eligibility of individual pupils. A sensitization campaign has been conducted and complaints from parents addressed to the administration can result in sanctions for the schools involved. There are some school-related costs that do not influence the quality of the teaching process, such as the school uniform. In many countries school uniforms, however, cost as much as or more than the relevant school equipment. In the context of the educational expansion campaign, the rules on school uniforms have already been imposed in Thailand. In primary education, free uniforms are being provided to the poorest 10% of the pupils. Yet, regular uniform can itself be a burden on the family budget (Nicaise, Tonguthai & Fripont, 2000).

Free lunch provision: every school under the Office of the National Primary Education Commission (NPOEC) provides lunch to children with malnutrition and from poor families. In practice, schools try to offer it to all children from kindergarten to

primary school or grad 3. Students are required to bring with them only plain rice and get other food at school. Teachers admit that food quality may not be ideal but there is a trade off with more quantity so everyone will have a chance to have them for free. Parents may not give the children enough to eat at home, especially for breakfast, expecting them to have a big lunch at school. They may have to leave home early for the work and give the children some cash to take care of their own breakfast. Some schools even have ways of giving children breakfast without causing them embarrassment by putting milk and cookies in the library (Nicaise, Tonguthai & Fripont, 2000).

Targeted financial aid to students: the government offered financial aid in the form of student grant and loan schemes. In 1998, the Thai government with support from the ADB Social Sector Programme Loan have introduced grants for pupils in primary and lower secondary education, targeted at dropouts who returned to school in the next academic year as well as students whose parents were severely affected by the crisis. The amount of the grant is a lump sum of 120 USD for primary school pupils and 5000 at secondary level. Schools have to select the applicants and submit lists to the MOE, that this means no more than 4% of all enrollees. Moreover, beside tuition fees and grant, transportation cost, which is not covered by the new policy, is a major cost of attending school, especially for poor students living far away from the schools. Students of public schools, who tend to come from low or middle income families, have to pay transportation costs averaging 100 USD per year per student in 2009 which is equivalent to 6% of the annual rural poverty line income for a family of 3.5 persons. This cost represents a significant burden for poor families and could lead them to keep their children out of school to avoid the cost (Nicaise, Tonguthai & Fripont, 2000).

Vocational and Technical Education Formal: vocational and technical education is conducted at three levels: (1) upper secondary leading to the Lower Certificate of Vocational Education, (2) post secondary leading to a Diploma or Vocational Associate Degree and (3) university level leading to a Degree. Currently there have been over 1 million students enrolled in the various fields such as: agriculture, trade and industry, fisheries, home economics, business and tourism, textiles and commerce arts and crafts. This concept of lifelong learning and learning society have been linked

with transferable credit system to facilitate mobility in education institution in different types of vocational training, evaluation of experience and learning from formal, non-formal and informal sector. This reform has been implemented to remodel the vocation system toward Thai Vocational Qualification to meet the industrial practice and demand on the labor market (MoE, 2008).

4. Presentation of the Result

This study attempted to examine the education polices between the two countries on how to achieve the EFA goals and to improve their education system. It can be noticed that the governments of Cambodia and Thailand put a great emphasis on enhancing equal access to education by identifying the problems and set out various policies responding to the limitations. Based on the literature review, the study have discussed on number of issues that can be compared. See Table 1.

Table 1: Comparing Education Policies

	Education Policies	Cambodia	Thailand
Millennium Development Goals & Education For All	Decentralization		x
	Education System 6+3+3	x	x
	National Expenditure 20%	x	x
	High Net Enrollment	x	x
	Dropout Issue	x	
	Out-Of-School Issue		x
	Fee Abolition	x	x
	School Construction	x	
	Teacher Recruitment	x	
	Children Financial Aids	x	x
	Child Friendly School	x	
	Life-long Learning	x	x
	Free Lunch		x
	Vocational Training		x

4.1 Similarities of the Policies

The two governments have decentralized some functions and responsibilities to lower levels of administration but remain rather centralized, especially with regard to standard setting and teacher management in Cambodia (UNESCO, 2014). Cambodia has just developed the culture of decentralization into education system to ensure the equitable access to quality and efficiency, institutional development and capacity building for local administration (Chhinh & Dy, 2009; Niazi, 2011). However, Thailand has pursued the reform of its education system through decentralization, universalization of basic education, expanding capacity for upper secondary school and ensuring opportunities for life-long learning for all people. The country has been strengthening the local capacity in planning, managing, implementing and monitoring the education system at all levels, especially down to the local administration organizations to better inform and improve policies, planning and management decision-making (Amornvivat, 2004)

Both countries have been increasing their national expenditure about 20% in the recent years. This financial allocation to the education sector provides a clear indicator of the government commitment to improve the education system. Moreover, the two countries have the same formulation of 6+3+3 system that require by law on 9-year basic education and 12 year free of schooling that prepare students for the basic life skills, cultural identity and understanding about society where they live in and compete in the labor market.

The current education system in both countries pulled number of students to schools. The net enrollments have increased significantly at primary school level. The rates are considered relatively high from 80% to 98% in the last couple years. With this report, Cambodia and Thailand have showed effort in creating opportunities for children across countries and they are on the way to achieve the EFA in 2015. Most interestingly, both countries have abolished the school fee in 2000 by adding this policies to law of education. Therefore, education became the human right in which children have equal chances to attend school. This new imposed law has a great impact on children to access school and continue their study to the next levels, particularly it helps to narrow the gate between gender disparity in basic education. For the poor children from low economic

background, both governments have provided some scholarships to encourage family to send their children to schools. For some cases in Thailand, the grant for travel and uniformed have been offered to ensure the financial security of the poor family in somewhat preventing the child labor while they have their rights to at least finish basic education.

4.2 Differences of the Policies

The two countries have some differences in policies on basic education. The study noticed that Cambodia experienced the remarkable dropout rate despite of its success in enrollment due the internal inefficiency of the education system and the exclusive poor communities in the remote areas. That was the significant transformation from primary school to secondary school that showed the big gap for the success of compulsory 9-year education in Cambodia. However, Thailand has face the similar problem but it was a low dropout rate during the transition. The most critical issue for Thailand is the out-of-school population that reported to be one of the top countries that increase the out of school children in the region. The government has put effort in dealing with this issues and UNESCO (2012) stated that the children who are out of school do not mean they have never entered school. In fact, some exposer to the formal school and leave school while some have never attended at all due to the poverty, migration issue, child labor and uneasy access to the schooling in the far remote areas. The two governments have struggled in promoting the internal education quality to retain the children.

In Cambodia, to pull more children to school and continue their study, more school construction have been built in the rural areas close to the poor communities. These projects have attracted more students, particularly girls to attend the class not to worry about their far distance travel. Regarding this, many primary schools in Cambodia have been converted into Child Friendly Schools under government and development partner supervision by providing financial and technical support. Moreover, the number of new teachers has been trained and developed their teaching skills and qualification. The new recruited teachers are provided scholarship to study and deployed to the remote areas across Cambodia, which recently has increased the recognition of quality education such as curriculum, quality standard, teacher qualification, and students' learning outcome.

On the other hand, the study found that Thailand has increased the number of students by providing lunch in many primary schools. It was considered important support by the government concerning children malnutrition and health problems at schools. This approach has been remarked as successful despite some negative feedback on the food quality; however, poor students can benefit from the support. Also, after student complete their basic education, Thailand has the policies for students who wants to attend the vocational training school. It was an alternative education and the use of equivalency program showing the way of learning programs are organized and delivered consistently.

5. Conclusion

Last but not least, Cambodia and Thailand have placed a great emphasis on the EFA goals by 2015. Both countries have achieved the net enrollment but still struggled with the dropout number and out-of-school population. However, each country has shared similar policies and approaches to deal the problems; meanwhile, they have put efforts in investing more budgets on universal education, believing that it will be a great impact on economic and social development. This study is aimed to identify the challenging factors affecting Education For All (EFA) goals and to compare the education policies on the affected factors that help to promote the equal access in both countries. Therefore, this paper found the relative significant issues which are the main factors affecting the equal access to education. Also, there are some policies are found to be emerging solutions for the government at different levels.

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