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Educational Movement toward School-based Management in East Asia: Cambodia, Indonesia and Thailand

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Educational Movement toward School-based Management in East Asia: Cambodia, Indonesia and Thailand

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Abstract

In order to reduce inequalities in access and quality among areas (e.g., between urban and rural areas within a country) and/or between schools, many of the countries in East Asia are now introducing school-based management or other similar reforms. By looking at three specific countries in this region, Cambodia, Indonesia and Thailand, this background paper aims to describe some major forms of school management and to explore whether and how the reforms could contribute to overcoming the inequality. The main conclusions are threefold: the recent reforms will bring some favourable results in prosperous areas, but rural and remote areas face much severer situations; educational partners at the school level are confused about the rapid change of the systems; and participation of local communities in school management has not been successfully stimulated. Implications include that for more widely accessed education of good quality, school management in this region should be organised and implemented with appropriate leadership by the central governments.

Introduction

One of the most significant milestones for education, the World Conference on Education for All in March 1990 in Jomtien, Thailand, set forth its views on education. The ultimate goal affirmed by its adopted declaration was to meet the basic learning needs for all children, youth, and adults in order to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions, and to continue learning. The declaration also emphasised that to achieve this goal, all educational partners' active participation was required in every stage of policy-making and policy implementation, and the actual demands for basic education services must be fulfilled.

The World Education Forum in April 2000 in Dakar, Senegal, confirmed the conference's basic stance and emphasised the importance of a good quality of education. In the same year, leaders from every country in the United Nations agreed on a vision of

a future with better-educated children, and they set the goals of ensuring that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling by 2015, eliminating gender disparity in primary and lower secondary education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015.

The Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2009 will focus on the strategies of educational management, governance and financing that contribute to overcoming inequalities in education. As one of the main strategies, the report aims to show how a stronger voice and strengthened accountability can play a critical role in raising access, improving learning outcomes, and empowering people to secure the education of children. Among several possible issues, this background paper focuses on school-based management (SBM).

SBM has been viewed as a means to deepen local participation in decision-making that is relevant to schools, and as a way to expand access to education and improve its quality. This paper discusses theories and practices of SBM in East Asia, particularly looking at three countries that recently introduced SBM into their education sectors: Cambodia, Indonesia and Thailand¹. This paper is organised as follows: the first section analyses the emergence of SBM in East Asia, and examines some rationales for and concerns about SBM reforms; the second section describes the recent reforms in these three countries, and explores some possible impacts on inequalities in education; and lastly, some implications are presented in the final section.

1. School-based Management in East Asia

In order to achieve the Education for All (EFA) goals and targets, every educational partner, including local communities, public authorities and the international community, has been mobilising all available resources. Many countries in East Asia have made good progress toward achieving the goals. Some have even almost achieved universal access, at least to primary education (Table 1).

Table 1. Net enrolment ratios in East Asia: primary education

Country or territory	Net enrolment ratio (NER) (%)							
	School year ending in							
	1999				2005			
				GPI				GPI
	Total	Male	Female	(F/M)	Total	Male	Female	(F/M)
Brunei Darussalam	...	...	...	...	93.4	93.0	93.9	1.01
Cambodia	84.8	88.8	80.8	0.91	98.9	99.7	98.0	0.98
Indonesia	...	...	...	...	95.5	97.2	93.8	0.96
Japan	100.0	100.0	99.9	1.00	99.8	99.7	100.0	1.00
Lao People's Democratic Republic	80.2	83.6	76.6	0.92	83.6	85.9	81.2	0.95
Macao, China	84.7	84.3	85.3	1.01	90.8	92.5	89.1	0.96
Malaysia	97.8	98.7	96.9	0.98	95.4	95.6	95.3	1.00
Myanmar	80.5	80.9	80.1	0.99	90.2	89.4	91.0	1.02
Philippines	92.3	92.2	92.4	1.00	94.0	92.9	95.1	1.02
Republic of Korea	94.5	94.1	94.9	1.01	99.5	99.6	99.3	1.00
Thailand	...	...	...	...	87.8	89.7	85.7	0.96
Viet Nam	95.7	...	...	...	87.7	...	...	...

Source: UNESCO (2007) Table 5

Table 2. Out-of-school children in East Asia: primary education

Country or territory	Age group	School-age population (000) ¹	Out-of-school children (000) ²					
			School year ending in					
			1999			2005		
			Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Brunei Darussalam	6-11	43	...	...	...	1.3	0.8	0.5
Cambodia	6-11	2,010	321	119	201	23	3	20
Indonesia	7-12	24,855	...	...	...	414	-	414
Japan	6-11	7,226	3	-	3	12	12	-
Lao People's Democratic Republic	6-10	769	141	59	82	126	55	71
Macao, China	6-11	35	7	4	3	3	1	2
Malaysia	6-11	3,317	67	20	46	150	75	75
Myanmar	5-9	4,966	1,051	521	530	487	267	221
Philippines	6-11	11,634	854	441	413	648	397	251
Republic of Korea	6-11	3,937	214	121	93	9	2	8
Thailand	6-11	6,151	...	...	...	419	155	264
Viet Nam	6-10	8,225	393	...	...	1,007	...	...

1. This table provides 2005 data for countries with a calendar school year, and 2004 data for the rest.
2. Data reflect the actual number of children who are not enrolled at all, derived from the age-specific enrolment ratios of primary school-age children, which measure the proportion of those who are enrolled either in primary or in secondary schools (total primary net enrolment ratios).

Source: UNESCO (2007) Table 5

Despite the steady improvement, over 6,000,000 primary school-age children in this region are still denied access to school, and nearly 6,500,000 youths aged 15 to 24 are functionally illiterate. Approximately 15% of children who enter Grade 1 leave school

before reaching the final grade (UNESCO 2007). Table 2 shows the number of children who are currently not enrolled at all. The poorer countries such as Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, and Viet Nam face challenges to expand access, while the wealthier countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand are more required to improve the quality of education. In order to meet these challenges, many of the countries in this region have introduced or are introducing SBM. For example, Cambodia first introduced SBM in 1998, Hong Kong in 1991, Indonesia in 1999, the Philippines in 2001, and Thailand in 1997.

The idea of SBM has its base in educational decentralisation. Decentralisation means "the transfer of planning, decision-making, or administrative authority from the central government to its field organizations, local administrative units, semi-autonomous and parastatal organizations, local governments, or nongovernmental organizations" (Rondinelli and Cheema 1983, p.18). The decentralisation of authority from the central government to schools is popularly known as SBM. SBM is the transfer of decision-making and/or authority over school governance from the government to the school level (World Bank 2007).

One of the common features of SBM reforms in East Asia is that the vehicles of school governance and management are, in most cases, school committees and community councils consisting of community members (King and Guerra 2005). School committees are given part of decision-making authority over day-to-day school operations. Despite this commonality, even across the countries in the region, the levels and types of SBM vary from one country to another, partly according to the motivations behind the reforms. For example, SBM reforms in Hong Kong aim to increase accountability and participatory decision-making at the school level; schools in Hong Kong have been given a high degree of autonomy over budgeting and staffing, receiving lump sum funds and grants from the government. On the other hand, schools in Cambodia and Thailand have less autonomy regarding finances and control of resources (World Bank 2007).

There are wide-ranging rationales that explain the significance of SBM. First, advocates of SBM argue that SBM fosters educational demand in the community. They emphasise that SBM ensures that schools provide the social and economic benefits that are more responsive to the priorities and values of those in local communities (World Bank 2007). One of the simplest theories for SBM is that people who primarily benefit from education (i.e., children, their parents, and other community members) should have a say in the provision of education (Abu-Duhou 1999).

Second, in an economic crisis, many governments have found themselves

incompetent to guarantee the quality of education in the daily workings of the very bottom of the educational bureaucracy (i.e., at the school level) (Shaffer 1994), as will be explained later in this paper in the sections on Indonesia and Thailand. To supplement this financial shortage, deploying limited financial and human resources, and sharing costs become more the focus (Colletta and Perkins 1995).

Third, advocates for the reforms emphasise that by giving local authorities decision-making authority over school management, they become aware of educational problems such as low enrolment, attendance and academic performance, and begin to realise key disincentives to schooling (Uemura 1999). For example, the deterrents to schooling may be inappropriate school calendars, inflexible school hours and out-of-date curricula, rather than an inadequate supply of learning materials. By appropriately identifying problems, inefficient use of limited educational resources can be avoided.

There are some more arguments in favour of SBM reforms, and it would be difficult to find an educational programme that does not employ any aspect of the transfer of decision-making authority to schools.

Some studies and subsequent literature, however, show unfavourable results of the reforms. Among critiques of SBM reforms in East Asia, one of the most commonly mentioned is that there is not enough evidence to support the idea that SBM leads to higher student achievement (Fullan and Watson 1999; Hanson 1998). One of the reasons is that educational decentralisation, including SBM in East Asia, has been often introduced for political and fiscal, rather than educational, motives (King and Guerra 2005; Nabeshima 2003).

Another weakness often mentioned is that as decision-making authority is transferred to schools, teachers and their educational partners at the school level are much more responsible for the quality of education: teachers as key stakeholders of the reform are granted more autonomy in their classrooms and also in their choice of course contents. However, in many cases, given that the reforms are introduced too rapidly, teachers are not ready yet. They lack adequate experience and training, and are not able to tailor their teaching methods or contents to educational needs of their students. Consequently, the degree of improvement expected in the students' achievements cannot be realised. For example, "Integrated Learning," which is a new subject introduced in Japan, gave on-site teachers greater autonomy in what to teach in the subject and how to teach it. Teachers themselves were encouraged to develop instructional methods and contents (Muta 2000). However, having never tried to exercise such a degree of autonomy, many schools and teachers asked the government for some guidebooks with

virtual examples (Muta 2000). Nabeshima (2003) concludes that in the selected countries in East Asia, there is not much difference found in students' performance across teachers with varying degrees of autonomy.

Another critique that is sceptical about SBM is that this reform will produce larger disparities in education within a country. Transferring responsibilities to each school and relying on its local community will widen the gap between the areas with more financial and human resources, and those with fewer resources. With limited financial and administrative support from their central government, schools in poorer and isolated areas will not be able to cope with the managerial and administrative workload (Sakurai and Ogawa 2007). In China, the improvement of literacy and enrolment ratios in the areas where many of the ethnic minorities reside are far behind the improvement in urban areas, and this regional disparity continues to widen after the introduction of decentralisation. For instance, in 1999, literacy and secondary enrolment ratios in Shanghai and Beijing were over 90%, while those in Tibet were less than 35% and close to 55%, respectively (King and Guerra 2005).

There is another main concern about SBM reforms. King and Guerra (2005) argue that the duties and legal responsibilities of school committees in East Asia often remain unclear, and thus, it is difficult for the committees to represent the interests of the communities².

2. School-based Management in Cambodia, Indonesia and Thailand

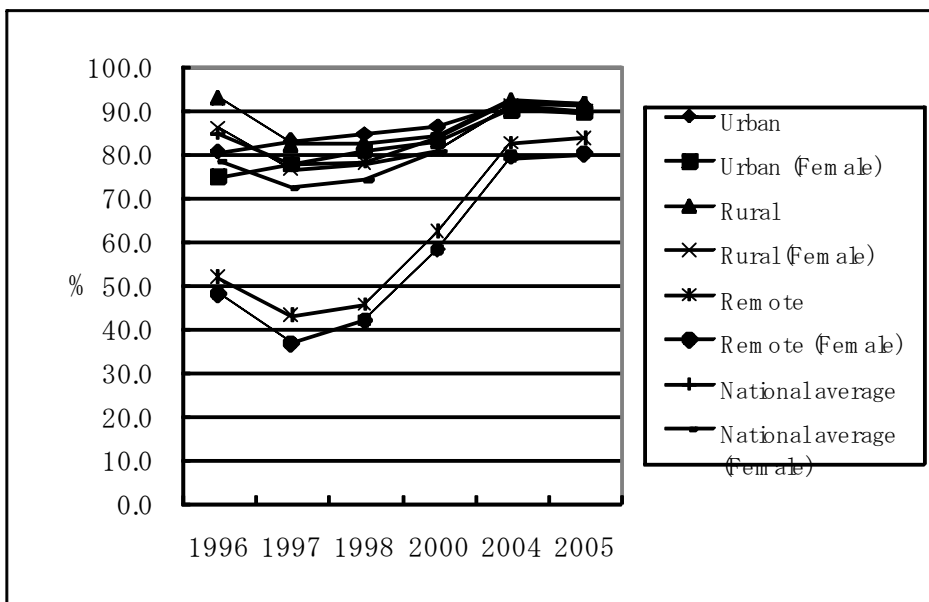
2.1. Cambodia

2.1.1. National Programmes for School Autonomy

Since the Paris Peace Accords of 1991, Cambodia has achieved significant progress in its education sector. At primary education, the average net enrolment ratios (NER) of the whole country increased from 85% in 1996 to 91% in 2005 (Figure 1). In remote areas, the improvement was even more substantial: the NER of remote areas increased from 52% to 83% between 1996 and 2005³. This means that more children in remote areas who had been denied access to primary education were enrolled in this level of education than in the last 10 years. The progress at the level of lower secondary education is much more significant (Figure 2).

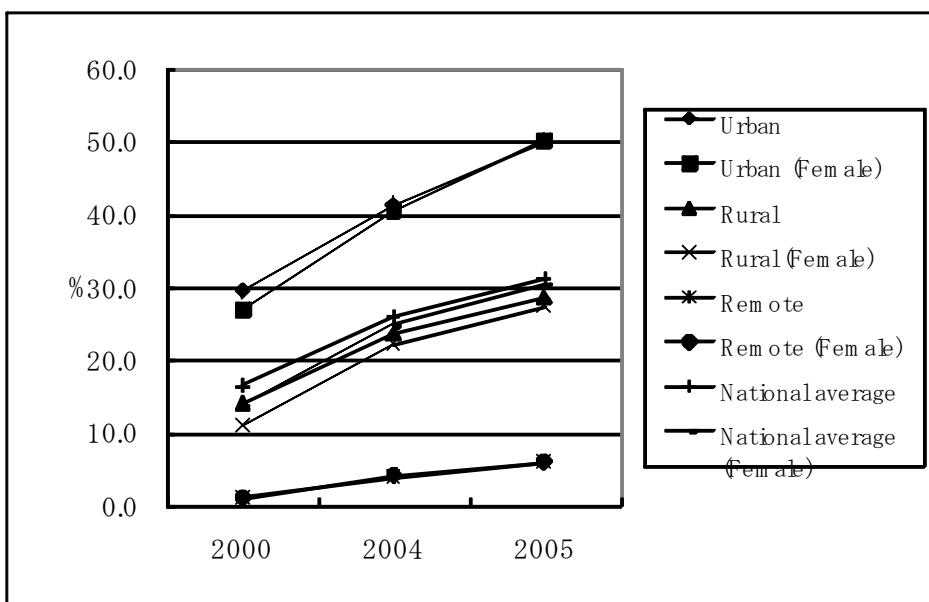
Figures 1 and 2, however, also reveal the lingering of regional and gender disparities. Compared to urban areas, rural and remote areas are statistically behind. For example, in 2005, the NER of lower secondary education were 28.6% in rural areas and

6.0% in remote areas, which was a significant contrast to the urban NER of 50.1% (Figure 2). Furthermore, children with disabilities, orphans, girls, those from ethnic minorities, and the poor have had little success in accessing public schooling (Consultative Group Meeting 2006).



Source: MoEYS (2000) Tables 2.6, 2.7; MoEYS (2001) Table 11; MoEYS (2005a; 2006) Tables 11

Figure 1. Net enrolment ratios in Cambodia: primary education



Source: MoEYS (2001a; 2005a; 2006) Tables 11

Figure 2. Net enrolment ratios in Cambodia: lower secondary education

The Cambodian government's current top policy priority for education is to ensure equitable access and quality improvement in nine years of both formal and non-formal basic education by 2015. In May 2003, the government released its national EFA plan to 2015 in collaboration with UNESCO. The plan consists of the following three policy objectives (UNESCO 2003, p.1):

- (i) ensuring equitable access to basic education;
- (ii) enabling quality and efficiency improvement;
- (iii) capacity building for decentralization through enabling operational autonomy of schools and institutions.

In addition to this official launch for EFA, in September 2003 the government contextualised the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) proposed by the United Nations so that the goals better reflect the realities of Cambodia (MoP 2003). Cambodia's MDG for education is to achieve universal nine-year basic education, including an assurance that all children complete primary schooling by 2010 and nine-year basic schooling by 2015, and that gender disparity in basic education would be eliminated by 2015 (MoP 2003).

Among a variety of strategies to achieve EFA and Cambodian MDG for education, the Priority Action Program (PAP) is the most notable. The purpose of this programme is to reduce the cost burden on the poorest families so as to increase the participation of their children in Grades 1 to 9. In order to achieve this purpose, the programme aims to secure a government funding commitment to the priority programmes to secure more equal access to, and quality of, education, and to shift the focus toward the school level (World Bank 2005). The following are among the PAPs that specifically refer to the basic education sector, PAP Basic Education (World Bank 2005, pp.72-73, original emphases):

- PAP 1: *Education Service Efficiency*. This program is focused on providing equitable access and improved quality and efficiency of education service through improved utilization of MoEYS personnel. Allowances were given through PAP 1 to teachers in hardship postings, such as those where ethnic minorities reside, and to teachers who are responsible for multi-grade and double-shift classes.
- PAP 2: *Primary Education Quality and Efficiency*. The first component of this program aimed to increase enrolment through the provision of school

operational budgets. These grants were meant to replace start-of-year fees, which were abolished at the same time grants were introduced. Guidelines for use of operational budgets were designed to ensure availability of school supplies, encourage minor repairs, and improve the overall school environment. A second component of the program aimed at reducing repetition in grade 1 through the provision of remedial classes in the summer months, for which teachers received financial remuneration.

- PAP 3: *Secondary Education Quality and Efficiency*. This program included provision of school operating budgets to over 550 lower secondary schools. The operational budgets were linked to MoEYS policy for abolishing start-of-year fees as a strategy to reduce the burden on parents and to enhance equitable access.
- PAP 12: *Scholarships and Incentives for Equitable Access*. A major component of this program is a scholarship scheme for lower secondary students in poor areas. Budget allocations for this program began in 2003-04.

PAP budgets are disbursed to each school in the forms of grants and funds: grants are designed for distribution partly on a per school basis and partly on a per capita basis, and funds are provided for remedial classes based on the number of Grade 1 repeaters at the end of the preceding year (World Bank 2005). Grants are 500,000 riels (nearly US\$125) per primary school and 1,000,000 riels (almost US\$250) per lower secondary school⁴. On a per capita basis, 6,000 riels are for a primary pupil and 13,600 riels for a lower secondary student, although the amount varies according to the area where the school is located (World Bank 2005).

Since its official launch in 2001, the ministry budget for PAP has been increasing, and its share in the whole budget has also increased four times annually (Bray and Bunly 2005; MoESY 2005b). The percentage of MoEYS budget for PAP was 12.7% in 2001, which increased to 27.9% in 2004 (MoEYS 2005b).

As in the extracts above, the landmark changes are the abolition of start-of-year fees and the provision of school operational budgets. Each school is given autonomy over how to use the budget for school matters, such as maintenance of school buildings and purchase of educational equipment. The school receives its budget in exchange for its annual school development and monthly expenditure plans, which have to be submitted to the district and provincial education offices.

Prior to the introduction of PAP, schools did not receive operational expenses from their government. Instead, households and communities provided the greatest

share of funding to schools, and thus, each household was required to spend a considerable amount of money on education. For example, in 1997, households and communities shared nearly 60% of the financial and other resources devoted to a school (Bray 1999)⁵. According to the World Bank's (2005) estimation, in Cambodia, the average household expenditure per primary school child accounted for 26% of non-food spending among the poorest households and around 12%, even among the richest.

After the introduction of PAP, the government abolished all informal payments from parents in Grades 1 to 9 nationwide and plans to establish regulations for any parental contribution by the end of 2008 (MoEYS 2005c). The removal of school charges aims to reduce the household costs for education and to increase enrolment, especially from the poorest families (World Bank 2005). For example, out of the combined financial resources of households and the government at the primary level, households were meeting 55.6% of the cost in 2004, as compared to 76.9% in 1997 (Bray and Bunly 2005).

In order to guarantee school autonomy and establish a close link among all the educational actors at the school level, every primary school is now intended to have a School Support Committee (SSC). The responsibilities of the committee are wide-ranging: it stimulates the schooling of children, especially girls and disadvantaged children; it motivates parents to enrol their children in school; it prevents pupil repetition and dropout; it establishes a pro-education community environment; and it tries to make the school development plan pertinent to children's basic learning needs (MoEYS 2002). An SSC consists of approximately 10 members who are selected from the community; a commune chief, village heads, other elder persons in the community and a school principal usually hold the positions of committee leadership, secretary and accountant. Other teachers and villagers, including pupils and their parents, can also be members (MoEYS 2002). As an autonomous school committee, an SSC aims to stimulate a more modern partnership between state authorities and civil society actors (Collins 1998). When it started, the SSC was merely a financial contributor to the school, but it is increasingly becoming a key stakeholder in the planning and support of school development activities (MoEYS and UNICEF 2005). The authority over PAP grants, i.e. school operational budgets, is now partly devolved to the SSC, and the committee is required to use the budgets to be somewhat transparent to the local community with the flexibility needed to meet local needs.

2.1.2. Community Participation in School Management

This section examines the realities of SBM in Cambodia, SBM with community participation, in particular. Drawing on the data from three public primary schools in Cambodian rural communities, it explores the possible impacts of the recent reforms on inequalities in education. The data analysed here are originally from the study by Shoraku (2005; 2007; 2008a; 2008b).

Among community members, the study pays particular attention to the parents whose children are currently enrolled in any of the schools studied⁶. SBM reforms in Cambodia put special emphasis on participation of parents in school management. In every country, parents are the first educators of their children and are responsible for children's early socialisation (Centre for Educational Research and Innovation 1997). As Wils et al. (2005, p.8) stress, parents play significant roles in ensuring access to education for their children:

Whatever the contextual factors, whether government policy, external support, or demand from the economy, it is individual parents and children who decide whether the benefits of the schooling system are worth the investment and opportunity costs. Schooling can only grow if parents are motivated to provide their children with education and the children are motivated to stay in school.

The results of the study suggest that out of 92 parents interviewed, more than half value themselves on equal terms with, or even above, teachers. They stress that they play a major part in developing their children's personality and teach them how to behave appropriately as a member of Cambodian society. With regard to their responsibility for the schooling of their children, they recognise that they should send their children to school and prepare them to be ready for learning. They assume that schooling gives their sons and daughters the skills and knowledge that are required in the country's industrial sector. They believe that an academic career gives their children more opportunities for employment in the non-agricultural sector. More than half of the parents studied hoped their children would complete at least primary education and have some experience of lower secondary education. This supports the basic concept of SBM in Cambodia that parental participation contributes to educational expansion and quality improvement. Especially in rural and remote areas where educational resources, both human and financial, are limited, parental participation may work effectively.

However, analysis of the data in more detail reveals that many of the parents

heavily rely on teachers to ensure their children receive academic training. They understand their own role and that of teachers in a different context. To the parents, a major role of teachers is to equip children with academic skills and knowledge, while parents have the responsibility for education outside of school.

According to the rationale for SBM, people's participation in school management stimulates their awareness of low enrolment, attendance and academic performance. Nevertheless, the study suggests that parents in Cambodian rural communities depend much on teachers for the improvement of learning and teaching at school, and they consider themselves not to be responsible for educating their children at school. The parents certainly acknowledge the importance of formal education, but this may not lead to their participation in school management, let alone to an expansion in access.

In order to explore whether Cambodian parents in rural communities participate in educational activities at school and how they participate in those activities, the study asked every parent the following question: "How do you take part in school activities?" Every participation activity that the parents discussed was categorised as one of the multiple-choice items: "Contributing money to the school;" "Providing labour to repair the school;" "Helping my children study at home;" "Attending a meeting at school;" "Attending an opening or closing ceremony;" "Designing a school development plan;" and "Other." This interview question was given with an unstructured response, not a checklist response. This means that the parents were allowed to provide their own answers, whatever they wanted, and were not asked to select one of the alternatives.

More than 90% of the parents interviewed mentioned participating in activities categorised as "Contributing money to the school." This percentage is quite large, compared to the other activities such as "Attending an opening or closing ceremony" and "Attending a meeting at school." Some of the main purposes for which they contribute money are for new buildings, preparation of opening and/or other ritual school activities, and school lunches.

Regarding financial contributions, the Cambodian government now prohibits schools from requiring parents to make private contributions. As previously explained, the elimination of private contributions is aimed at increasing new enrolments, especially from poorer families, by reducing household costs for education, which would contribute to reducing disparities in access between children from poor families and those from affluent families⁷. The data above, however, show that, in addition to the regular expenses for their children's schooling (e.g., purchasing learning materials), the parents are still burdened with private costs for schooling.

None of the parents studied answered that they were taking part in activities

categorised as “Designing a school development plan.” Designing school events, and discussing the use of financial and material resources with teachers and SSC members would have been grouped with this type of participation. This type of participation will get the voices of parents to be reflected in educational activities at school, which is one of the main rationales for SBM reforms in Cambodia. Nevertheless, Cambodian parents in rural communities will not participate in the formulation of, or the decision-making process for, educational activities at school⁸.

The study also observed a committee meeting in one of the schools. In total, 13 attendees were present in the meeting: all the six teachers, SSC members, the village heads, the commune leader and one NGO staff. They discussed the construction schedule of the new building, how many villagers would be hired, and how much more the school would have to collect from the villagers. After forming a clear view of the project, the information was provided to other villagers, and the villagers contributed money. No parents attended the meeting. This means that ordinary parents – parents who are neither committee members nor community authorities – received the detailed information about the project after the final decisions were already made: they did not participate in the decision-making process.

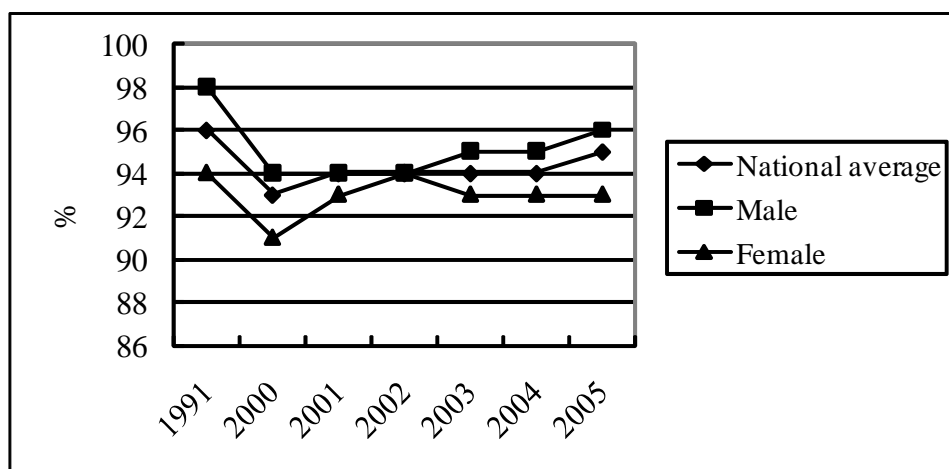
Regarding the selection of SSC members, the government regulates that committee members should be elected, not appointed. In other words, an SSC does not automatically accept a village head or another community authority as a member. In theory, any villager who wants to become a member can stand for election. Yet, the interview with the principal revealed that SSC members in this school were appointed by this principal, and many of them were from other committees, such as the Pagoda Committee and Village Development Committee. This may have led to a situation where a few people in the “vested-interest” group were given additional decision-making power over school governance.

As stated earlier, the Cambodian government created SSCs with the intention that they would become a channel for involving many other villagers, especially parents, in educational decision-making at the school level. The government expected that the formulation of school committees would promote people’s participation in school management, which would lead to an expansion in access and good quality of education. However, in practice, the findings of the study show that the parents have little participation in school decision-making. The parents are not motivated enough to participate in school management. Decision-making power still remains in the hands of few who have already been in positions of authority in the communities. In spite of the recent reforms, the style of school management maintains the status quo.

2.2. Indonesia

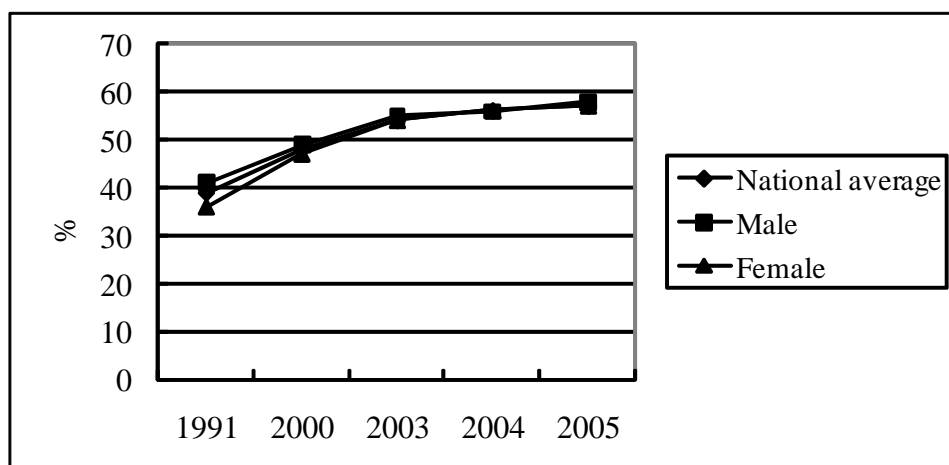
2.2.1. School-based Management after the Crisis

In Indonesia, equity and equality of educational opportunity have been a major issue since the First Five-year Economic Development Plan 1969-1973, and the Indonesian government has introduced a variety of programmes to universalise nine-year compulsory basic education⁹. The result is obvious: in the 1980s, the NER of primary education was already more than 80%, and in the mid 1990s, the NER of primary and lower secondary education reached over 90% and 60%, respectively (UNESCO, the EFA 2000 Assessment Country Reports Indonesia). After the Asian financial crisis of 1997, in 1998, the NER of primary and lower secondary education slightly decreased: the NER were 95% at the primary level and 56% at the lower secondary level before the crisis, but slowed down to 93% and 53%, respectively, in 1998 (UNESCO, the EFA 2000 Assessment Country Reports Indonesia). However, the ratios are recovering, as indicated in Figures 3 and 4.



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

Figure 3. Net enrolment ratios in Indonesia: primary education



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

Figure 4. Net enrolment ratios in Indonesia: secondary education

SBM in Indonesia was introduced in some pilot areas in 1999, right after the collapse of the Suharto regime in 1998, and expanded to throughout the country in 2001. The highly centralised education system during the regime was inefficient in terms of teaching methods and course contents. Most of the course contents were determined at the central level, and teachers were not given much autonomy over their teaching methods or in designing curricula. The central Ministry of National Education was responsible for authorisation of textbooks, school establishment standards, hours of instruction and other matters related to the governance of public schools (Nakaya 2001). However, this style of school management could not respond to the educational needs that varied from one region to another.

Besides the collapse of the regime, there was another factor that initiated the reform. In order to recover from the Asian financial crisis that severely hit the country's economy, the government urgently needed to cut the central expenditures, and instead, to transfer many responsibilities to the lower levels of the hierarchy (Kristiansen and Pratikno 2006). This supports the arguments by Hanson (1998), King and Guerra (2005) and others discussed earlier in this paper: SBM reforms in East Asia are often introduced for political and fiscal, rather than educational, concerns.

In 2001 when SBM was introduced nationally, managerial and financial responsibilities for all the levels of public schools were delegated to the district level, or the third layer of the five-tier government hierarchy (Kristiansen and Pratikno 2006). The entire provincial and district education offices of the Ministry of National Education that had been in charge of school administration and financing were abolished, and district bureaus of education under the Ministry of Interior and

Administration took over many of the roles that had been assumed by the offices (Nakaya 2001). The Ministry of National Education is now in charge only of the formulation of national education policy¹⁰.

SBM in Indonesia is targeting four aspects of basic education: quality, equality, relevance and efficiency. In the early 1990s, the equality in basic education of this country showed good progress. However, after the Asian financial crisis, the number of households who lived in poverty or even under the poverty line increased significantly. Subsequently, many of the children from those families remain uneducated or have much less experience of schooling (Sadiman 2004). During the 1990s, huge inequalities remained in the access to a good quality of education. For example, during the period, lower secondary students performed well at the national examinations, on average. Yet, more detailed analysis reveals that the wealthiest provinces, such as Central Java and Yogyakarta, experienced an increase in the scores, while the middle-income and poorest provinces, such as East Timor and Nusa Tenggara Barat, did not meet the requirements for achievement, and some provinces in fact experienced a decrease (UNESCO, the EFA 2000 Assessment Country Reports Indonesia).

Prior to SBM reforms, the high percentage of government subsidies worked to reduce the disparity between some prosperous provinces and others with fewer resources¹¹. After 2001, when the provincial and district education offices were closed down, the budgeting system was changed. Currently, schools receive government subsidies from the district bureaus of education. The amount of the budget to each school is determined by its immediate district bureau, according to the situations and academic performance of the school (Nakaya 2005; Toi and Muta 2006). In order to receive their budgets, schools are required to formulate annual plans and implementation programmes. The annual plans are submitted first to the county offices, and the county offices submit the plans to the district bureaus (Nakaya and Suwa 2001).

Importantly, pupils or students, parents and other community members as well as teachers need to participate in the formulation and implementation of the plans and programmes (Nakaya 2005). For the realisation of autonomous schools with their participation, a school committee was established in every school in 2002. The committee of each school plays a significant role in school governance. Its roles cover a broad range of areas. It helps the school determine the minimum standards of academic achievement and the criteria for new enrolments, and recommends the appointment and dismissal of new principals and teachers. Furthermore, the committee monitors the quality of teaching and learning (Sumintono 2007). Each committee consists of a variety of members of the community, including parents, educational experts and

alumni, as well as teacher representatives of the school (Nakaya 2005). The government expects that this style of school management will increase the overall quality of education, and teaching and learning in classrooms will become more relevant to pupils' or students' needs.

Another strategy to improve needs-relevance is that schools now have some autonomy to develop local curricula. In Indonesia, the central Ministry of National Education was controlling almost every aspect of teaching and learning at the school level, and the ministry formulated the national curriculum. Individual schools did not have much freedom to adapt the curriculum to their local needs. The recent reform, however, set a few subjects, the curriculum of which provincial governments hold the authority to develop. Each school develops course contents of the subjects and tailors its own teaching methods (Nakaya 2000). For example, provinces with many scenic spots such as Yogyakarta can use the subjects to teach about tourism development, which is more likely to match the learning needs of many students.

2.2.2. Impacts of School-based Management

It may be too early to examine the impacts of SBM reforms, but there is some evidence showing that SBM in Indonesia does not necessarily have a favourable impact. Also there are some arguments that educational decentralisation, including SBM in this country, widened educational inequalities. In terms of quality, the recent reform has brought some counter results in the gap between schools located in different areas. According to Indriyanto (2003), schools in economically poorer areas tend to have a lower quality of education, and contrarily, schools in prosperous areas tend to have a good quality of education. In Indonesia, as well as in the other two countries covered in this paper, SBM reforms have made a school largely dependent on the participation of the local population for its management. Therefore, there is a risk that pupils or students with good academic performance but coming from relatively poor families in poor communities may not enjoy as good educational opportunities, while their counterparts who are from affluent families may enjoy a better quality of education that their schools provide (Indriyanto 2003).

Toi and Muta (2006), based on their empirical research, point out the gap widening between the schools. Their study compares the data of 2002 to 1999 and points out that some schools became more budgeted and sufficiently equipped with many teachers, while the conditions in other schools worsened. One of the main reasons behind this discrepancy is the new budgeting system (Toi and Muta 2006). As explained

in the previous section, every school receives its operational budget, the amount of which is determined at the district level. However, the district governments do not necessarily possess enough knowledge and skills to allocate appropriate resources to appropriate places on a timely basis. The governments of poorer provinces and districts have much less capacity, so that it is more likely that schools in these areas cannot receive necessary budgets in the right timing.

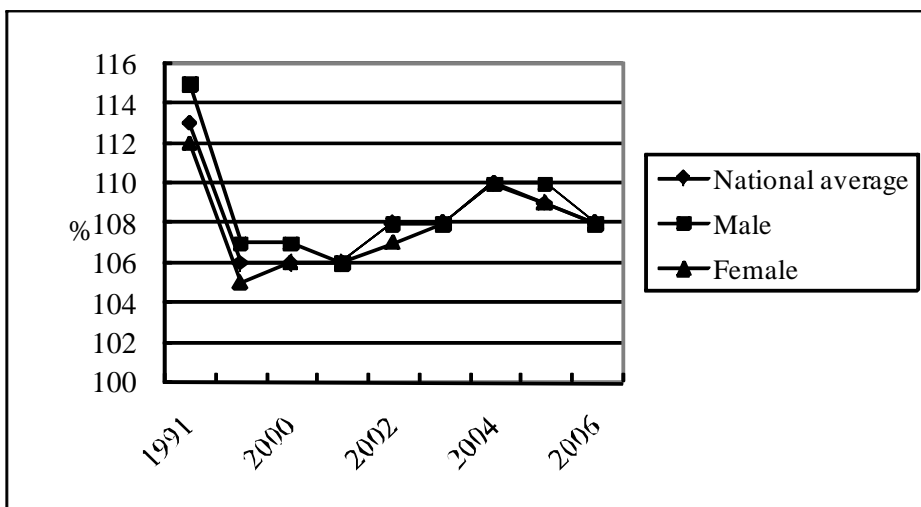
The study by Sumintono (2007) in Lombok reveals the situation that principals tend to dominate the information on SBM, and other teachers are less knowledgeable about how and to what extent they can exercise the autonomy they are given. The teachers attend SBM training organised by the government, and they believe that SBM benefits the improvement of teaching and learning. They consider that the authority to formulate school plans and develop curricula should devolve to the school level. However, they lack practical skills and knowledge to exercise this authority on site. Furthermore, they are confused about the influx of new changes, and do not obtain information that is really practical and reliable (Sumintono 2007). Understanding SBM theory and practicing it on site are quite different matters.

Sumintono (2007) also points out the lack of communication between ordinary teachers and school committees. School committees tend to communicate with principals, but often do not make enough, or frequent, contact with other teachers. Compared to principals, teachers attend committee meetings less frequently. Consequently, with them receiving less information, their teaching in the classroom remains unchanged, which does not provide much of a positive impact on the performance of students.

2.3. Thailand

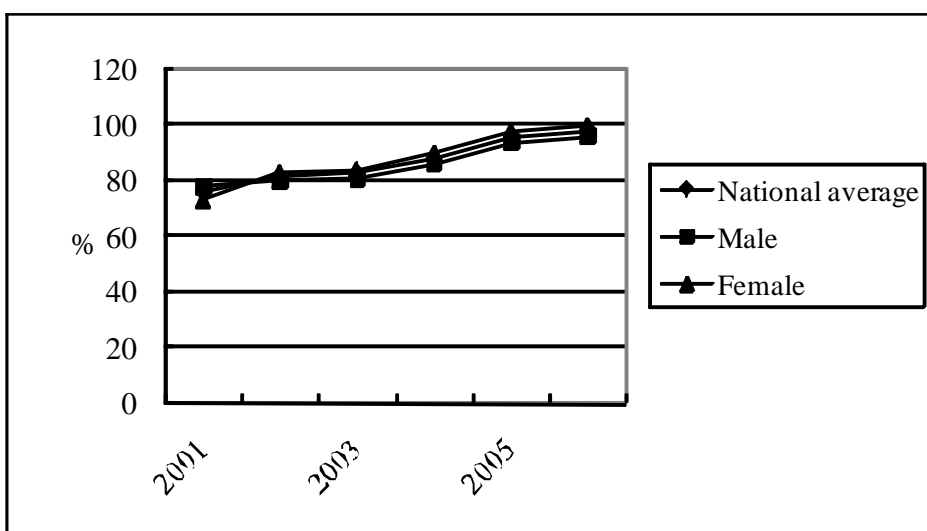
2.3.1. National School-based Management Commitment

Thailand's policy and framework for action on EFA was officially formulated in 1992. Since then, this country has attempted to implement various kinds of activities, and has made steady progress. Particularly, the National Education Act of 1999 legislated that compulsory education shall be extended from six to nine years. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, which was approved in 1999, stipulates that all Thai citizens shall enjoy their rights to education, and it guarantees a 12-year free and good-quality basic education to all children in the country.



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

Figure 5. Gross enrolment ratios in Thailand: primary education



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

Figure 6. Gross enrolment ratios in Thailand: lower secondary education

Figures 5 and 6 show the country's progress in the past few years. At the primary level, the average gross enrolment ratios (GER) of the entire country decreased from 113% in 1991 to 106% in 1999 (Figure 5). This is partly due to the Asian financial crisis of 1997, but since the economic recovery, the GER has been gradually recovering. Besides the GER, the NER of the country on average has been relatively high (e.g., in 2006, the ratio was 94% both for males and females). Lower secondary education is also expanding. In 2006, the GER and NER of this level of education reached 98% and 71%, respectively. Compared to some other countries in East Asia that are still far from

having wide access to the lower secondary level, Thailand has accelerated its enrolment.

The Thai government usually formulates its educational development plans to be consistent with the National Economic and Social Development Plans (NESDP). The First to Sixth NESDP focused on the production of manpower to meet the country's demands for economic and social development. However, in the Seventh and Eighth NESDPs, the focus was adjusted to concentrate more on people as the centre of development, and consequently more emphasis was put on the basic education sector.

During the initial stage of the Seventh NESDP (1992-1996), the EFA Assessment Country Report pointed out some educational management obstacles, including inequalities in education. The report states that the educational inequalities of Thailand are largely due to poverty: poverty causes children to come to and learn at school without enough learning equipment, uniforms or daily lunches. Besides, disabled children are not fully and widely provided for. The number of HIV/AIDS sufferers is also increasing (Murata 2003). Referring to this unfavourable situation, Murata (2003) and Witte (2000) analyse that as a result of the Asian financial crisis, the country faces some serious social problems (e.g., the gap between the rich and poor, cultural deterioration, and weak economic competitiveness). It is reported that in Thailand, 800,000 children, or 15% of primary school-age children, are still out of school, out of which 54% are females (Lugo 2005).

To overcome these inequalities in educational opportunity, the Thai government identified major target groups and recognised the importance of delivering education to those groups. The groups include children from low-income families, the underprivileged in overcrowded communities, those residing in remote areas, child labourers and orphans. Among them, those in remote areas and those living in poverty receive special attention (Fry 2006). In order to secure the access to basic education of a high quality for these disadvantaged children, the government considered that centralised decision-making by a small group at the central level should be changed.

In 1997, Thailand launched SBM reforms with the purpose of overcoming the deterioration in the quality of education provided by a poorly coordinated and hierarchical bureaucratic administration (Gamage and Sooksomchitra 2004). The National Education Act of 1999 was enacted to pave the way for this extensive nationwide educational reform. To implement the reform successfully, the Committee on Reform of the Educational Administrative System and the Committee on Learning Reforms were newly established at the central level (Gamage and Sooksomchitra 2004).

Thailand's educational reforms put special emphasis on four areas (Murata 2003, p.16):

- (1) Achieving education equally accessible to all: especially at the lower secondary level
- (2) Improving the quality of education: at all levels of education, from pre-primary to higher education
- (3) Developing a child-centred curriculum: promoting educational management whereby learners study independently with critical and analytical thinking, and seek for more knowledge.
- (4) Implementing effective management of schools and other educational institutions, including central and local governments: 1) decentralising administrative and financial authorities to local and other educational institutions, 2) promoting harmony between educational policy planning and administration, 3) stimulating community and parental participation in school management, and 4) encouraging private and public partnerships in education.

In order to implement SBM, a School Management Committee (SMC) was established in every school in 2003. The main responsibilities of the committee are the supervision, assessment and evaluation of day-to-day educational activities at school (Murata 2007). The SMC usually is comprised of parents, teachers, community-based organisations, local governments, alumni, religious associations and other influential people in the community.

Before the establishment of the SMC, each school was supported by a school committee that consisted of the principal and some community authorities such as village heads. This school committee model was officially established in 1982, but according to Murata (2003), the committees already existed in many schools in the 1960s. The roles of a committee were limited to providing indirect support for the school (e.g., encouraging enrolment, providing the school with financial support, and establishing a pro-education community environment) (Murata 2007). Compared to school committees, the SMC has more decision-making authority over everyday school operations, including autonomy in the use of budgets and financing.

In 2003, the Ministry of Education adopted a new system of a per-head rather than line-item budget. That is, the amount of the budget to a school is determined according to the number of pupils or students registered. Schools now receive their budgets as block grants instead of by charging fees to their pupils or students. In principle, every pupil or student is worth an equal per-head in the budget; however, a child in a remote area, living in poverty or with special needs gets a per-head amount

almost a time-and-a-half to nearly twenty-times, depending on his/her conditions and educational level (Sangnapaboworn 2006). Schools also receive supplemental funding from their immediate local governments (Fry 2006).

In order to accelerate the reforms, in 2003, the Ministry of Education legally incorporated every public primary and secondary school (Morishita 2007; Murata 2007; Sangnapaboworn 2006). The incorporation of public schools gave them the responsibility for their financing, allowing them to receive funds from outside, for example, their communities, NGOs and private companies (Morishita 2007). This means that primary and secondary schools in Thailand are no longer under the direct jurisdiction or control of the government. A school itself is entirely responsible for the improvement of its teaching and learning environment. Moreover, a school needs to consider its pupils or students as its clients, taking full responsibility to deliver a good quality of education. Schools are much more required to be responsive to the educational needs of various children, such as children with special needs, HIV/AIDS sufferers and those from poorer families who are educationally excluded. In other words, schools themselves as well as the government have to be responsible for reducing educational inequalities.

2.3.2. Local Reactions to School-based Management

Preparing for the start of SMC, the Thai government conducted a nationwide survey of SBM in 2001, and found that those at the school and community levels (i.e., principals, teachers and community members) expected their schools to be managed as follows (Boonmee 2002):

- (1) Principals should be competent enough to meet the requirements of the educational reforms. For example, they have to exercise leadership and be able to work in a team, and also they need to develop both their knowledge and abilities in management. Moreover, they should be able to show a supportive attitude toward the reforms.
- (2) Principals should adopt the indicators of the SBM approach. They are required to encourage community members to participate in the development of the learning process. Also, they are expected to adopt a democratic approach by taking into account the opinions of all parties concerned, especially opinions on the planning of school development for the benefit of children.

Much more pressure is placed on principals, and people in local communities expect that their schools will be operated to foster their children's learning achievement. Nevertheless, some research and subsequent literature state that the styles of school management have remained the status quo, and impacts of the recent reform have not been as significant as expected.

Hallinger (2003) stresses that educational bureaucracy remains in Thailand and this hampers the institutions, including schools, from responding to new priorities. At the school level, as expressed above, a principal should be the school leader, manager and also supervisor who organises the school in a cooperative style of leadership. In Thailand, principals have been the persons who were always called for to provide and clarify the decisions on school governance, and also the persons who had the information from the government (Gamage and Sooksomchitra 2004). After the SBM reforms, this style of leadership still remains, and principals are afraid that other teachers think they do not know how to manage their jobs if they ask other teachers. Other teachers also expect their principals to direct them (Hallinger 2003; Hallinger and Kantamara 2003).

Gamage and Sooksomchitra (2004) also point out the unchanged leadership style, although they stress that the recent reform in Thailand has been successfully implemented. SMC members feel that principals tend to dominate the decision-making process, and much of the information is provided via their principals (Gamage and Sooksomchitra 2004). It is doubted to what extent this style of leadership contributes to reducing inequalities in education, since schools may not fully exercise their independence and creativity with widely collected opinions. Similar to the case of Cambodia in this paper, schools in Thailand are governed by a small group of people, especially by principals and the persons close to the principal. The voices of many others cannot be reflected in day-to-day school operations.

Based on their research in primary schools, Boonreang et al. (2004) analyse the development of the local curriculum introduced at the time when the National Education Act of 1999 was enacted, and conclude that those at the school level (i.e. teachers including principals, community members and local government supervisors) lack the knowledge and experience to get started to develop the curricula¹². In particular, teachers do not possess self-confidence in or capacities for developing the student-centred teaching methods that the new curriculum reform strongly encourages (Boonreang et al. 2004).

According to the Ministry of Education, Thailand (2004), schools should develop the contents of local curriculum by utilising local knowledge. Consequently, the

contents shall become responsive to local needs, and pupils and students will acquire the cultural norms of Thailand and how to behave in their communities. The government expects that given the great cultural and regional diversity in Thailand, this new policy on local curriculum will positively affect teaching and learning at school (Fry 2006). Yet, as Morishita (2007) and Suzuki et al. (2004) analyse, this curriculum reform was too rapid for those at the school level to obtain appropriate knowledge and skills, and the budgets allocated to each school for curriculum design are not enough, either. Especially, schools in rural and remote areas that are often small in size and lack experienced teachers are facing more severe situations.

The new school budgeting system may also produce counter results to educational equality. Some local governments such as Bangkok, Pattaya and Phuket can ensure enough revenues and thus, have considerable resources to devote to their schools, while schools in other provinces with little revenue, especially in the disadvantaged remote Northeast, such as Buriram and Amnatcharoen, will be financially troubled. The incorporation of public schools that allowed them to finance themselves will also widen the gap between schools in prosperous and more populated areas, and those in poorer areas. This is given that schools in wealthier communities can collect more money and resources from people in the communities and private organisations, while those in poorer areas cannot. Furthermore, some schools, secondary schools in particular, collect more money from parents due to the government's new policy of tuition charge-free. This makes parents feel that costs for schooling have become higher (Sangnapaboworn 2006), and will prevent the parents who cannot afford the costs from sending their children to school.

3. Conclusions and Some Implications

In all three countries covered in this paper, the governments' policy statements espouse the devolution of decision-making power to local schools, and SBM is a focal point of the policies to achieve EFA. However, the analysis of some studies and subsequent literature reveal a dichotomy between the policy intention and its implementation and practice at the school level. SBM reforms that were introduced with intentions to reduce inequalities in education are actually widening, or have a risk to widen, the gap between the schools in different areas, and/or between children in different situations. Declared policies on school autonomy have been translated into some disappointing and unexpected results.

To date, a range of supply-side issues, such as government policies on SBM or

school autonomy and its corresponding programmes, have received much attention. However, issues on the part of the educational actors at the school levels have not been carefully considered. This paper has highlighted the need for educational policymakers at the central level and their international partners to carefully consider demand-side factors pertaining to SBM reforms. Practical implications are covered in the following suggestions, many of which will require time and patience, but will be well worth the effort.

It may be necessary to train teachers, particularly principals, in basic leadership techniques and community organisation skills. As in the sections for Indonesia and Thailand, they are presently one of the least-prepared groups for SBM. They are trained for teaching in their classrooms, but they are not school management experts or seasoned spokespersons for all the educational stakeholders at the school level. In particular, teachers in rural and remote areas face much more difficulties than their counterparts in urban areas. In conjunction with their efforts to improve their pedagogical skills and knowledge, teachers should receive guidance on how to manage schools effectively (e.g., use of school budgets, financing and community organisation).

With teachers trained in leadership techniques, local government staff also needs to be trained in monitoring, supervising and assessing school operations. They might be already trained in routine administrative work, but they do not necessarily possess the skills or knowledge to finance educational systems effectively and to equally allocate limited resources. They should be equipped with these skills and knowledge so as to work in cooperation with and support teachers.

In order to stimulate community participation more widely, so as to collect as many voices as possible, it may be necessary to establish separate school-based autonomous organisations for vested-interest groups and other ordinary people. As in the section for Cambodia, authority given to schools is exercised only by a few people who have been influential; many others are excluded from the decision-making process, and they are not given a platform nor encouraged to voice their opinions. It might be necessary to give them a common space to express their thoughts. An organisation specifically for ordinary people (e.g., parents) could allow them to work together, and share ideas and concerns about their children and schools. As the Cambodian section suggests, parents should have many ideas about how to improve teaching and learning, and how to motivate children who are not currently enrolled. Comfortable spaces for open discussion would enable them to identify supportive people who share similar concerns about education. Active and successful parental and school-based organisations can play an important role in identifying the issues to be overcome.

Notes

¹ According to the EFA classification, the East Asia region consists of 15 countries: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Indonesia, Japan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Macao (China), Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam.

² SBM experience in Latin America shows that school councils in this region elect their members from the community, and in many cases, the councils hold power to hire and fire their teachers (King and Guerra 2005; World Bank 2007).

³ According to the Cambodian government's classification, urban areas comprise the four municipalities of Phnom Penh, Kep, Sihanoukville and Pailin, and all provincial towns. Where population density of an area is less than 10, the area is termed a remote area. The rest fall under rural areas.

⁴ The riel is the local Cambodian currency.

⁵ Other sources of funds are politicians, NGOs and school-generated income (Bray 1999).

⁶ This case study defines a parent as a birth father or mother, adoptive father or mother or legal guardian of a child.

⁷ A contrary view of this governmental action states that free primary education may have a negative effect on the relationships among schools, communities and parents. Bray and Bunly (2005) emphasise that the strong community spirit in many schools in Cambodia might be diminished if the government provides all the costs of schooling, and some parents and communities are both willing and able to share the costs of schooling.

⁸ The result of this study partly matches the World Bank's (2005) version of parental participation in school development planning. According to the bank's analysis, most of the Cambodian parents surveyed are neither aware of the preparation of school development plans nor are involved in the process. The gap between the government's intention and the practices at school is attributed to a combination of factors, including schools' lack of effort to involve parents and parents' lack of active participation in school matters as a whole (World Bank 2005).

⁹ Until 1994, compulsory education was six years for primary education: in 1994, compulsory education became nine years, covering both primary and lower secondary education.

¹⁰ Many of the religious schools such as *madrasah* and *pesantren* are administered by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kristiansen and Pratikno 2006).

¹¹ The subsidy from the central government accounted for 70% of the local budget revenue (Nakaya 2001).

¹² New Curriculum for Basic Education 2001 sets the guideline that 30% of the curriculum can be locally determined, while 70% of the curriculum is determined at the

central level (Fry 2006).

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