Chapter 9: Recognizing diversity: The incipient role of intercultural education in Thailand

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Abstract

Thailand has a long and consistent policy of denying concessions to a pluralist vision of its identity which would arise from formal recognition of differences, and has never embraced, at the official level, any discourse approximating multiculturalism. Instead, it has stressed the importance of minority assimilation to established and privileged norms, and succeeded in propagating a general perception of itself, both domestically and internationally, as ethnically homogenous. Despite this attempt to create an image of cultural homogeneity, as the first section of this chapter demonstrates, Thailand has a long history of diversity, from the polyethnic foundations of the Kingdom of Siam to the geophysical demarcation of its territory. Suppression of diversity in Thailand has resulted in ethnic stratification, the consequences of which reverberate throughout modern society. The second component of the chapter focuses on an education commission undertaken through the UNICEF Language, Education and Social Cohesion (LESC) initiative, a component of the UNICEF Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy (PBEA) Programme. Activities undertaken through the LESC initiative and through this particular mapping exercise represent important groundwork in creating a dialogue around difference and how it is represented and engaged with in the Thai education system. In the context of the exercise in curriculum mapping some reflections on the relevance of the notions of multicultural education for the specific setting and historical circumstances of Thailand are elaborated.

Key words: Cultural diversity, Deep South insurrection, intercultural education, language rights, language policy, LESC (Language, Education and Social Cohesion), Thailand.

Introduction

While modern Thailand is seen as a country of remarkable homogeneity in comparison to neighboring countries, Simpson and Thammasathien (2007) argue that the 'apparent "unity amongst diversity" which distinguishes Thailand from various other countries in the region…is the clear result of a hundred years of state-controlled language-planning initiatives in conjunction with sustained and highly successful efforts at nation-building' (p.391-2). An overwhelmingly important characteristic of Thailand's experience of difference, and how it is accommodated, is a powerful and historically sanctioned national narrative of a centralized and standardized 'Thai-ness' – language, culture, religion and politics.

Successive governments of Thailand have promoted both the image of a homogenous, united and securely bounded nation, as well as taking action to counter the lively and extensive reality of ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity of the populations that comprise the kingdom. This effort to construct a cohesive national state by stressing a unitary cultural depiction of the kingdom can be contrasted to the opposite tendency of some of its neighbors, especially Malaysia. Thailand has a long and consistent policy of denying concessions to a pluralist vision of its identity which would arise from formal recognition of differences, and has never embraced, at the official level, any discourse approximating multiculturalism. Instead, it has stressed the importance of minority assimilation to established and privileged norms, and succeeded in propagating a general perception of itself, both domestically and internationally, as ethnically homogenous.

This first section of this chapter reflects on the polyethnic foundations of the Kingdom of Siam, the geophysical demarcation of its territory, and creation of 'Thai-ness'. The ensuing suppression of diversity in Thailand has resulted in ethnic stratification, the consequences of which reverberate throughout modern society. While in many ways

successfully forging an identifiable and universally legible Thai-ness, inequitable educational outcomes and ongoing conflict and violence in some regions of the country illustrate detrimental aspects of this endeavor. While expressions of pluralism have been accommodated in small amounts, this review of multicultural discourse and its manifestations reveals the reluctance of state institutions to engage substantively with the implications of ethnic, linguistic and religious differences among the population. This chapter also reports on developments that point in precisely this direction and some of the pressures and openings that might indicate future lines of development in multicultural education.

The second component of the chapter focuses on an education commission undertaken through the UNICEF Language, Education and Social Cohesion (LESC) initiative, a component of the UNICEF Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy (PBEA) Programme. LESC has focused on research and intervention activities exploring policy and planning, particularly with regards to current practices and prevailing attitudes and values related to language throughout education systems. Central to these activities has been the role of language in civil society, public policy and the labour market, how these conditions shape language and ethnicity issues, and how amenable they are to change. Focusing on intercultural education, this section draws from the report *An Upper Primary and Junior Secondary School Intercultural Education Framework* (Lo Bianco and UNICEF, 2015)[1] to detail an exercise in mapping intercultural education as a general capability onto the Thai curriculum. This work was undertaken in consultation with the Thai Ministry of Education in 2014, but has not moved to implementation stage at this point. However, activities undertaken through the LESC initiative and through this particular mapping exercise

[1] Materials in the second component of this chapter have been adapted from Lo Bianco and UNICEF, 2015, *An Upper Primary and Junior Secondary School Intercultural Education*, with the permission of UNICEF EAPRO Bangkok

represent important groundwork in creating a dialogue around difference and how it is represented and engaged with in the Thai education system.

The demarcation of a nation

When tracing the intellectual history of Thailand back through to the 14th century, Wyatt (2002) captures glimpses of political, religious, and artistic ideation through more than 1300 years of history. His illuminations provide insights into the multicultural, multiethnic and multilingual congregation of people in the plains of Siam during the formation of the Kingdom. In these early years, as detailed in Winichakul's (1994) influential work, *Siam Mapped: A history of the Geo-Body of a Nation*, boundaries were characterized by overlapping and shifting conceptualizations of cosmographic, religious and political spaces and lacked reference to bounded notions of geographical and political jurisdictions. Allegiances of overlords and local tributary kingdoms were changeable and interchangeable between Siam's rulers, as well as with rulers of neighboring states, and people moved with few restrictions across ethnic and geographic boundaries (Lo Bianco 2012; Toyota 2005).

Allegiances and political activity were also strongly influenced by the geographical position of the capital, Ayutthaya, which was located at the base of neighboring uplands, with access to the waterways of Southeast Asia. The burgeoning kingdom accommodated a polyethnic gathering of traders, settlers and explorers from all surrounding lands, expanding over the centuries to include Koreans, Japanese, Ryukuans, and colonizers of surrounding regions such as the Dutch, Spaniards, Portuguese and English (Wyatt 2002).

Change was forced upon Siam and its ruler by the imperialistic intentions of the French and British. Mapmaking undertaken by Siam, and eventually by Thailand's rulers, moved towards the explicit demarcation of space. In exploring aspects of border theory, Lo Bianco (2012) engages Winichakul's work, to illustrate how the contemplation of both the

physical and conceptual reality of border creation led to the construction of a national sentiment, the nation-state of Thailand and the Thai-political self. Yet, in the course of creating the Thai state and Thai culture, the 'Other' had to be created. The 'Other' has taken many complex and changing forms over Thai history. Renard (2006) argues, that it was originally a fluid construction, which allowed people to move between being 'Tai' and 'non-Tai'. However, over time, the notion of 'Other' evolved, moving from a conceptualization that did not primarily differentiate on ethnicity, language and culture, to one based on a unitary notion of 'Thai-ness'. When the threat of colonization was at its peak in Thailand, inculcation in Thai-ness, which embodied Thai history, Thai language, and Thai manner, among other distinctions, was a leading priority (Renard 2006). Through these effective strategic maneuverings, Thailand distinguishes itself from many other countries in the region in having never been colonized.

The formation of a constitutional monarchy in 1932 and the founding of the Kingdom of Thailand in 1939, led to all inhabitants of the Kingdom becoming 'Thais', a process that emphasized the civic duty of studying Thai language and Thai-ness (Simpson & Thammasathien 2007). Subsequently, a socio-political system was formed based on the three pillars of religion (Buddhism), monarchy and nation (Tais). The key mechanism for creating unity during this period was *Ekkalak* – meaning 'only one characteristic', perpetuated through the endeavors of the *Office of Ekkalak Thai* (Luangthongkum 2007).

In the decades since the establishment of the Kingdom of Thailand, the notion of 'Thai-ness', with the three pillars at its core, has been a 'cornerstone of nation building and the creation of a national identity' (Premsrirat & Bruthiaux 2012, p.11). Thai-ness, as a nationalist construct, is based on projections of ethnic and linguistic homogeneity, with the Monarchy at its center and the king as the spiritual leader (Streckfuss, 2012). Streckfuss (2012) argues that the appearance of a unitary Thai identity, both ethnically and culturally,

has resulted from ‘a combination of linguistics, a pseudo-science of race and ethnicity and historical revisionism’ (p.305) on the part of Thai governments, where the ethnic history of Thailand has developed alongside the centralized formation of Thai identity; the latter predominating until recent decades. The effectiveness of the assimilation process can be seen in the great reduction in ethnic diversity, which Renard (2006) argues was in the hundreds in the early 20th century, reduced to broadly homogeneous groupings in modern times.

Diversity in Thailand

The depiction of difference in Thailand differs markedly between political discourse, regional discourse and the rhetoric utilized in socio-ethnic and sociolinguistic descriptions. In one respect, cultural diversity is an accepted feature of Thai political-social life. The official administrative divisions of the state acknowledge diversity, so that ‘central’, ‘northern’, ‘northeastern’ and ‘southern’ Thailand do not simply designate physical territory but also encapsulate ethnic and cultural characteristics associated with proximal states, particularly Laos in the northeast and Malaysia in the south but actually these four divisions instantiate great historical linguistic and cultural differences. However, successive Thai public administrations have largely repudiated the use of Lao, Khmer, Malay as ways to understand, or identify, the populations of these zones, in favor of the unitary ascription of Thai (Jory 2000).

It needs to be stated that the promotion of Thai-ness as the ultimate state of representation of Thai identity, and ‘Thai-ization’ as the process of its accomplishment, is a project in which national bureaucracy is accompanied by an activist military and strongly participatory monarchical culture, including nationalist scholarship emanating from privileged institutions serving the project of creating a unitary national identity. However, the regional patterns of ethnic diversity as discussed above act as a counterpoint to the official ‘Bangkok-centric’ narrative, or the ‘centralized’ formation of Thai identity (Streckfuss 2012).

Regionalized diversity is often problematic politically because it overlaps and indexes proximal states and historical territorial struggles, complicated by imperial intrusion from Britain and France, and later Japan. Proximal states (Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia and Myanmar) share the overarching supra-national security apparatus of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) with Thailand, but each has a complex and often still troubled connection of disputes over territory and hegemony.

Ethnically, the three major groups in Thailand are ethnic Thais (around 45% of Thais), Thais of Lao-Isan ethnicity (northeast Thailand - around 30%) and Sino-Thais (western and north-western Thailand - around 14%). Other major ethnic groups include the hill peoples in the north and west of Thailand such as the Hmong and Karen; the Islamic Malay peoples in the southern four provinces of Thailand; the Khmer-Thais in the lower northeast of the country, and other ethnic groups such as the Cambodians and Vietnamese (north-east Thailand) (Rappa 2006). The political definition of 'ethnic minority' in Thailand, however, differs to the ethnolinguistic representation of ethnicity above and is more akin to the notion of 'stateless' people or refugee status (see Luangthongkum 2007).

Despite the ubiquity of Standard Thai, there are 76 living languages in Thailand, 65 of which are indigenous, with a further 11 classified as immigrant languages. Four regional Thai dialects predominate - Northern Thai (spoken by 10% of Thais), Northeastern Thai (28%), Central Thai (39%), and Southern Thai (9%) (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig 2013). As a result, Luangthongkum (2007) argues, most Thais (86%) are bidialectal in that they speak a regional Thai as a mother tongue before learning Standard Thai. Around 7.6% of the population speak a non-Thai language. Across the Thai population, approximately 94% speak Tai-Kadai languages, 2% speak Austro-Asiatic languages, 2% Austronesian languages, 1% Tibeto-Burman languages and smaller proportions of Thais use Hmong-Mien languages.

Premsrirat (2007) argues that the hierarchical relationship of languages in Thailand mirrors the social hierarchy in Thailand (see Figure 1). Many people, particularly among the ethnic minorities, are bilingual or multilingual but treat their languages as diglossic. Ethnic languages are spoken in the home or neighborhood, with regional or national languages used in all situations outside of these domains. 'People can change their identity and social status if they can speak the language and have the education or economic status of people at a higher social level' (Premsrirat 2007, p.79).

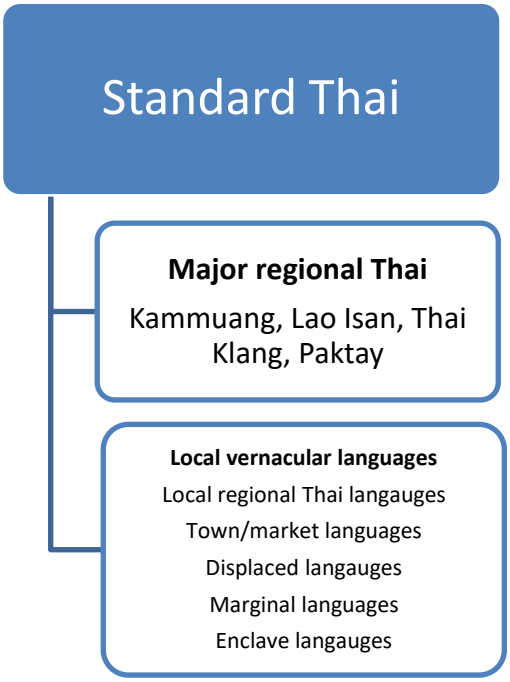


Figure 1: Language hierarchy of Thailand, (adapted from Premsrirat 2007).

Premsirat (2011) argues that the linguistic and cultural diversity of Thailand should be promoted, partly to 'reinvigorate their cultural and linguistic identity' (p. 55) but also to allow access to quality education and employment opportunities. It is pertinent that Premsrirat's (2011) work was published in an edition of the official journal of the Royal Institute of Thailand, subtitled *Harmony in Culture*, partly dedicated to the process of development of a

national language policy. While the Institute officially adopted the national language policy in 2010 (see Warotamasikkhadit and Person (2011) in the same edition for an overview of the policy process and aims), Premsrirat (2011) nonetheless contends that the notion of Thai-ness 'needs to be broadened to offer ethnolinguistic groups their own space within Thai political society on an equal basis so that they may be empowered to live a dignified life with security, justice and opportunity' (p.55).

Problematically though, neither Thai nor minority languages, enjoy national juridical recognition or any kind of local legal status even in public administration or service delivery. The 2007 constitution does not specify a position in relation to any language (although Thai is the *de jure* national language based on other acts and edicts (Draper, 2013b)). Furthermore, in the draft 2015 constitution, 'Thai is not specified in the constitution as the national language, meaning there is no recognition of other languages, nor a framework for supporting minorities along ethnolinguistic lines' (Draper, 2015a, n.p.). Additionally, while the Royal Institute of Thailand adopted the national language policy in early 2010, the document is not legally binding and is, at present, a 'brief statement of principle', although potential remains for the instrument to provide greater support for languages other than Thai (Draper 2013b, p.9). Education reforms (see below) commenced in 1999 and envisage local adaptations of curriculum and, if fully implemented, could represent a site of future development.

Thailand's notorious political instability, the nation with 'the most coups' (Fisher, 2013), is particularly acute in the 'color struggles' between republican (red) and monarchist (yellow) loyalties of the past 15 years. These conflicts have established a broad sense that change is needed, but such change will result in strong negative reactions.

In general, though, the lack of recognition of and space for Thailand's cultural and linguistic diversity in education contributes to the diminishing of diversity. Although tens of millions of Thais are multilingual, bidialectal, or have a Thai dialect or other language as a first language (Kosonen & Person 2014), standard Thai is the sole medium of instruction in schools other than in some private schools where occasionally English and sometimes other languages are used as teaching media. There has been a limited small scale experimental where minority languages have been used as the medium of instruction, but official Thai is the sole language of government offices and the bulk of mass media. Thai and a handful of prestige foreign languages are core subjects in the National Curriculum, commanding between 240 and 480 minutes per week across the curriculum (see Table 1). While English is typically taught as the foreign language in all Thai schools, other foreign languages such as Mandarin, French, Japanese and Malay are also studied. Addressing challenges around languages education in schools involves a nuanced response to multilingualism in Thai society, as well as consideration of its broader economic, regional and global requirements. English plays an important role in the Thai education system, as it does in all of its neighboring countries, and will continue to grow in importance with the introduction of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015, which has English as its working language (Kirkpatrick 2010).

At this stage, space for the study of ethnic or minority languages is minimal, although Pali and Arabic are studied in religious schools and monasteries and there have been a small number of mother tongue programs across Thailand (See e.g. Premsrirat & Bruthiaux 2012).

The expanding role of other languages, and the assertive and occasionally authoritarian nationalist model of Thai-ness perpetuated by the interim military government (Draper & Streckfuss 2015), among other variables, have imposed enormous pressure on many of Thailand's languages, with Ethnologue classifying 22 as endangered, and a further

seven as moribund. Draper and Streckfuss (2015) argue that reformulation of Thai-ness, as dictated by the interim government in the form of 12 cultural values, idealizes the composition of ethnic groupings in Thailand, and contributes to the diminishing of minority cultural and linguistic rights in the country. Additionally, language shift is amplified in younger generations of Thais who do not value their ethnic languages, preferring to use the language of education and wider communication (Premsrirat 2007, 2011).

As well as contributing to the disempowerment of minority groups, lack of recognition for ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity is widely held to contribute to conflict and violence (e.g. McCargo, 2014; McCargo & Hongladarom, 2004; NRC, 2006) and impacts directly on the education system. However, multiple calls for reconsideration of the construction of 'Thai-ness' in response to conflict and inequality has led to little change in a society where multiculturalism as a discourse is barely tolerated beyond a superficial level of acknowledgement (Vaddhanaphuti, 2005).

Multiculturalism in Thailand

There is little literature, though it is growing rapidly, on distinctive approaches to ethnocultural accommodations in Asian settings. Kymlicka and He (2005) offer a rare exploration of debates and conceptions of social pluralism in South and East Asia, incorporating legacies of precolonial and colonial traditions and experiences. In the volume, arguments around 'western' models of liberal theory and social pluralism, and the misfit with the 'Asian values' of the 'East' inevitably arise. He and Kymlicka (2005) argue that while these debates have been largely discredited, several chapters explore nuanced notions of more communitarian forms of multiculturalism, focused on local ethnic, religious and linguistic communities, rather than on obligations people feel to nation-states. However, He and Kymlicka (2005) stress 'the mutual learning and cross-cultural influences that have shaped

public debates in the region', arguing that 'the people of Asia show a strong desire to understand their local debates in the context of global trends and international norms' (p.7).

Although there is little discourse around multiculturalism as an ideological concept in Thailand itself, there is evidence that the notion is entering public discussion and gaining a foothold in proposals for future national direction. In posing the question as to whether assimilationist policy making had conceded enough space to allow for multiculturalism to emerge in Thailand, a symposium was held in 2012 for the commencement of a new doctoral studies program in multicultural studies at Mahidol University in Bangkok. The panel of experts concluded that there have been limited policies of selective multiculturalism and ethnic pluralism, and that there have been some signs of rethinking around cultural 'Others'. Yet, it was evident that ethnic minority groups still lacked collective and cultural recognition and that any movement towards rights based on any such recognition was not yet 'sincere' (Horstmann, 2012).

In such a context Yoko (2006) considers talk of Thai multiculturalism 'contrived', and notes that absence of any official discourse around the concept deprives the nation of an important ideology that could frame public acceptance of diversity and difference. However, multiculturalism remains a promising potential framework to organize ways to understand how areas of activity, such as education, tourism policy, local development and foreign relations, might develop. Yoko (2006, p.285), for example, in investigating the potential for change through increasing recognition of difference and diversity draws on the multicultural notion to identify contexts where changes are occurring, how recognition of the 'other' is formulated, and how the notion of multiculturalism can be locally configured to be acceptable to all a wide range of groups and agencies in Thai society.

In her deliberation of the promise and possibilities of 'debating multiculturalism' Yoko (2006) argues that while recognition of diversity is underway in particular, if restricted, contexts in Thailand, it is critical that the representation of difference and diversity that is officially allowed is subjected to critique. She exemplifies the need for this by analysis of exhibit displays and their ideological presuppositions at the museum of the Tribal Research Institute (1962-2002) in northern Thailand, currently under the management of the Tourist Authority. Yoko (2006, p.285) describes the three floors of the museum as follows:

1. The first floor – traditional hill tribe cultural artefacts, alongside a narrative of endeavours by the Thai government bringing 'occupational, social, educational, and moral development' to the people
2. The second floor – a display on hill tribes and Buddhism, and
3. The third floor – displays demonstrating the devotion of the hill tribes to the King and his benevolence towards them.

Care must be taken, Yoko (2006) argues, in not allowing local culture to be reduced to 'standardized and appropriated through emphasis on performance and display' (p.289), reducing culture to mere 'object', in what is essentially an antiquated display of visible and safe objects to be passively observed. By presenting a benign and superficial display of difference in these ways, such as that seen at the TRI museum, difference becomes 'domesticated', denying space for critical discussion for minority needs and claims to sustain living culture though action on citizenship-based rights or diverse kinds of community development. Essentially, this is a critique of a docile presence of difference within an unchallenged overarching national hierarchy of cultural practices.

Still, increasing space has been allowed for the expression and recognition of difference, and many developments have been welcomed, such as the acknowledgement of

more than 30 ethnic groups and their unique cultures by the Ministry of Culture in 2003 (Yoko 2006). Diversity of culture has also been increasingly recognized through the development of tourism, particularly into the north of Thailand; in media content – radio, television, movies, etc.; in explorations of regional musical influences, and through the opening up of Thailand's national borders facilitated by various levels of administrative decentralization (Draper, 2013a; 2015b; Jory, 2000; Yoko, 2006). The increasing accommodation of difference can be seen, argues Jory (2000), in the growing popularity of popular culture and music of the Yuan culture of northern Thailand, which has transitioned from folk genre to commercially successful folk rock, as well as in the progression of attitudes towards identification with 'Lao', from pejorative to more positive. Increasing expressions of Chinese culture in Thailand – a reclaiming of Chinese identity from ethnic groups generally perceived to be well assimilated into the overarching canonical Thai culture, is posited by Jory (2000) as further evidence of a renewed interest in the varied historical, linguistic, and cultural histories of Thailand's regions.

These kinds of commodification of 'difference', in popular music, museum display practices, or exotic tourism promoting cuisines, are increasing, although Horstmann (2012) and others argue they are too few and often too banal to constitute genuine progression towards policy recognition of pluralism in Thailand. Streckfuss (2012) notes that Central Thais have had a defining role in Thai-ness and 'Thai' history, but that such a center-based history, 'ultimately cannot make sense without its periphery'. He argues that

> …it is possible to see the vague contours of an ethnic rendering of a history that is no longer Thai, but nonetheless has been expressed from within the boundaries of 'Thailand', both geographically and ideologically… Rather than continuing with a century of the center occasionally looking out, the time has come for a history of the periphery looking in (Streckfuss 2012, p.324).

Consequences of the singular

The demographic, ethnic, cultural and linguistic differences, briefly traversed to this point indicate that Thailand is best understood as an ethnically plural entity. However, unrelenting pressure to demand conformity to a unitary notion of Thai-ness has resulted in sustained struggle. In some situations this has led to protracted conflict and violence. Examples from the north and the south of the country illustrate tensions in what is essentially an ongoing struggle between unitary constructions of Thai-ness compared to an alternative pluralistic shared Thai citizenship based on fuller acknowledgement of cultural diversity. Although ethnic questions are complex by nature, and always underpinned by multi-causal issues in Thailand (Vaddhanaphuti, 2005), given the centrality of education in this volume, we will maintain a narrow focus on the impact of these struggles on the education system.

The Deep South

The 'Deep South' became part of Thailand when the Anglo-Siamese treaty finalized the Thai-Malay frontier in 1909. The treaty, a historic agreement which ensured Siam's independence, created a division through the northern Malay states, generating the conditions for decades of conflict in Southern Thailand (Brudhiprabha, 1998). Ethnic Malay Muslims represent approximately 85% of the southern provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat, with smaller populations in neighboring Satun and Songkla provinces. This population can be considered an 'enclave community'. It is a relatively intact ethnic/linguistics and religious group, forming a distinct community, with its own history, institutions and self-perception as a discrete community, but located within a geographical and political space that differs substantially in its ethnic, religious and political structure.

The conflict in the Deep South, erupting into violence in 2004 after a period of relative calm, has complex causes that involve identity, culture, religion and history, but an important factor is the high degree of state centralization in Thailand. Strong opposition from

the local community is focused on the use of Thai as the only medium of instruction in schools, the primacy of Buddhist ethics and character across the curriculum, the nationalization of Thai culture, and the lack of recognition for Malay Thai's own local history, language and religion within the school system (von Feigenblatt et al. 2010). Resistance to the singular notion of Thai-ness, explicitly promoted through the official curriculum, has often been violent. The Patani Freedom Fighters (*Pejuang Kemerdekaan Patani*), effectively the paramilitary wing of the *Barisan Revolusi Nasional Melayu Patani* or *Barisan Revolusi Nasional*, the main but not sole independence militant group in the Deep South against the Thai military, has called the national education system 'a symbol of infidel occupation and suppression of ethnic Malay Muslim identity' (Human Rights Watch, 2007, 72; Boonlong, 2007). Schools and teachers have been direct targets of militant action resulting in many killings and injuries among civilians, including teachers and students.

The conflict and its militarization have had an enormous impact on the education system, which goes beyond even the targeted killing of teachers, closures and destruction of schools, and extends to the fracturing of the social fabric of inter-community relations and social cohesion. Two parallel systems of education have emerged, government and Islamic private schools, which has resulted in the de facto segregation of most children and youth into Buddhist and Muslim education streams, divided by language, cultural identity and religion, through the demands of adult interpreters of history and designers of an unintegrated future. Although this segregation has long historical roots since 2004 it has been at its highest level of intensity (see e.g. Melvin 2007; Narongraksakhet 2006).

Education based amelioration initiatives have been undertaken by official, educational, community and civic organizations. This has included the major involvement of international and UN agencies, applying concerted efforts to encourage student-centered

approaches to building awareness and fostering understandings of the role of education in exacerbating divisions and grievances. This involvement has seen extensive UN promoted research and intervention, activity by Thai intellectuals and agencies, and many others in attempting to incorporate 'difference' into public life, including education, to promote reconciliation and social cohesion. Activities from financial assistance to students, academic support, experimental bilingual education, and other work to alleviate the significant 'ethnic gap' in literacy and academic achievement (Draper, 2015b; Foreign Office, 2011; Smith, 2013; Lo Bianco and UNICEF, 2015). However, the persistence of violence and conflict dramatically impacts on education and the entire struggle with difference and its management within the state requires major politico-administrative change (Jitpiromsri and McCargo, 2008).

Furthermore, as education is directly linked to students' social development, according to Von Feigenblatt, et al (2010), even direct policy innovations in multicultural education would be inadequate since:

> What is at stake is not only the content of history textbooks but the security of thousands of people belonging to ethnic minorities, their incomes, the natural resources of the country, and the economic opportunities of millions of people in the provinces. Thus, education is linked to political and economic development (p.293).

The conflict in the Deep South continues despite recent attempts at peace negotiations, its cost on life is high as bodies such as Deep South Watch which monitor the violence have documented, (Jitpiromsri, 2015) but the political and administrative measures that are proposed for its resolution remain as elusive (Satha-Anand, 2012). The conflict however, appears to be quarantined from national consciousness, constituted for the most part as the problem 'in the south', somewhat removed from the lives of mainstream Thais. This is

especially the case in communities north of the Malay speaking provinces and its administration, which is subject to levels of military involvement beyond those applying elsewhere in the national territory.

Northern Thailand

Isan or the Thai Lao, are the largest minority in Thailand, numbering around 15 million speakers. While most Isan people are of Lao descent, Isan identity is varied and complex (McCargo & Hongladarom, 2004). The Isan region is the poorest, as well as the most populous in Thailand, although many Isan people live in the Bangkok area, servicing the industrial, construction and service industries. Some Bangkok Isan retain registration in the home provinces and return annually to assist in the labour intensive rice planting and harvesting seasons (McCargo & Hongladarom, 2004). Isan identity is still deeply stigmatized (Keyes, 2014) and the image of Isan as a 'marginalized and disadvantaged group which has missed out on the benefits of Thailand's remarkable economic growth since the early 1960s' is enhanced by the combination of 'economic deprivation, ethnic minority status and seasonal residence patterns' (McCargo & Hongladarom 2004, p.221).

As noted earlier, minority languages have no formal standing in Thailand and no recognition in the education system. In Northern Thailand, 85% of people use Northern Thai at home and for working class populations, proficiency in Standard Thai is generally low (Kosonen, 2008). Adult literacy rates in Standard Thai among most minority groups in the north are low, as low as 10% among the Akha and Lahu, and among groups with higher literacy rates, such as the Iu Mien, can still be as low as 30% (Kosonen 2008). Consequently, many children commence school without any proficiency in the sole and exclusive medium of instruction. Although the oral use of non-dominant languages by teachers in regional locations is quite common, a lack of access to literacy development in the initial years of schooling contributes significantly to inequalities in educational attainment (Kosonen &

Person, 2014). In general, minority language speakers underperform in all school measures in comparison with their Central Thai counterparts. Results from both the Thai-based Ordinary National Educational Test (O-NET) and the international PISA test show significant disparity in scores between Central Thai students and students from practically all other ethnicities and areas, across all areas of north Thailand (Fry, 2013; Kosonen & Person, 2014).

Beyond this there remain issues of a socio-political nature facing many northern Thai communities concerning citizenship rights, language rights, cultural preservation and access to the full range of education. However, increasing numbers of non-governmental and civil organizations have made significant progress in these areas in recent decades. There has been considerable improvement in gaining greater public and governmental awareness of the significant educational disparities that persist for students from many ethnic minorities and the role that mother tongue education could play in alleviating such disadvantages (Kosonen & Person, 2014). In 2013, for example, work began on the development of a curriculum for the mother tongue in northeast Thailand, with an Isan curriculum introduced into 11 schools that will be expanded into 18 schools by 2016 (Draper, 2014; 2015b). This example however, serves both to mark a positive change and to illustrate the small scale and limited dispersion that recognition of difference is allowed.

An intercultural curriculum in Thailand

The imposition of homogeneity in Thai society, particularly through a relatively inflexible curriculum and a slow-to-adapt education system, entrenches ethnic stratification, strongly correlates with academic underperformance across most measures of attainment, and presents considerable post-schooling challenges such as low adult literacy rates, poor employment prospects and poverty (e.g. Draper, 2014; Kosonen & Person, 2014). From a social cohesion perspective ethnically stratified education systems pose a considerable danger when these stratifications coincide with or reinforce academic underperformance and reduced

literacy, employment and social opportunity. This is made considerably worse still when students' experiences and understanding of their broader community are limited and marked by hostility and distance. Tied by cultural, linguistic and religious particularities into non-interacting communities, prospects of inter-ethnic understanding or even interaction become intermittent, and occasionally, deformed by fear of the other (UNICEF, 2008).

In response to these considerations we will now describe a UNICEF initiative that focuses on introduction of intercultural perspectives and content into the official and normative Thai curriculum, as detailed in the report *An Upper Primary and Junior Secondary School Intercultural Education Framework* (Lo Bianco and UNICEF, 2015). This activity was undertaken through the UNICEF Language, Education and Social Cohesion (LESC) initiative, a component of the UNICEF Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy (PBEA) Programme (2012-2015) funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of the Netherlands. The focus of PBEA has been to encourage practical intervention (tools and methods) to alleviate conflict, and to support research into conflict analysis (increasing understanding of the ways in which education can hinder or support social cohesion). The overall vision is to strengthen policy and resilience in society, to foster social cohesion and human security in countries at risk of conflict, experiencing conflict or recovering from conflict.

The premise of the LESC initiative in Thailand has been to ensure a much more engaged education system in the urgent task of fostering social cohesion, overcoming conflict in a durable way and in forging a stronger sense of both personal and communal resilience. In negotiation with senior Thai educators, public officials, researchers, and community representatives across the country ideas towards curriculum reform are proposed in this work, informed by situation and conflict analysis, and best practice intercultural and peace education schemes from other Southeast Asian settings. Intercultural or multicultural

education that fosters knowledge of and encounters with social 'others' cannot succeed on their own, especially if small and experimental, unless they are reinforced by measures to redress bias and inequality in educational arrangements across the board (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000). Nevertheless, short to medium term action is possible and strongly advocated by educators across the country. It becomes critical to design and apply cross-curriculum initiatives that have a chance of being practically effective in the local conditions of education and which respond to robust understanding of how social relations are negotiated and perceived through curriculum activities (Lo Bianco, 2013; Smith, 2013).

At this stage, little or no identifiable component of the official curriculum is devoted to or labelled 'intercultural' or 'multicultural' with the exception of activities and curriculum content associated with foreign language study, especially English, and a growing body of ASEAN related content. What is described below are activities undertaken through the LESC initiative mapping onto the existing national curriculum intercultural and multicultural content that could be realistically adopted and implemented by teachers. The groundwork for this mapping is extensive community and governmental consultation between 2012 and 2014, as outlined in the materials from *An Upper Primary and Junior Secondary School Intercultural Education Framework* (Lo Bianco and UNICEF, 2015), some of which is reproduced here with UNICEF's permission.

Interculturality, identity and education

According to UNESCO's (2013) definition, interculturality presupposes multiculturalism, which refers not only to cultural diversity – ethnic or national culture, but also to other elements of diversity including linguistic, religious and socio-economic diversity. The key feature of interculturality is that it allows space for multiple perspectives and voices. It is a dynamic concept which involves intercultural exchanges and dialogues

between cultural groups and is not limited to international contexts, but refers to exchanges at the local, regional, national or international levels.

Intercultural understanding encompasses both cognitive and affective learning. Having an awareness or knowledge of another culture, a knowledge of historical, political, social, economic, religious and anthropological aspects of a culture, does not necessarily result in an intercultural understanding in and of itself. A critical component of intercultural understanding is a positive disposition towards another culture. This does not preclude critical analysis of difference, but includes empathy and respect, and an understanding of the existence and necessity of differing perspectives (Hill, 2006).

As we have seen in the earlier part of the chapter, the construction of culture and identity in Thailand is often dependent on the interwoven relationships between politics and power, shaped the longstanding centralization of power and influence. Internally, dissent, political conflict and advocacy have caused some change, but external forces such as globalization, the Internet and social media, migration within and across national boundaries, and other contemporary influences also contribute to cultural change or evolution. The result of these influences is the formation of dual, multiple and hybrid identities, 'characterized by domination and resistance as well as participation and community' (Lo Bianco 2006, p.224).

Concepts of culture and education are, in essence, intertwined. Culture forges educational content, operational modes and contexts because it shapes our frames of reference, our ways of thinking and acting, our beliefs and even our feelings. All actors involved in education – teachers and learners, curriculum developers, policy makers and community members – invest their cultural perspectives and cultural aspirations into what is taught, and how it is conveyed. Yet education is also vital to the survival of culture. As a collective and historical phenomenon, culture cannot exist without continual transmission and enrichment through

education and organized education often aims to achieve this very purpose (UNESCO 2013, p.12-3).

The parameters for non-authorized cultural expression are relatively narrow within the Thai curriculum, and the construction of personal and societal cultural identities, consciously or unconsciously, results in the perpetuation of difference as seen through differential education attainment, as well as ongoing social tensions. It is therefore vital that the education system and curricula are more reflective of the pluralism existing within Thai society and within the student population, and that work is done through the education system to move towards a more equitable and peaceful coexistence.

The purpose of (a potential) intercultural education in Thailand

The purpose of engaging with intercultural education in classrooms in Thailand is to allow students the opportunity to articulate the differences within and between groups and to work towards accommodation and acceptance of differences. In doing so, students aim to reconstruct a positive conceptualization of the intergroup relationship, while diminishing negative intergroup relations (see Bush & Saltarelli, 2000). In the longer term, the integration of intercultural education as a component of the curriculum would aim to develop programs supportive of positive experiences of diversity, leading to intercultural and interfaith dialogue across the breadth of Thailand. In this context, it is hoped that students develop the complex thinking and affective capacities that underpin intercultural understanding, both as members of a multicultural society, as well as global citizens.

Such an initiative can also build on previous non-government, informal education initiatives in diversified localities such as Southern Thailand (for example, Building Peace by Teaching Peace (NISEA 2014)) and the positive work of peace educators who have founded the Committee on Peace Education in Southern Border Provinces of Thailand (COPE) and

facilitated acceptance of the concept and practice of peace education by education officials, school directors and local leaders (Ferrer, 2012). The intercultural education initiative could also works in more directly with the Thai curriculum, in particular, with 'LIFE skills', one of five core competencies in the standard curriculum regulated by the Office of Basic Education Commission (OBEC) (Ministry of Education, 2010).The Life Skills framework assists students in developing skills and capacities to better know and care for themselves and others; to cope with and manage emotional stress; to prevent harm to themselves and others and to improve their self-esteem, dignity, confidence and wellbeing. Emphasis on analytical, critical and creative thinking supports problem solving and decision-making, while the development of enhanced communication skills facilitates exchange of thoughts, perspectives, feelings and emotions.

Thailand, ASEAN and the role of English

Discussions of Thai modernity and students' interaction with cultural difference in general, arise for most students in their formal and obligatory study of English. Thailand was one of the founding members of ASEAN and has played an important role in the development of the regional body. Thailand has already undertaken significant preparation work for participation in the ASEAN community with the launch of a center, run by the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO), whose aim is to facilitate integration with the three pillars of the ASEAN community: the ASEAN Political-Security Community; the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. Educationally, significant work has been undertaken by the Spirit of ASEAN development program through curriculum development workshops and the publication of ASEAN-focused general information and curriculum resources. The ASEAN Youth Forum (AYF), further supports these peace-oriented values through the involvement of young leaders in the region

and beyond in discussion of issues related to diversity, promotion of friendships beyond boundaries, and initiation of people-centered reforms.

As the sole official and working language of ASEAN and AEC, English plays an institutionalized role in regional affairs. ASEAN activities are invariably undertaken in English, which was declared 'official' by all 10 member states of the organization, despite its previous informal status (Kirkpatrick 2010). As ASEAN has proposed closer economic integration for Southeast Asia it has also promoted cross regional curriculum innovation stressing engagement, interaction, contact and communication (Lo Bianco and UNICEF, 2015). The claims made for increased English proficiency and capability across Thai education that result from these developments, also elevate various intercultural education activities and concepts. One of the claims proposed here is that the multicultural/intercultural activities needed to address intra-national concerns can be used to satisfy extra-national aims through English study. This includes direct engagement with the cultures and societies of partner ASEAN countries and indeed across the wider Asian region.

Mapping intercultural education onto the Thai curriculum

The Thai curriculum allows incorporation of intercultural education as a *general capability*, which expresses outcomes intended to operate across the whole curriculum to be applied through content in learning areas. The Thai curriculum describes the promotion of thinking skills, self-learning strategies and moral development as being at the heart of teaching and learning. These capacities emphasize communication skills, interpersonal relationships and concern for the environment, which are in line with similar principles of 'learning to live together' commonly in conventional multicultural education in multi-ethnic societies. Points of entry include references in the Thai National Curriculum to building social cohesion, and references to local communities and how education is to make a contribution to meeting the real needs of localities and regions across the country. Numerous

references are made to the study of local histories, geographies and to traditions, cultures, literature, performing and visual arts, and wisdom found among Thai people. These openings towards local realities reflect the spirit and inspiration of the 1999 National Education Act which has pointed towards changed management and administration of national education, even legislating for the decentralization of administrative responsibilities to the local level, with the consolidation of education planning at the central level. The full implementation of the provisions of these reforms, and their application to all parts of the country, are a promising source of future potential for a more robust notion of cultural difference to be incorporated into curriculum activity. Such reforms represent a remit for development of multicultural content and a Thai-specific set of capabilities that would be generated within the specific stocks of knowledge the curriculum would inculcate. All this, however, awaits full adoption and implementation of the reforms.

The reformation process had led to the establishment of 175 Education Service Areas (ESA) by 2003, increasing to more than 180 in late 2014. At the provincial level, education development plans, five year plans and operational plans are prepared and implemented. Local authorities are responsible for the formulation of local education policies and planning and management of education (Punyasavatsut, 2013). The Basic Thai curriculum executes this legislation. Explicitly, the Thailand Ministry of Education (2009) states that 'flexibility is built into the curriculum in order to integrate local wisdom and culture, so that it is consistent with set learning standards in each of the core subject groups' (p.3). The Thai curriculum appears to be designed to allow for the integration of local narratives and histories and to provide opportunities for integrating multicultural activities in mainstream learning areas. Specifically, it refers to the time allocated for *Learner development activities* or the curriculum space allocated to *Additional courses/activities provided by schools* (see Table 1).

Table 1: Learning item in hours, Grades 4 to 9, Thai curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2010, p.25)

Learning area/activities	**Grade 4**	**Grade 5**	**Grade 6**	**Grade 7**	**Grade 8**	**Grade 9**
Thai language	160	160	160	120	120	120
Mathematics	160	160	160	120	120	120
Science	80	80	80	120	120	120
Social studies, religion and culture	120	120	120	160	160	160
Health and Physical education	80	80	80	80	80	80
Arts	80	80	80	80	80	80
Occupations and Technology	80	80	80	80	80	80
Foreign languages	80	80	80	120	120	120
Total learning time (Basic level)	840	840	840	880	880	880
Learner development activities	120	120	120	120	120	120
Additional courses/activities provided by schools	No more than 40 hours for each year			No more than 200 hours for each year		
Total learning time	No more than 1,000 hours for each year			No more than 1,200 hours for each year		

The model utilized to map intercultural education onto the Thai curriculum was the *intercultural learning continuum* (Figure 1), which is positioned as a general capability in the

Australia national curriculum. The purpose of intercultural education as a general capability is to develop students who are active and informed citizens with an appreciation of Australia's social, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity, and the ability to relate to and communicate across cultures at local, regional and global levels (ACARA 2014, p.1529).

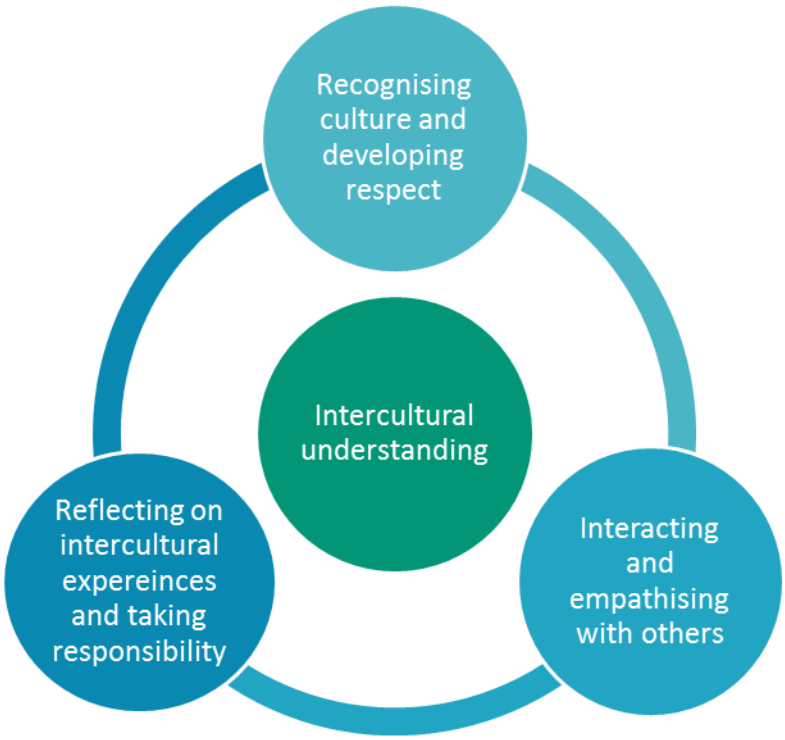
The intercultural learning continuum consists of three interrelated organizing elements as illustrated in Figure 1 below and each element has three key components:

1. *Recognising culture and developing respect*
    a) Investigate culture and cultural identity
    b) Explore and compare cultural knowledge, beliefs and practices
    c) Develop respect for cultural diversity

2. *Interacting and empathising with others*
    a) Communication across cultures
    b) Consider and develop multiple perspectives
    c) Empathise with others

3. *Reflecting on intercultural experiences and taking responsibility*
    a) Reflect on intercultural experiences
    b) Challenge stereotypes and prejudices
    c) Mediate cultural difference.

Figure 2: Organizing elements for intercultural understanding (ACARA 2014, 1549)

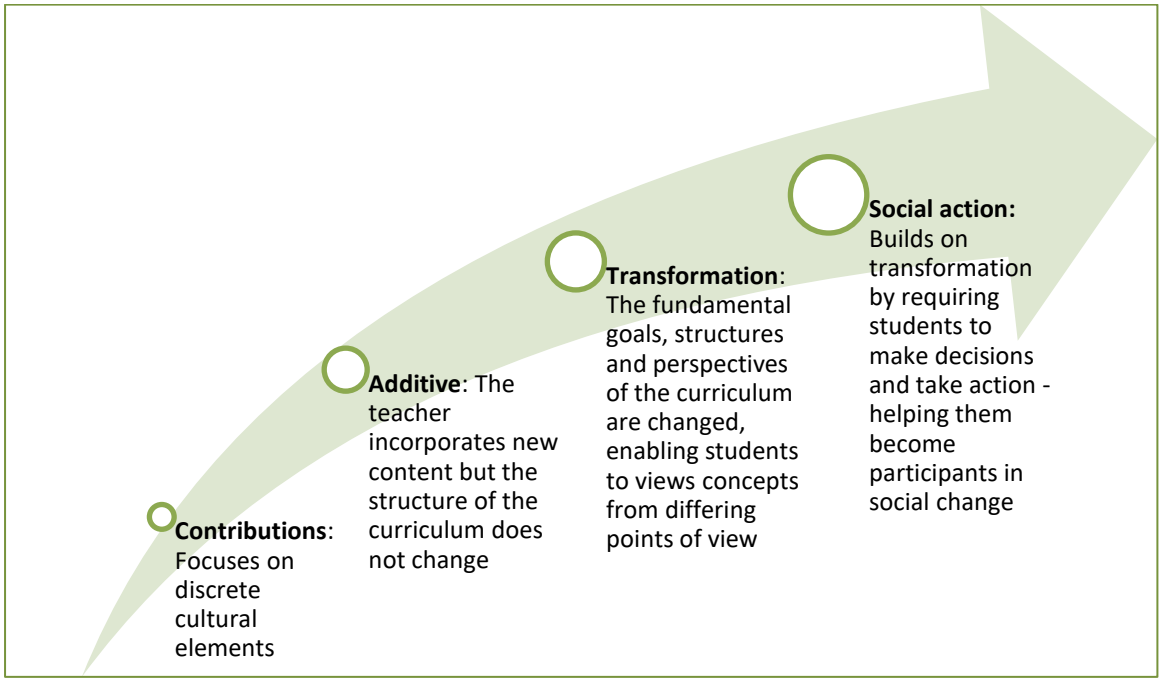


In his extensive work on culture and education over many decades, James Banks has developed a four-level paradigm for integrating multicultural and intercultural content into curricula (see e.g. Banks 2006). In Figure 2, we can see the four levels of activities building towards an intercultural perspective, which aim to encourage students to become agents of social change in their educational, personal and community environments. In Banks's schema the first two components, *contributions approach* and the *additive approach*, do not require change to the structure of curriculum. What is required is integration of themes, concepts and perspectives into the existing structure of teaching, learning, assessment, and reporting. These approaches can be important 'gradual and cumulative' steps towards the higher levels of content integration (Banks 2006, p.143).

However, both of these are content or information centered and research into the acquisition of intercultural capability highlights that acquisition of knowledge in and of itself does not necessarily foster intercultural capabilities or transform thinking towards principles

of interculturalism. Such deeper changes rely on the *transformation* and *social action* approaches depicted in Banks's framework and specifically the 'infusion of various perspectives, frames of references and content from various groups that will extend students' understandings of the nature, development, and complexity of…society' (Banks 2006, p.142).

Figure 3: Bank's integration framework for education (Banks 2006, pp.140-143)



Given the dominance of Thai-ness and its associated aspects in the existing curriculum, and lack of systematic preparation in pre-service education for these activities, much of this will pose a significant demand and additional burden to practicing teachers. They will require a range of starting points in mapping perspectives across the curriculum, and considerable assistance through professional development, even to undertake the first components of including diverse 'contributions' and 'additive content'. However, in consultation with the first author across Thailand over the past three years many have expressed more substantive concerns, including the fact that merely suggesting the topic of systematically teaching cultural differences is often rejected by authorities at the school and

district levels. Some have made the more troublesome point that there is no readily available way to express the need or purpose of intercultural education since it is sometimes construed as a criticism of the overarching primacy of national cohesion and unity.

There are issues related to general pedagogical practice as well, so that while nearly all models of intercultural and multicultural education invoke activities that are student-centered, many teachers are not comfortable with the pedagogy this implies. Many concepts and activities in multicultural education expressly aim at subjectivity transformations among learners, an ideal of identity and self-becoming in the interests of promoting not merely cognitive development but affective, attitudinal and even ideological change. Extensive experimentation with intercultural education specific to Thai contexts and realities are needed, buttressed by research, pre-service training for future teachers and in-service professional development for existing teachers. Despite such limitations, the experience of the past three years under LESC, and that of many Thai innovators in this area, shows that some teachers independently begin using *contributions* or *additive* approaches, but may need support and training and to work with the assistance of colleagues, school boards and local authorities to move to *transformative and social action* approaches.

The mapping framework reported below was developed in response to requests from Thai officials to illustrate how intercultural activities can be mapped against the existing framework and content of the curriculum across a range of subject areas. The tables should not be seen as a finished product available for implementation, this is not their intention, but as a demonstration guide for teachers and administrators to create their own priorities and foci in the proportion of the curriculum which will be made available for localized innovation.

In deciding how to proceed and what to priorities, it has been suggested in workshops conducted in Thailand that teachers and administrators construct local 'situation analyses' of diversity, local circumstances, the school community and wider social context, and that these inform the early stages of the sequence, but that the mapping exercise should consider that:

- Intercultural education involves understanding the self, as well as others – locally, nationally and globally;
- An intercultural education program should contain structured progression from a *contributions* or *additive approach* through to more complex activities leading to social change, as outlined in Bank's integration framework for education (Figure 2).
- Certain subjects and subject areas lend themselves more readily to different types of activities and different levels of complexity. For example, a simple additive activity investigating culture and identity could be mapped to Mathematics or Science, but a more complex activity involving a community of enquiry and activities promoting social change may be better located in a subject such as Social Studies, Religion and Culture. Consideration should be given to resource availability and the achievability of different activities under local circumstances.

In the original project, the three elements and their sub-elements were mapped against the Thai curriculum for students in Grades 4 to 6 and students in Grades 7 to 9. That is, the first table mapped the element of *Recognising culture and developing respect* and its three sub-elements against the curriculum, providing brief outlines of activities through which to explore each component. Due to the constraints of this chapter, only the mapping of one element will be included to illustrate the exercise followed between 2012-2015, for children in Grades 4 to 6 and 7 to 9. That is, the same element and sub-element mapped for different year levels.

It is important to note that these examples are brief outlines of possible activities that can be undertaken in existing classrooms using the typically available resources of Thailand schools. Local 'ownership' of the activities is imperative of course and, in areas of major conflict, agreement and understanding of the relevance and importance of such curriculum innovation needs to be recognized by the major stakeholders.

An example table is provided to illustrate how the elements and activities were mapped against the Thai curriculum and its descriptors (Table 2). This activity is based on element 1: *Recognising culture and developing respect* and the sub-element: to *Investigate culture and cultural identity*. The activity is mapped to one or more of the subject areas in the Thai curriculum. In Table 2, these are the subject areas of *Mathematics* and *Social Studies, Religion and Culture*. The activity is then mapped to explicit learning elements within the Thai curriculum. In Table 2, this involves the learning elements of *Measurement* within the subject of *Mathematics* (Ministry of Education 2010, 62), while for the subject of *Social Studies, Religion and Culture*, the activity engages with the Thai curriculum learning element of *Civics, Culture and Living* (Ministry of Education 2010, 162). The activity itself is detailed on the right side on the table.

Table 2: Example of curriculum mapping

Recognising culture and developing respect (Years 7 to 9)	
Investigate culture and cultural identity	**Example activities**
Subject: • Mathematics; • Social Studies, Religion and Culture **What is learned:** • Measurement; • Civics, Culture and Living	**Concepts of time**[2] ○ Identify regions in Thailand and across the Asian and Asia Pacific region within the same time zone. ○ Investigate the history of Greenwich Mean Time. ○ Explore how and why time is manipulated through 'daylight savings'. Which countries in the region utilise daylight savings and why? ○ Investigate the linear and non-linear construction of time across cultures.

[2] Adapted from *The Australian Curriculum*. Unit **ACMMG199.**

The following two tables illustrate the mapping of the element Recognising culture and developing respect for students in Grades 4 to 6 and Grades 7 to 9 (Tables 3 and 4).

Table 3: Recognising culture and developing respect (Grades 4 to 6)	
Investigate culture and cultural identity	**Example activities**
Subject: Social Studies, Religion and Culture; Thai language **What is learned**: History; Civics, Culture and Living; Literature and Literary Works	**Investigating the significance of a cultural event** ○ Read a text that is used across cultures, and explore variations in characters and storylines. For example, 'The Ramayana' story which is told to children across Asia, including in Thailand, as well as India, Indonesia, Cambodia, Burma, Laos, Tibet and Malaysia.
Subject: Social Studies, Religion and Culture **What is learned**: Geography; Civics, Culture and Living; Science	**Protection and care for natural resources in the environment** ○ Examine a case study of a community in one of the ASEAN nations, or beyond, where people have worked together to save animals threated with extinction. ○ Examine a similar case study in Thailand. What do this case studies highlight about the responsibilities humans have for caring for living things? Were the approaches similar across cultures? What different obstacles are people working to overcome?
Explore and compare cultural knowledge, beliefs and practices	**Example activities**
Subject: Mathematics; Arts **What is learned**: Geometry; Visual arts	**Understanding the geometry and visual aesthetics of pattern** ○ What are tessellations and how do they provide symmetry, shape and pattern? ○ Explore the shapes of regular tessellation – square, equilateral triangles and hexagons. Have each student work with the same shape, illustrating each one and then using their shapes to construct a class tessellation. Set an overall theme for the tessellation, allowing each student to provide their own interpretation. Can you do the same activity utilising irregular tessellation? ○ Are there forms of tessellation that can you see in your local community? ○ Research the tessellated tiles of Alhambra in Southern Spain and the Islamic cultural heritage represented in the architecture.
Develop respect for cultural diversity	**Example activities**
Subject: Social Studies, Religion and Culture; Thai language; Foreign languages; Arts **What is learned**: Civics, Culture and Living; Language and the Relationship with Community and the World; Visual Arts	**Investigating language in the local community** ○ Create a survey to record the dialects of Thai used in your local community. Observe and record the types of Thai spoken in students' families. In what situations are dialects or other languages other than Thai used, and when is Thai used?
Subject: Art; Social Studies, Religion and Culture **What is learned**: Visual Arts; Music; Dramatic Arts; Civics, Culture and Living	○ Examine images or artefacts of different arts forms across Thailand, such as silk designs or musical instruments from different regions of the country. How do they differ regionally? ○ Can you find an equivalent art form in a neighbouring country? Can you identify differences, for example, in the use of materials and techniques to make the instruments or in how the instrument is utilised?

Table 4: Recognising culture and developing respect (Grades 7 to 9)	
Investigate culture and cultural identity	**Example activities**
Subject: Mathematics; Social Studies, Religion and Culture What is learned: Measurement; Civics, Culture and Living	**Concepts of time** o Identify regions in Thailand and across the Asia Pacific region with the same time zone. o Investigate the history of Greenwich Mean Time. o Explore how and why time is manipulated through 'daylight savings'. Which countries in the region utilise daylight savings and why? o Investigate the linear and non-linear construction of time across cultures.
Subject: Arts; Social Studies, Religion and Culture What is learned: Visual Arts; History	**The birth of modern art in Thailand** o Investigate the life of Silpa Bhirasri, his influence on modern art in Thailand and the establishment of a University of Fine Arts (Silpakorn University). Explore the theme of intercultural connections between Italian-Western Art and Thai Art. o Document and describe some of Bhirasri's monuments spread throughout Bangkok.
Explore and compare cultural knowledge, beliefs and practices	**Example activities**
Subject: Science What is learned: Astronomy and Space; Nature of Science and Technology; History	**Science as human endeavour** o Research scientists such as Ptolemy, Copernicus, Khayyám, Galileo and Kepler and the different ideas they contributed to the development of models of the solar system. How did their beliefs differ and/or build on each other's theories? o Research developments in the understanding of astronomy. For example, al-Battani, who determined the length of the solar year and predicted eclipses, in the tenth century.
Subject: Social Studies, Religion and Culture What is learned: History	**The historical development of mathematics** o Research the achievements of Islamic mathematicians such as al-Khwārizmī (algebra), Abū Kāmil (irrational numbers), al-Uqlidisi (decimal fractions) and al-Qūhī (equations), and their contributions to the development of modern mathematics.
Develop respect for cultural diversity	**Example activities**
Subject: Social Studies, Religion and Culture What is learned: Civics, Culture and Living	**Language variation and change** o Explore language use in your community. What is the result of interaction between languages and dialects in your community (e.g. Thai, Pattani Malay and Chinese)? Identify vocabulary and expressions from other languages in the community that have become part of your own language. Can these items be categorised? E.g. cultural, religious or technical expressions. o Look at language use in social media. Is there a combination of the languages and dialects used across your community or does it include other languages as well?
Subject: Art; Social Studies, Religion and Culture; Foreign Languages What is learned: Visual Arts; Civics, Culture and Living; Language and the Relationship with Community and the World	**A picture tells a thousand words** o Undertake a photographic investigation of the use of language in your community. What signs are displayed in which languages? Where is multilingual signage utilised? Does the language determine who the services or goods are intended for? Are foreign languages represented visually in your community? What is its role in the promotion of goods and services?

Concluding remarks

In this chapter we have discussed the broad context of 'differences' in Thailand, as well as mentioned some of the historical and political conditions and their special significance and problematic character. The national curriculum of Thailand is a vehicle of increasing promise within the education system that is progressively becoming more open to incorporation of difference of religious identity, linguistic community and cultural affiliation. In the past the curriculum has been the primary vehicle of the longstanding national project of establishing a bounded, practical and symbolic closure to differences, favoring instead a centrally prescribed idea of Thai-ness.

Secessionist violence in some parts of the country and non-violent conflict in others, expressly repudiates the overt purposes of the curriculum and its reinforcement in many other practices of national life. Alongside these 'bottom-up' demands for a more inclusive and pluralistic vision of the national state, extra-national pressures from the immediate region, as well as pressures of economic globalization and population mobility into and out of Thailand, also push Thai education towards building wider and more pluralistic understandings of the cultural messages of the curriculum and the cultural capabilities it imparts. Prizing open curriculum space for the admission of content about difference itself makes possible a wider discursive possibility about other kinds of difference. The represented and included selections might range from the use of English in tourism to support activities promoting regional cuisines, popular music and ethnic traditions. Many of the latter are currently tied to safe displays of ethnicity in commercial tourism, yet these play a role in raising consciousness of diversity within even the established canons of national life. To link these to more critical representations of national crises so that they foster social cohesion, cross-ethnic communication, and peaceful co-

existence in a context of often bitter conflict and tension requires substantial pedagogical innovation.

The supra, or extra-national, and the sub-national press for conceptualizing diversity is not identical and may be irreconcilable, yet both foster cultural knowledge, communicative skills and attitudinal dispositions that are broadly pluralistic and inclusive. Innovation in Thailand's education will need to respond to multiple points of pressure and kinds of diversity. Recognition of difference has taken significant steps through initiatives of the Royal Institute of Thailand and its decade long interest in a multilingual language policy (Warotamasikkhadit and Person, 2011) and in wider fields (Vaddhanaphut, 2005; Premsrirat, 2011). Language policy innovations have been held back by political turmoil in recent years but major work has gone into conceptualizing Thailand as a multilingual, multi-dialectal and pluralistic society representing probably the biggest intellectual investment in national reconceptualization in decades. That the source of this innovation is the Royal Institute (2007 and 2009), attached to the highest academic institutional life and to the monarchy, the central institution of the country, is of major significance.

From all of these sources a new and distinctive Thai intercultural curriculum, Thai national language policy, as well as a rejuvenated notion of Thai multicultural pluralism are made possible, if not inevitable. This is despite the extreme political tensions and the suspension of the democratic processes resulting from the military coup of 22 May 2014 in which the Royal Thai Armed Forces, led by General Prayut Chan-o-cha, launched a *coup d'état* (the 12th since 1932). Today Thailand is ruled by a junta called the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) and no date has been set for a return to electoral democratic politics and no definitive account has been offered of what kind of political dispensation will follow. All executive and legislative powers reside in the leader of the junta, while the judicial branch of the state is subject

to influence or directives from the NCPO. Civilian rule is promised and few doubt it will be restored in some, probably modified fashion, but even under the current arrangements considerable work proceeds to re-imagine a pluralistic future vision of Thailand.

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