

Research Article

SOCIAL CLASS AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT WITH CHILDREN'S EDUCATION: A STUDY OF EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITY IN CHIANG MAI PROVINCE

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Abstract

This article is an empirical study of the ways that parents' social class impacts their children education. The aim is to explore how these parents with different class background mobilize their resources to help their children through the education system. It draws on a survey of 50 respondents from three schools: one public school and two private schools in Chiang Mai. The study shows that although most of parents are interested, informed and concerned regarding their children education, their different class backgrounds significantly affect their involvement with children's education. Middle class families tend to bring up and care for their children's learning in a way called in this study as 'intensive cultivation' while lower class and lower middle class families tend to look after and take care of their children's learning with another method called 'limited cultivation.' These differences in patterns and styles of educational involvement help us see and understand the mechanism that social class use to make differences in their children's opportunities and advantages in school. With education being central to processes of social reproduction, the paper suggests that specific patterns of social class in education may explain this differences in parent involvement with their children's education and help to reproduce and sustain educational inequality in Chiang Mai.

Keywords: Social Class, Parent Involvement, Educational Inequality

Introduction

"What school your kid will be going to?" is a question that parents of pre-school at a private kindergarten often ask each other at the end of 2014. I have a daughter studying there; therefore, have heard the question, answered and often asked parents of my daughter's friends as well. What we talk about is about choosing a good primary school for our children, their readiness and adaptation to the requirement, expectation, quality and environment of the schools where we want them to attend and the adjustment of the parents themselves to the burdens, problems, needs and new activities there, most of which consist of only five to six well-known private schools in Chiang Mai.

The problems and worries about early childhood education are not limited only to these parents and me. News in the media appears to suggest that parents' concerns about their children's education seem to be a much broader phenomenon that include not only the university entrance examination but also early childhood education

especially the need for parents to push them to study in schools with good reputation. But it must be emphasized that opportunities of education of these children are not equal. Numbers showing primary school completion rates and further secondary school education classified by economic status and family education in 2005-2006 indicate that 75 percent of students from very poor families have secondary education and higher education, while 89 percent of those from very wealthy families continue secondary education and higher (Patthamasiriwat, 2011)

Every parents is more or less caring for their children's education especially among wealthy families with high education and income. But I think that the anxiety that happens to parents of different socio-economic statuses is a new phenomenon which is related to certain structural conditions of modern society. Firstly, in today's society parental concerns about children's education point out problems and pressures from other institutions in the society such as private agencies, business corporations, other economic institutions and modern bureaucracies that require knowledgeable, skillful workers with educational qualifications. Secondly, studies have found that parents of different classes have different thought and understanding of their role in development, attention, learning skills and other skills including different forms and levels of educational investment, resulting in different experiences and learning skills of their children (Chin & Phillips, 2004; Dumais, 2006; Nelson, 2010). Therefore class difference in values and parenting are related to inequality in education and is a major cause of social reproduction and social inequality in the society (Lareau, 2003).

Many concepts and researches relevant to explore parent's role in children education I am interested in are Pierre Bourdieu's writings and many works by academics influenced by him. Bourdieu offers a new approach to the study of sociology by looking at education as part of broader context connected to power, inequality and overall social structure. (Jenkins, 1990, p. 70). Bourdieu regards that the study of field or social space is important in understanding interaction between people or a particular social phenomenon. The field here refers to the system of structural relationship of people and groups of people or various institutions of which their positions vary according to capital and resources they possess. (Jenkins, 1990, p. 52). Bourdieu separates capital characteristics that people use to compete and struggle in the field (or relationship) into four types: economic capital (such as income, salary and various assets), cultural capital (such as education, skill, knowledge, occupation, taste, cultural arts preference, language, speech and intonation), social capital (such as network, member of organization and association, family background, religion and culture) and symbolic capital (such as value, ideology and belief in important things in society). These capital are linked to other things and coexist with other forms of capital such as cultural capital having relationship with habitus. At the same time cultural capital along with other capital can give advantage and disadvantage in society.

The concept of class here means those who occupy different positions in the field (economic relationship and power relationship) which have similar amounts and proportions of capital components. The closer position people in the field have, the more they will have feeling, attitude, taste and views (or habitus) together, the more possibility they will become social group through the fighting for capital and resources and mutual acceptance of different identities from groups or other classes (Crossley, 2008, pp. 92-95).

According to Bourdieu, habitus, or class culture as some scholars propose (Reed-Danahay, 1996, p. 29), is about the way we act, our feeling, our thought and our individuality, a matter of taking our past with us to wherever we go, taking our past into our present and using the past to help decide to do something with some methods. It is

also is a conceptual tool for considering and understanding the difference and diversity among members of society or a particular class. Bourdieu emphasizes class culture as an important quality of the class. This is because people with the same size and components of capital or closely the same have a chance to meet each other, interact and build relationships and connection more easily as their many conditions in life are the same. They can buy a single house living close to each other, and sending children to the same school. Moreover they may also have similar life styles, worldviews, thoughts, feelings and practical knowledge about their position in society (Crossley, 2008, p. 93). Bourdieu proposes that people in different social position or different status are more likely to receive different kind of training and learning. With these training and learning, children (and later adults) are more likely to form certain type of idea, feeling, viewpoint, and the understanding of what is proper, what is right, what is familiar, and what makes you feel comfortable.

There are many scholars who are directly and indirectly influenced by Bourdieu's ideas. The followings will be discussion of some these important work especially on the issue I think that will be useful to understand relevant concepts and apply them to study the role of parent in education involvement in their children.

Parenting varies according to class position and interest or advantage (in education and careers) which children receive due to those differences. Lareau (2003) studies different parenting in poor families, working class families and middle class families in America and the evidence in her study suggests that certain home environment is linked to what Bourdieu calls habitus or class culture and can be categorized into two different types. Parenting practices tend to group together as what Lareau calls class-based cultural logics of parenting which middle class families often choose way to involve their children in what Lareau calls concerted cultivation while working class families and poor families tend to choose parenting of accomplishment of natural growth. The former is seen as parents encouraging their children to participate in outside and/or systematic extracurricular activities along with providing and preparing educational materials to use at home including time and attention that parent spend on talking to their children to encourage their development of learning. The latter is parenting pattern among working class families and poor families, believing that if parent take good care of their children's safety, cleanliness, food and give them love and warmth, they can grow up and live well on their own.

Reay's work (1998) focuses on the role of mothers in caring for their children both at home and at school. Reay points out gender differences in parent's education involvement in their children and remarks that a mother is the main person in managing children's educational opportunity. She emphasizes that the investment of middle class mothers in family cultural capital leads to educational benefits and profits for children more than parent's direct economic investment. Reay finds that in the sample each woman values education and physical and mental dedication to their children's education equally. But what working class mothers do to support their children's education does not affect as much as what middle class mothers do. This is because: firstly, working class mothers support their children with confidence and certainty less than middle class mothers; secondly, working class mothers have limited income and financial status for such work and activities and thirdly, working class mothers do without knowing how much they are disadvantaged in this matter.

Reay finds that among lower class mothers they are often uncomfortable helping children with their homework or being a teacher for their children. Reay sees that this feeling is caused by their limited opportunities to

access to essential cultural capital comparing to middle class mothers. Support to solve children's problems is easy if mothers, especially those middle class ones, have capital and economic resources available to help supplement and solve children's education problems.

Why do class differences still exist despite broader educational opportunities? This is one of the questions that Devine (2004) is trying to answer. Devine sees that Bourieu's ideas of culture capital and class culture or habitus are limited especially the issue that the lower class lack inspiration in education. Because during the expansion of education system not only middle class children study higher education more but lower class children also do. Because parent or different status family have changed economic capital into cultural capital by investing and paying for children's education for good job opportunities and their future, and this education investment for children is related to values, beliefs about the importance of education to success in life as well. Devine sees that the limitation of Bourdieu's concept does not mean that we must reject the important role of cultural capital, class culture and class practices in reproducing advantages and class power particularly the importance of cultural capital as information capital or knowledge of learning system, knowledge of work of education system and how parent raise their children and try to instill what they think are important (such as values and practice behaviors) in order to promote academic success and careers including what is called educational habitus, which is about expectation and ambition for educational success (study well, study high) and providence and hope for career success (good work with progress, stability and high compensation).

Attitude, standpoint, opinion and value or what is called class culture and cultural capital of the parent appear and display in everyday lifestyle practices such as forcing children to do homework or to bring homework to check regularly, limiting time to watch their own television, spending free time or relaxation emphasizing on education and learning and closely following up their educational activities, concerns, prohibitions of this and that, rules setting and parent's obsession with children's watching television (how long can they watch?, what time and what program can they watch?).

Devine views that parent share values, beliefs, class culture about education through actions, thoughts, words, feelings, attitudes, events and stories in everyday life. In other words, what these parent do is the transmission of values about education and career, especially the process of creating class culture and class reproduction. This process of class reproduction happens in family in everyday life and class practices.

Objectives of the Study

This article aims to understand the role of parents in creating social inequality through their involvement in children education at primary level in Chiang Mai province with the purpose to answer two main questions: (1) How does parents differently involve with their children's education?; and (2) How is this difference related to the parents' class status.

Research Methods

In designing the research for this study I rely on quantitative survey research to collect data. In the survey I select a sample of parents with primary school children in three schools based on five-criterions, i.e. size, location, fee, reputation and school status of state or private. In this regard, I have chosen 3 schools called here as school A, school B and school C.

School A is a public school located 14-15 kilometers outside the Muang district. It was part of 'Educational Opportunity Expansion School' program to add lower secondary classes to existing primary ones, without charging tuition fees since 1987. It provides basic education curriculum for up to 600 students. Most of its students come from local communities around school's vicinity. Although, the school charges no tuition fee, but there are extra cost for some special courses such as computer skill, English and Chinese languages.

School B is a well-known private school with a long history of a Christian missionary's support and involvement. Located in the city center, it is one of the five private schools in Chiang Mai famous for its high-standard education and therefore one of the first choices among parents near and far when choosing good school for their children. School enrollment is consisted of more than 6,500 students, thanks also for its relatively affordable tuition fee. Other than basic education curriculum, School B currently provides both an Integrated English Program (generally known as English as Second language Program) and a special English curriculum (called Gifted English Program) where parents are subject to additional costs.

Started as a small kindergarten 40 years ago, school C has now expanded its education services up to senior high school level with a total of approximately 3,000 students. It is located on suburban area of Muang district. Currently, school C provides three distinctive curricula: English as a Second Language program; Bilingual program (or English Program); and International program. These three programs are housed in many modern and spacious buildings with high-end technological equipment and other high-quality educational resources. As expected, comparing to the two schools above, the cost of tuition for school C is highest.

As for selecting respondents for this survey, I mainly interview for parents who have their children enrolled in first and second grade levels because the students of these ages still largely dependent on their parents. The small size of survey sample, a total of 50 respondents, was limited by the time, respondents' cooperation and other resources available. The survey was conducted by selecting 10-20 parents from each school, basing on their voluntary cooperation.

Results and Discussion

Sample families in this study can be classified into 3 class groups according to type and proportional amount of capital which each group has in possession consisting of middle class, lower class and lower middle class families whose class is overlapping between the middle and the lower class (Sugunnasil, 2020). However format and important characteristics of types, quantities, proportions, and components of cultural capital (education and occupation) and economic capital (gross income) of families in each class can be found in Table 1.

Table 1: Parents' class positions, by cultural and economic capital

Parents' social class	Education		Job/Occupation		Total Income / Month	
	Level	Ranking	Category	Ranking	Average (Baht)	Ranking
Lower (16)	Most are uneducated and graduate in primary education.	Low and Middle	Most of them do general employment, service and product sale, craftsmanship.	Low and Middle / Low	19,500	Low
Lower Middle (9)	Uneducated and graduate in secondary education, high vocational certificate and bachelor degree.	Low, Middle and High	Most are technicians, do product sale and service	Middle and Middle / Low	50,000	Middle / Low
Middle (25)	Most have bachelor degree, some have master and doctorate degree as well.	High	Most of the work is executives, managers, professional jobs including technicians.	High and Middle	140,000	High

Data and figures in Table 2 and 3 help identify quantity and proportion of cultural capital (education and occupation) and economic capital of survey families in each class. From table 2, it can be seen that among lower class families approximately 50 percent of them graduate from primary education and under with no one having bachelor degree at all, while more than 90 percent of middle class families have bachelor degree or higher. Many people in this group had master and doctorate degrees from abroad, and no one with just only primary education and under level. As for lower middle class families, even if more than 60 percent graduate with vocational and bachelor degree and higher, there are about 10 to 20 percent who had primary education and under level. Further, each class' differences in educational or cultural capital seem to have affected their job opportunities and occupations. As can be seen, more than 60 percent of lower class families with less education work in elementary occupation, primary skill job and service/product sale which are mainly labor-intensive requiring not much knowledge and must work mainly under other people's mandate without anyone working in professional jobs or executives/managers, while middle class families with high education, more than 50 percent to more than 60 percent do professional jobs and executives/managers which need to use skills having income, security, welfare and freedom in quite high decision. As for lower middle class families, even though there are quite a bit highly-educated people, only 30 percent work in high skilled professional jobs with more than 37 percent and 44 percent work in low skilled jobs such as elementary or wage jobs and service and sale respectively. This group of families then have their main providers work in both decent and low-paid jobs.

In addition, if the level of education of key family members has influence and affects their career characteristics as already mentioned, we should also expect that their careers will also have an impact on their personal and total family income. As shown in Table 3 when considering the total monthly income (husband's and wife's

monthly income combined) of survey families, the different levels of total income of families with different class background are clear because nearly 70 percent of lower class families earn 20,000 baht per month and less while more than 70 percent of middle class families earn more than 80,000 baht per month. Of this, 35 percent of them earn more than 140,000 baht per month while 78 percent of lower middle class families earn among 20,001-80,000 baht per month.

Table 2: Parents' class position by education and occupation (amount and percentage)

Education & occupation		Respondent's social class			Spouses' social class	
Education	Lower	Lower Middle	Middle	Lower	Lower Middle	Middle
Primary & under	9 (53.6)	1 (11.1)	0 (0.0)	9 (60.0)	2 (25.0)	0 (0.0)
Secondary	5 (31.1)	1 (11.1)	2 (8.0)	3 (20.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (8.0)
Vocational	2 (12.5)	3 (33.3)	0 (0.0)	2 (13.3)	1 (12.5)	0 (0.0)
College & higher	0 (0.0)	4 (44.3)	23 (92.0)	1 (6.7)	5 (62.5)	23 (92.0)
Occupation	Lower	Lower Middle	Middle	Lower	Lower Middle	Middle
Executive/Manager	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	5 (20.0)	0 (0.0)	3 (33.3)	7 (28.0)
Professional work	0 (0.0)	1 (11.1)	9 (36.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (11.1)	9 (36.0)
Technician	0 (0.0)	2 (22.2)	4 (16.0)	3 (18.8)	1 (11.1)	4 (16.0)
Clerk	1 (6.3)	1 (11.1)	1 (4.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Service/product Sale	3 (18.8)	4 (44.4)	3 (12.0)	4 (25.0)	3 (33.3)	3 (12.0)
Craftsmanship	6 (37.5)	1 (11.1)	0 (0.0)	1 (6.3)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Machinery operation	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (6.3)	0 (0.0)	1 (4.0)
Elementary wage work	5 (31.3)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	6 (37.5)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Others *	1 (6.3)	0 (0.0)	3 (12.0)	1 (6.3)	1 (11.1)	1 (4.0)

Source: From the survey Note: *Others are staying-home housewives taking care of children

Table 3: Parents' social class by total family's monthly income

Total family income (baht / month) *	Parents' social class		
	Lower	Lower Middle	Middle
20,000 and less	11 (68.8)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
20,001-80,000	5 (31.3)	7 (77.8)	6 (26.1)
80,001-140,000	0 (0.0)	2 (26.1)	9 (39.1)
More than 140,001	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	8 (34.8)

Source: From the survey Note: *Two families provide no information of their monthly income

The analysis of the relationship and connection between class and cultural capital and economic capital of the sample families shows that they have both types of capital in clearly different amount and proportion and this difference is evident among families of different class. However in class conceptual framework discussed elsewhere

(Sugunnasil, 2020) I presents the argument about the limitations of conventional class categorization and the need to consider the relationship between class and lived experience in an attempt to move away from the rigid class grouping or what Bourdieu calls 'theoretical class' to 'lived class'. The latter refers to social class as a group of people who think, make decision, act, and build relationships and association, affecting their everyday life and other important activities and helping to reproduce their class position under the constraints and opportunities which they are experiencing. This is what is known as class practice. In this study, what is of interest is that of parents in their involvement with their children's education. Questions to consider here are to what extent these three groups of families are different in terms of their living lifestyles, and how these differences are reflected in their standard of living, property possession, and everyday decision making regarding their involvement with their children's education.

The first issue we will consider here is how families in each class have different life styles. If families of different class have different education, occupation and income, will their daily practices and everyday life be different? Here I use important assets which families generally need and use in everyday life such as transportation vehicles, characteristics, possession rights and house price to consider such forms and daily life difference characteristics. When considering such amount and proportion of property possession according to the family's class position, evidence from survey indicate that families in each class have clearly different amount and proportion of various assets in their possession.

About 80 percent of lower class families travel by motorbike. 75 percent do not have their own houses. In the group of people who do not have their own houses half of them still live with parents, the rest live in rental accommodations or dormitories. In the latter families, all are migrant families who come to work and have children studying in Chiang Mai. Houses where lower class families live mostly are row houses, townhouses and rental houses or dormitories. Four of this class have their own houses which are valued between 300,000 -800,000 baht.

In lower middle class families 44 percent and 33 percent use cars and motorcycles as vehicles respectively. In this group there is the proportion of having their own houses of 56 percent while more than 30 percent still live with the parents of the husband or wife. Most houses or 67 percent are not the houses which are bought under housing estates projects but are built by themselves. Prices of houses of these families mostly are not more than 3,000,000 baht.

Among middle class families, more than 90 percent have and use cars to travel. Nearly 90 percent of middle class families have their own houses. Popular formats of houses in these families are buying ready-made houses in housing estate projects located in the suburbs of Chiang Mai, accounted for 60 percent, while some bought the land of housing estate projects and built them by themselves or built them on their own land, accounted for 36 percent. According to the survey, almost 70 percent of middle class families are those migrate from other provinces, 42 percent having residences worth among 1 million and 3 million baht, and another 54 percent live in houses which ranges from 4 million baht to 10 million baht, mostly located in suburb areas.

Numbers, characteristics, quantity and proportion of important asset possession of sample families point out that families in each class have quite a lot different lifestyles. Class seems to have an impact on living, working and having a family in Chiang Mai where there is more economic growth than other provinces in the North. Families travelling by motorbike and those travelling by car in the streets where there are mostly various kinds of crowded vehicles and heavy traffic means completely different lived experiences on the road in terms of convenience, pollution and physical

safety while the distribution of residences along the intersection between the city and the surrounding area to support the expansion of the city and the growing population makes the middle class who want to escape the congestion in the city have opportunity to choose to set up houses more in the suburb.

The choice of having a house and family life away from the city of these middle class means more time to pick up and drop off children in schools which are located in the city farer away from home especially famous schools. Middle class families spend more time to pick up and drop off children at school each day than anyone else because while lower class families often choose schools near their houses for their children to study, half of them take less than 10 minutes, and the other half take among 15 to 30 minutes, most middle class and some lower middle class always choose schools for their children regardless of the distance but emphasize more the quality of curriculum, teaching and reputation of the school. These schools are always not close to their houses and require quite a lot of time to go to pick up and drop off children. From the table more than 60 percent of the middle class and more than 40 percent of the lower middle class take more than 40 minutes to pick up and drop off children. In these two class 40 percent spend time among 1 to 1 and a half hours, as to be further discussed. This has become a burden in daily lives of middle class families.

Besides different lifestyles, do families in each class involve in their children's education differently? How? Table 4 illustrates the influence of family class background on their children's education.

Table 4: Parents' social class by their involvement in children's education

Parents' involvement		Parents' social class		
	Choosing children's school	Lower	Lower Middle	Middle
School A		16 (100.0)	4 (44.4)	0 (0.0)
School B		0 (0.0)	5 (55.6)	15 (60.0)
School C		0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	10 (40.0)
Choosing school's curriculum		Lower	Lower Middle	Middle
Basic education program		16 (100.0)	4 (44.4)	0 (0.0)
English as second language (ESL) program		0(0.0)	5 (56.6)	17 (68.0)
Bilingual or English program (EP)		0(0.0)	0 (0.0)	8 (32.0)
Reasons for choosing school		Lower	Lower Middle	Middle
Suitable Curriculum		0(0.0)	2(22.2)	9 (36.0)
School Reputation		1 (6.3)	2 (22.2)	5 (20.0)
Near home / Convenient transportation		15 (93.8)	4 (44.4)	2 (8.0)
Others		0 (0.0)	1 (11.1)	7 (28.0)
Access to internet at home		Lower	Lower Middle	Middle
Have access		7 (43.8)	8 (88.9)	25 (100.0)
Do not have access		9 (56.3)	1 (11.1)	0 (0.0)
Having a computer for children		Lower	Lower Middle	Middle
Have computer		4 (25.0)	6 (66.7)	23 (92.0)
Do not have computer		12 (75.5)	3 (33.3)	2 (8.0)

From the table you can see that all lower class families choose to have their children study at school A which is a public school and there is no tuition fee including choosing children to study in basic education curriculum as well. More than 90 percent say that the reason for choosing such school is the convenience of travelling to school especially the pickup and drop-off. All of these families also pay special tuition fee for their children at 500 baht per month and lower. If communication technology is an important component of children's learning today, accessibility and availability of service and equipment needed in this area seems to be an indicator of attention, care and child education promotion at home reasonably. From the table you can see that even in the lower class more than 40 percent specify that children are able to access and use the internet at home although only 25 percent have computers for their children to use at home.

The type of education involvement of the lower class in these areas is very different from that of middle class families. In choosing a school for children all middle class families choose children to go to private schools. 60 percent choose children to study in School B and the other 40 percent study in School C. Not only that, these families also place great importance on learning English. You can see that no one has the children study basic education curriculum program but 68 percent have their children registered in private schools which have English as a Second language (ESL) program and 32 percent in Bilingual program. While being convenient to travel to school is an important reason for choosing a school for the lower class, the middle class is hardly interested in this matter but pay more attention to the quality of education that the children will get whether it is about the curricular (36 percent) or the reputation of the school (20 percent). While some others want their children to go to the same school where they used to study, there are some who think in long term focusing on the chance of passing the university entrance examination and other reasons such as getting to know friends, being able to get along with other people and having teachers in charge. All children in this class are able to access and use the internet at home and over 90 percent can access and use computers at home.

Not only families with different class position choose schools, curriculum and invest educational technology and equipment for children differently, Table 4 suggests that middle class families spend more money for their children's education than the other two groups of families in almost every item. This can be seen more clearly in Table 5 considering how parents' class position affect their children's monthly expenses. Expenses for children here include those for education (such as tuition fee and special tutorial fee) and other expenses necessary for daily living of the children (e.g. food, snacks, clothes and others including school supplies).

Table 5: Parents' social class by monthly expenses for children's education*

Expenses (Baht / Month) *	Parents' social class		
	Lower	Lower Middle	Middle
Total Expenses			
8,000 and less	15 (93.8)	3 (33.3)	0 (0.0)
8,001- 14,000	1 (6.3)	3 (33.3)	0 (0.0)
14,001-20,000	0 (0.0)	1 (11.1)	8 (32.0)
More than 20,001	0 (0.0)	2 (22.2)	17 (68.0)

Expenses (Baht / Month) *	Parents' social class		
	Lower **	Lower Middle	Middle
Tuition Fee			
2,000 and less	16 (100.0)	4 (44.4)	0 (0.0)
2,001-5,000	0 (0.0)	5 (56.6)	17 (68.0)
More than 5,001	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	8 (32.0)
Tutorial course	Lower	Lower Middle	Middle
500 and less	14(100.0)	3(37.5)	1 (4.3)
501-2,000	0 (0.0)	1 (12.5)	9 (39.1)
2,001-4,000	0 (0.0)	3 (37.5)	7 (30.4)
More than 4,001	0 (0.0)	1 (12.5)	6 (26.1)
Food & Snacks	Lower	Lower Middle	Middle
1,000 and less	7 (43.8)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
1,001-2,000	4 (25.0)	2 (22.2)	1 (4.0)
2001-3,000	4 (25.0)	5 (55.6)	6 (24.0)
More than 3,001	1 (6.3)	2 (22.2)	18 (72.0)
Clothes & Others	Lower	Lower Middle	Middle
500 and less	13 (81.0)	7 (77.8)	3 (12.0)
501-1,000	3 (18.8)	1 (11.1)	11 (44.4)
More than 1,001	0 (0.0)	1 (11.1)	11 (44.4)

Source: from the survey

Note: * Expenses for some families are the average per one child in case they more than one.

** For lower class families who send their children to school A, the tuition fees represent cost they pay for special subjects such as computer skills, English and Chinese languages, and tutoring course after school

Starting with the overall expenses, from the table you can see that for children's total expense per month, nearly 70 percent of middle class families invest more than 20,001 baht in their children's primary education. Some details for these expenses are as follows: 32 percent pay more than 5,001 baht per month for tuition fees, another 56 percent pay more than 2,001 baht for tutorial course (of this, 26 percent of pay more than 4,000 baht per month for tutorial course), over 72 percent pay over 3,001 baht for food and snacks and more than 40 percent pay more than 1,001 baht for clothes and school supplies.

These various numbers indicate that educational cost for children of middle class families are quite a lot different from those for children in lower class families. From the table, almost all lower middle class families or over 90 percent invest and spend overall 8,000 baht and less educational and other expenses for their children. When considering each item separately, it can be seen that no lower class families pay more than 2,000 baht for tuition fee, no one pays more than 500 baht for tutoring fees while nearly 70 percent pay less than 2,000 baht for food and snacks, and about 80 percent pay for clothes and school supplies for children not over 500 baht.

For lower middle class families, 66 percent pay less than 14,000 baht in total for expenses for their children. Of these, families with expenses among 8,001 to 14,000 baht are 33 percent (more than 6.3 percent of lower class

families), while more than 20 percent have expenditures of more than 20,001 baht (less than 68 percent of middle class families). Details on each item are as follows: over 56 percent pay among 2,001 to 5,000 for their children's tuition fee, the rest of 44 percent pay 500 baht and lower for tuition fee and 55 percent pay among 2,001 to 3,000 baht for food and snacks for their children, 78 percent pay 500 baht and lower for clothes and school supplies.

Table 6: Parents' social class by self-assessment in helping their children's schooling

Self-Assessment in helping their children	Parents' social class		
	Lower	Lower Middle	Middle
Know how to help them study well	11 (68.8)	6 (66.7)	23 (92.0)
Don't know how to help their difficult subjects	12 (75.0)	3 (33.3)	4 (16.0)
Do not know about what do they ask	9 (56.3)	3 (33.3)	3 (12.0)
Do not know how to help them get good scores	6 (37.5)	2 (22.2)	0 (0.0)
Have not much time	6 (37.5)	1 (11.1)	2 (8.0)
What they try to help their children is useful	13 (81.3)	9 (100.0)	25 (100.0)
Think that they can help improve their study	14 (87.5)	8 (88.9)	23 (92.0)

How parents from different class background get involve in their children's education. From Table 6 it can be seen that when ask respondents to assess general ability to assist their children's education, parents from different class have distinctly different self-assessments. It can be seen that the proportion of respondents from lower class families think that 69 percent of them know how to help their children study better, close to the lower middle class, which is 68 percent, but still less than the middle class which 92 percent answer that they know this. 75 percent of the lower class accept that they do not know how to help their children or grandchildren in difficult matters, comparing to the lower middle class and the middle class, only 33 percent and 16 percent of the proportion of very few respondents not knowing this. The lower class who think that they do not know much about what their children ask are fewer but still slightly more than half the proportion (56 percent) and quite a lot more than the lower middle class (33 percent) and the middle class (12 percent). When evaluating more specific capabilities which is in regards to helping their children get good grades in studying, the lower class who think they do not know this have significantly reduced proportion which is only 37 percent but still have more proportion than the lower middle class and the middle class especially in the latter group, no one answers that they do not know. As well as the problem of time to help children with learning problems, most lower class have time (only 37 percent respond they do not have time) but also have much smaller proportion than the two groups. Although admitting that they have a lot of limitations, about 80 percent of the lower class feel that what they are trying to help their children with education is beneficial comparing to everyone in the lower middle class and the middle class who feel the same, and the lower class who think they can help their children improve have higher and the highest proportion compared to self-assessments in other areas, that is 87 percent, close to the proportion of the assessment of the lower middle class (90 percent) and slightly less than that of the middle class (92 percent).

Data from the table point out that the lower class assess their ability to help their children's learning somewhat lower than the assessment of the lower middle class and the middle class. Additional data from survey

interviews indicate more that the lower class really have limitations in terms of knowledge, ability and experiences to help their children. Cultural capital especially education and economic capital is their major obstacle while other class especially the middle class is the group that has the potential of knowledge, experience, skill and capital to be used to help and support children's learning or to solve problems which their children are facing. However, these differences do not diminish intention, determination and expectation of the lower class in their children's learning. They still see education as important and many think and believe that 'Where there is a will, there is a way'. Attention, teaching, and helping even limited does not diminish the feeling and the idea that what they do is useful and helps their children study better although they do not know how.

Table 7: Parents' social class by self-assessment of knowledge and ability in helping their children's schooling

Self-assessment of competence	Parents' class position		
	Lower	Lower Middle	Middle
Able to communicate with teachers.	16 (100.0)	9 (100.0)	25 (100.0)
Able to communicate with children about learning.	16 (100.0)	9 (100.0)	25 (100.0)
Able to explain to help children do their homework	12 (75.0)	8 (88.9)	25 (100.0)
Know enough to help children do their homework	12 (75.0)	8 (88.9)	25 (100.0)
Able to talk about children with teachers	15 (93.8)	9 (100.0)	25 (100.0)
Able to help children's daily life in school.	15 (93.8)	9 (100.0)	25 (100.0)

The information in Table 7 shows the results of competency assessment of parents which directly and indirectly affect the children's learning especially the ability to talk, communicate with teachers, talk and communicate with children about their learning, explain to help them do homework, have knowledge of enough various stories to help them do homework, talk about their children with teachers and help children about living at school. It can be seen that except for some items, all class assess their own knowledge and abilities in various matters almost not differently and most of them think that they have knowledge and ability to help their children. High proportion of numbers in all questions asked points out parental thoughts and responsibilities of current children's learning at high level. One part may be the result of expectations from school and society as a whole regarding the importance and involvement of parents in their children's education. The other part is likely the result of changes in parents' roles and responsibilities in their children's learning. Parents seem to have more expectations and are more involved in education of children in modern society whether talking with teachers, talking with children, doing homework, or living in the school. This seems to happen to parents of all groups and class.

However differences in knowledge and competency are still there particularly the questions are specific in terms of knowledge and ability to help children with their homework which the lower class despite the proportion of people who think they can explain, help their children do their homework and know enough various stories to help them do homework as high as 75 percent, it is less than the proportion of the same group in the lower middle and the middle class, which are 89 percent and 100 percent respectively. These differences are consistent with general self-assessment figures in Table 6 especially regarding parents' ability to help children in difficult subjects including their knowledge to answer questions which their children ask.

Table 8: Parents' social class by self-assessment of available time and readiness to help children with their studies

Assessment of Time / Readiness	Parents' social class		
	Lower	Lower Middle	Middle
Always ready to help children with their studies.	12 (75.0)	9 (100.0)	23 (92.0)
Always ready to communicate and talk to teachers.	12 (75.0)	7 (77.8)	19 (76.0)
Always ready to participate in any school activities.	11 (68.8)	8 (88.9)	21 (84.0)
Always ready to help children do their homework	8 (50.0)	7 (77.8)	21 (84.0)
Always ready to deal with / give advice on homework	9 (56.3)	6 (66.7)	23 (92.0)

Problems of the lower class in caring for the children's homework are still regularly evident in the assessment of time or their own readiness to help support their children's learning in various aspects (see Table 8). It can be seen that the percentages of parents who assess themselves regarding having time or readiness to help children with learning, regular conversation with teachers and participation in school are not much different among three groups of survey families. However when it comes to helping with homework and giving advice about homework, the proportion of people with time or readiness in the lower class is a bit lower than that of the lower middle class but much lower than that of the middle class.

Conclusion and Suggestion

Education is a matter of creating equal opportunities but it is also a system that creates differences and inequality. In competitive situation where educational and professional success and well-being and security are opportunities and choices that must be striving for more intensely. Middle class families tend to bring up and care for their children's learning in a way can be called here 'Intensive Cultivation' while lower class and lower middle class families tend to look after and take care of their children's learning with another method called 'Limited Cultivation.' These different education involvement styles help us see and understand the mechanism or tools that social class use to make and advantages in the learning life of children in society. Both class practices regarding involvement in their children's education have the following important characteristics.

To choose a school, middle class parent pay attention to the quality of the curricular more than others, thinking about opportunities and options in education, career and future while in lower class parent always choose schools which are close to their accommodations with not much expense. To help with their learning at home, parents using intensive cultivation method can look after, help and involve in their children's education in and outside the school. Parent using limited cultivation cannot or do not have enough knowledge to help their children, are not confident in themselves and in their children's learning potential. To solve learning problems for their children, middle class parents generally have enough time, resource and cultural capital or experience, useful idea in thinking, decision making, and spending time doing good and suitable things for children including investing in good and expensive tutorial courses.

However it should be emphasized here that the expected benefits among middle class children and disadvantages of lower class and lower middle class children in this study are at best speculative of what might happen in the future because children of parents in this study are still in their early years of schooling. Additionally creating

advantages and reproducing class is not a smooth process but requires adjustment, modification and correction all the time and sometimes the effort to reproduce (class interest in the field of education) can be a failure as not every child will study well as all parent have expected.

But it is obvious that the process of creating advantages for well-off families has already occurred since childhood and it should be emphasized that evidence from other studies at the macro level (Latthaphiphat, 2011, Patthamasiriwat, 2011, Puapongsakorn, 2011) makes it clear that children of well-to-do families always have opportunity to study at the tertiary level and to study subjects which guarantee income, stability and good future more than those from families with lower socioeconomic status.

In terms of policy implications, the findings of this study suggest that narrowing class inequality in children's education requires multiple interventions. First, policies directing at the reduction of inequalities among disadvantaged and poor families should become both local and national priority. These redistributive policies ought to consider children that are both in low class families and in low quality schools. Second, reducing the role of parents in reproducing social inequality in education means the necessity of local and national government to establish and extend policies and measures to cover investment in affordable and high-quality childcare to narrow the learning gap among children, and on important attributes as health, cognitive, and non-cognitive abilities among children in their early years of schooling. Third, mechanism of inequality reduction in education also lies in securing that those parents in poverty have well-paid and stable employment. Parents' education and secure income and other measures to increase benefits for mother in poor families are more likely to be an effective guarantee against inequality in children's education. Finally, schools and teachers could play a much more important role in supplementing educational resources for disadvantaged children. In this regard, programs and activities that provide support and resources for parent involvement in their children's education are crucial. This entails the investment of resources and the practical development for teachers to enhance their capacities to work with families, especially low income and poor families.

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