Doctoral Dissertation of Philosophy in Education

Rethinking Refugee Education: Education ‘for’ and ‘by’ refugees in a Karen refugee camp, Thailand

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Graduate School of Education

Seoul National University

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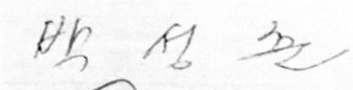
Chair	Sung Choon PARK	
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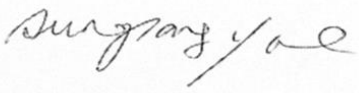
	Sung-Sang YOO	

In the hopes that this work may in some way contribute to the lives of refugee children, this is dedicated to my research participants in the camp who have contributed in different voices for the refugee learners to read their own world

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ABSTRACT

Rethinking Refugee Education: Education 'for' and 'by' refugees in a Karen refugee camp, Thailand

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With increasingly protracted conflict situations worldwide, many refugees are exposed to dehumanizing environments in separately administered – and often temporarily built – camps. Coupled with the right to education articulated in the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the global commitment to achieve universal access to education was formalized since the 1990 Education For All movement. It called for plans and actions to include provision for education in emergency and conflict situations. However, the scholarly works in refugee education is still focusing heavily on the refugee population that are resettled in industrialized countries, while 85% of the refugees are known to be living in developing countries.

Based on this context, the purpose of this research is twofold. First, it aims to reveal the marginalized narratives in refugee education discourses by

highlighting the local perspectives and voices on how education is formed, maintained, and conceptualized in a refugee camp located on the border of Thailand and Myanmar. Focusing on the voices of various educational stakeholders within the camp community, this research encompasses the discourses of not only the external actors from the international organizations, host country, and country of origin, but also the internal perspectives from the community-based institutes and leadership, as well as the refugee teachers and students. Second, it aims to make theoretical contribution to the existing discourses of refugee education by critically interpreting the ways that refugee education is practiced and perceived through a lens of Paulo Freire, one of the most influential educational philosophers in the twentieth century. Following his notions of critical pedagogy, this research regards education as a process of "emancipating and empowering" and assumes that education does not always operate in the service of the established social order. While there are three conventional approaches found in the existing literature of refugee education – humanitarian approach, human rights approach, and developmental approach – this study adopts an educational approach as an alternative and examines the diverse educational stakeholders' perspectives and practices. Ultimately, the study provides a critical opportunity of re-thinking whether refugee education is indeed educational.

Adopting an ethnographically informed qualitative approach, I conducted a field research in 2019 and 2020 inside the Mae La refugee camp – where 35,000 predominantly Karen refugees are living – near the border town of Mae Sot, Thailand. Over a total period of five months of full-time stay in the camp, identifying myself to the community as a volunteer schoolteacher as well as a

researcher, I collected data from over 40 key participants and countless hours of formally recorded interviews as well as informal conversations and experiences in the form of participant observation. With snowball and purposive sampling methods, the key interview participants included the following three groups of individuals. First, educational coordinators from the local CBOs such as KRCEE and KECD, second, external stakeholders including international NGOs and UNHCR, and third, community stakeholders including teachers, parents, students, and camp leaders.

Findings of the study present how education is formed and maintained as education ‘for’ refugees and education ‘by’ refugees in the Mae La camp community. Education ‘for’ the refugees in the camp appears to be awkwardly structured by the pseudo-State comprising global governance, national jurisdiction, and local management. The top-down development paradigm that perceives refugee education merely as an emergency endeavour on the humanitarian ground is easily rationalized. Under the unique environment of the camp outside the modern states, while the conceptualization of refugee children has been framed around their vulnerability and role as victims, external stakeholders’ rationale for schooling tend to be unsettled, leading to inconsistent and mixed curriculum content. On the other hand, education 'by' refugees reveal more of the narratives derived from refugee-led institutions and leadership. Highlighting the refugee voices on what education means to them and how they play a subjective role in it, education is described as 'a boundary making device' (Oh, Walker, & Thako, 2019), in the Karen refugees' formal and informal efforts for nationhood and recognition. The purpose of schooling expressed by internal stakeholders in the camp is deeply connected with the historical root of *Kawthoolei*, the Karen nation without a state.

To respond to unjust status-quo, education is seen as both a last resort and a pride to sustain Karen's identity, and students are encouraged to regard themselves as a subject – mostly meaning a nationalist revolutionist – rather than an object of international assistance.

Informed by insights from Freirean pedagogical theories, the Karen refugee learners need to be perceived beyond aid beneficiaries or national revolutionists. Since the concrete utopias for education are always in motion; they are never pregiven; they never exist as blueprints, which would only ensure the “mechanical repetition of the present” (McLaren, 2007, p. 104), refugee education needs to be regarded as a vehicle for liberation instead of domestication (Freire, 1970) in both education 'for' and 'by' refugees. Without critically addressing fundamental questions about to what ends education is pursued, the recent trend in refugee education – away from the global governance model and towards global support for national integration – may ultimately fall short in leading education to be transformative in the necessary ways. As opposed to suggesting the ways to solve problems, this research posed critical questions toward the ways of defining the purposes behind refugee education. In doing so, it contributes to rethinking refugee education in a more comprehensive way embedding community-based perspectives, practices, and their contextual background.

Keyword: Refugee Education, Thailand-Myanmar Border, Refugee Camp, Critical Pedagogy, Ethnography, Qualitative Research

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACTED	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CCSDPT	Coordinating Committee for Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand
COERR	Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees
CMU	Chiang Mai University
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DARE	DARE Network
EFA	Education For All
EiE	Education in Emergencies
HI	Handicap International
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IDPs	Internally Displaced People
INEE	Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
IRC	International Rescue Committee
JRS	Jesuit Refugee Service
KECD	Karen Education and Culture Department
KED	Karen Education Department
KNU	Karen National Union
KRC	Karen Refugee Committee
KRCEE	Karen Refugee Committee Education Entity
MI	Malteser International
MOI	Ministry of Interior, Thailand
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OCEE	Office of Camp Education Entity
PRS	Protracted Refugee Situations
RTE	Right to Education
RTP	Right To Play
SCI	Save the Children
SVA	Shanti Volunteer Association
TBC	The Border Consortium

UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioners for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WEAVE	Women's Education for Advancement and Empowerment

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem

For the past decades, many refugees in the world are exposed to increasingly protracted conflict situations. The average duration of displacement is known to be 20 to 25 years (Mendenhall, 2017) and the refugees spend their life in separately administered - and often temporarily built - camps. Thus, they easily become dependent on external humanitarian or development agencies with no choice (Zeus, 2011). According to the most recent statistics from United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 26 million refugees have crossed borders and 40% of the population are recognized as children under the age of 18, as shown in Table 1 (UNHCR, 2019c). What is noteworthy is that 85% of these refugees are found to be living in developing countries that are neighbouring the country of origin. Top five countries of origin are recently announced as Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Myanmar (UNHCR, 2019c). Though it is difficult to accurately measure the global figure of forced migrants in each region – due to identification and documentation issues – it is known to be consistently increasing since World War II (Dryden-Peterson, Adelman, Bellino, & Chopra, 2019).

[Table 1] Recent Figures of Refugee Population and Education Enrolment worldwide

Forcibly displaced people worldwide	79.5 million	Hosted in Developing Countries	85%
Internally displaced people	45.7 million	Enrolment of Refugees in Primary School	63%
Refugees worldwide	26 million	Enrolment of Refugees in Secondary School	24%
School-aged Children	40%	Enrolment of Refugees in Higher Education	3%

Source: (UNHCR, 2019c)

Aligning with today's sustainable development imperative, the international community is faced with the significant challenges in providing quality education to a diverse population including refugees, whether they are documented or undocumented (Meda, Sookrajh, & Maharaj, 2012). Coupled with the right to education articulated in the 1951 United Nations (UN) Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (UNHCR, 2011b), the global commitment to achieve universal access to education was formalized in the 1990 Education For All (EFA) conference in Jomtien. It called for plans and actions to include provision for education in emergency and conflict situations (UNESCO, 2000). Nonetheless, the scholarly works in refugee education is heavily focusing yet on the refugee population resettled in industrialized countries (Dryden-Peterson, 2016a) while the number of refugees is rapidly growing due to civil wars and environmental challenges in diverse nations. With broad concerns around growing human mobility and global migration, the dominant themes and discourses of the literature in refugee education tend to highlight the interventions used to integrate refugees in so-called 'mainstream society' (Sengupta & Blessinger, 2018). They often reveal the efforts implemented by the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and local state governments toward achieving an optimal level of integration with host communities. Hence, the primary focus of the academic discourses in refugee education has been placed on the process of assimilation and integration of the refugee children in distant resettlement countries. It often carries a narrow view objectifying refugee child as a victim of conflict who must overcome the traumatic experiences. Considering the fact that only 15% of the refugees are currently hosted in the distant resettlement countries, the refugee children's right to quality education in low- and middle-income countries – where

the educational infrastructure is already overstretched – is left far behind and under-researched (Dryden-Peterson, 2016b; Sengupta & Blessinger, 2018).

1.2 Background

The foundations of this dissertation are rooted in my own experiences where I worked with resettled refugee students as a primary school teacher in Australia. As a qualitative researcher, I often think of my own teaching experiences, and interactions with the refugee learners and parents then as an unofficial starting point for this research project. It is because it made the significance of education for refugee learners into something noticeable. I began to raise many questions to myself while I was teaching my students in Australia, many of whom came directly from refugee camps in developing countries. Seven years before this PhD research was born, I came to encounter with their fascinating narratives of resettlement journey before arriving in my classroom. I soon realized the group of students I met only represent the tip of iceberg because most of the refugees do not get to leave the refugee camps for a protracted period. While I felt the students had extremely diverse learning needs - after a long time spent in the camps - most parents wanted their children to focus on learning Australian culture and language to adapt themselves quickly into the main society through education. Since I realized that the resettlement program is no longer the main durable solutions for refugees by the international organizations, I wanted to know more about what would happen to the children in the refugee camp settings, living in limbo between home and host countries. In specific, it made me wonder how, and by whom, those refugee learners remaining in the camps are educated. Starting from this personal

inquiry, I have stopped teaching at school and decided to pursue research career in international development and cooperation of education sector. Thinking of education as a right for all, including those who have been stuck in the borderlands, I was constantly faced with the two burning questions: who can secure this right and who is obliged to secure this right?

Education in protracted refugee contexts is strongly tied in the legal affiliation. Building on the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1951 Refugee Convention is a UN multilateral treaty that defines who is a refugee and sets out the rights of individuals who are granted asylum and the responsibilities of nations that grant asylum. However, as many of the developing countries still remain as non-signatory to this Convention, refugee children are caught between the global promise of universal human rights, the definition of citizenship rights within nation-states, and the realization of these sets of rights in everyday practices (Dryden-Peterson, 2016b). As a result, those who are trapped in protracted refugee situations have limited access to employment and basic services such as healthcare and education. In light of this, refugee situations are still perceived as a temporary character demanding immediate and basic humanitarian relief, whereas the provision of refugee education is indeed "a long-term developmental effort" (Zeus, 2011, p. 261). With this background, refugee education has long been a neglected priority for the international community even though many recent conflicts that are on-going have lasted for decades, such as in Afghanistan, Somalia and Myanmar.

Providing quality education in protracted refugee contexts is certainly challenging in a way that consists of dynamic power structures with various actors involved in the "crossroads of globalization" (Dryden-Peterson, 2016a, p. 473).

There are three strands of actors working together towards quality refugee education under the international refugee regime.

First, the UNHCR is one of the significant global actors coordinating refugee education policies. Despite there is little evidence of tangible organizational commitment by the UNHCR to guaranteeing the right to quality education for refugee children, it is the organization mandated with the physical, political, and social protection of refugees. While education is a rising concern for the UNHCR among its humanitarian assistance such as food, shelter, and water, it publicized the strategy of shifting the 'global governance of refugee education' into the framework of 'global support to national systems' (Dryden-Peterson, 2016a). In the region where a national system is still resistant or passive in taking refugee children into its public schooling system, NGOs also play vital roles in implementing the global policies of refugee education in partnership with the local stakeholders in the field.

Second, schooling of the refugee learners is strictly sanctioned by the state governments of host countries. While the external global actors including the UNHCR and NGOs act as constituent bodies, their work on provision of refugee education is to be approved and coordinated thoroughly with the states in which refugees reside (Dryden-Peterson, 2016a). Whether or not the refugee children are welcomed by the host countries, the states in which refugees reside have the practical authority in education provision.

Third, in addition to those external actors on global and national dimensions, a notable actor involved in providing refugee education is the refugee community themselves. Despite of the restrictions placed by the external stakeholders acting like 'pseudo-State' (Waters & Leblanc, 2005), the systems of schools and learning

is often set up, staffed and managed by the Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) sustained by active community members within the refugee setting (Oh, 2011).

With those overlapping sources of authority, refugee education in protract crises of developing countries might appear like situations which seem extremely difficult to achieve, for they contain two opposite characteristics. This is the case because refugees are deemed to be 'oppressed' and 'unfree' whereas education is closely associated with 'freedom' and 'democracy' (Freire, 1970). For many spend much of their time in exile inside the camps where restrictions are placed on their basic rights and freedoms, there are three assumptions reflecting on practical barriers to education in protracted refugee situations (Zeus, 2011). First, refugee camps – despite having in many cases existed for several decades – still carry a connotation of temporariness. Second, schooling, as a formal type of education in refugee contexts, is often believed to be dependent on the existence of a nation-state. Third, refugees are merely perceived as traumatized victims of war and conflict, who are dependent on external aid with no agency. They are usually believed to lack the capabilities to cope with the challenges of education. All of these assumptions make refugee education almost an impossible endeavour and continue to regard refugees as a homogenous group of stateless people in liminality as in "having left one nation-state, they are not yet accepted by another" (Zeus, 2011, p. 259).

Given the challenging situations encountered by refugee youth, coupled with narrow perceptions on them, it is easy for international community to only focus at the deficits of the situations. Nevertheless, some scholars – based on their fieldwork – point out that refugee children are incredibly resilient and capable

(Joliffe & Oh, 2018; Oh et al., 2019; Pieloch, McCullough, & Marks, 2016; Yeo, Gagnon, & Thako, 2020). While a thousand tragic stories can be framed through the refugee crisis, some scholarly works perceive refugee youth as capable beings and underline the importance of refugee education as a hope and freedom amid their adversity. From this point of view, schooling can have an ameliorating effect in extreme, conflictual and post-war settings by building utopian hope (Maadad & Matthews, 2018). Indeed, this hope may enable people to believe that there is a better community to be strived for and imagine their future beyond current conditions and constraints. For this reason, it is worth looking into how refugee education is shaped, sustained and conceptualized from different viewpoints. To explore how refugee education plays the role of reconstructing communities of belonging and stability – or even sustaining pre-existing hierarchies and inequalities – the knowledge, experience and understanding of specific refugee communities are to be taken seriously (Maadad & Matthews, 2018).

1.3 Purpose of the Study

To find out more about how, and by whom, those refugee learners remaining in the camps are educated, living in limbo between home and host countries, I had to choose a specific site to conduct a case study. This is because I realized from listening to various refugee students and parents' narratives while I was a primary school teacher, that every refugee situation has its own history and context. Therefore, focusing on the case of a Karen refugee community in Mae La refugee camp located on the border of Thailand and Myanmar, this research aims to describe and analyse how refugee education is perceived and implemented by

taking the snapshots of the diverse stakeholders' viewpoints. By acknowledging there are different stakeholders involved in providing and managing refugee education in the camp, it is to reveal how the purpose of refugee education is shaped, sustained and conceptualized from both external and internal stakeholders.

In general, refugees are often portrayed as helpless victims and burdens of the host society (Ryu & Tuvilla, 2018) while conventional approaches to the study of minority/migration education – including refugee education – have mainly focused on how they adapt to the educational environments of the host countries (Lee, 2014). Even with good intentions and commitment to assist the refugee community, the both policymakers and practitioners in refugee education field may focus on what they lack, rather than the various narratives, experiences, and perspectives they have to offer.

Considering this, the purpose of this research is in twofold. First, it aims to describe the local perspectives and voices on how education is formed, maintained and conceptualized in refugee context by encompassing marginalized narratives. Focusing on the voices of the educational stakeholders within the camp community, this research encompasses the discourses of not only the external actors from the international organizations, host country, and country of origin, but also the internal perspectives from the community-based institutes and leadership, as well as the refugee teachers and students. Second, it aims to make theoretical contribution to the existing discourses to refugee education by interpreting the ways that refugee education is practiced and perceived through a lens of Paulo Freire's critical education. Following his theory of critical pedagogy, this research regards education as a process of "emancipating and empowering" and assumes that education does not always operate in the service of the established social order

(Davis, 2004, p. 142). In such terms, the purpose of this study ultimately includes giving voice and advocating the involved stakeholders to become conscious of and to affect the processes of enculturation by re-thinking whether refugee education is indeed educational.

To be specific, the **main research question** is: How is the refugee education shaped, sustained, and conceptualized in the Mae La refugee camp? To address this question, the **partial questions** raised throughout this thesis are: What are the purposes of sustaining schooling in Mae La refugee camp? How is the meaning of refugee education conceptualized differently - or similarly - between the stakeholders involved? To answer the questions throughout the dissertation, I describe and analyse perspectives from the community of individuals and institutes that have been involved in shaping educational purposes in the refugee camp. Recognizing that refugee education is closely related to its wider political environment and global regime, it is worth to take snapshots of how refugee education practices are perceived and implemented from various local perspectives to gain a more holistic understanding of it. Throughout the research, different rationales and approaches are described on what are the intrinsic values and knowledge that should help students advance through education in refugee camps, and the role of refugee communities in refugee education. Informed by post-structural theories as a lens through which to examine issues surrounding education in the refugee context, the research adopts key concepts from Freire's critical pedagogy to refugee education. It is to invite refugee educators and learners into critical examinations of the conventions that frame their experience and into similarly critical examinations of their own practices in those conventions.

Refugees, civil society movements, and opposition forces may have a

variety of opinions and agendas for international organizations, states and bilateral donors that dominate the current focus of the field (Novelli & Lopes Cardozo, 2008). Meanwhile, policy makers and practitioners adopting critical education approach in conflict settings tend to be somewhat abstract and often lacking in utility for those people working in the field affiliated with international organizations, international NGOs or local CBOs. Since many researches with critical education theories locate the focus within a broader landscape, considering sociocultural and political structures, they often fail to take into account the real-life case with practical needs and the more complex processes within which this practical activity ends up taking place (Paulson & Rappleye, 2007). It is partly due to a gap between the practice of refugee education heavily relying on problem-solving approach toward reconstruction and the theory of critical education that calls for re-creation of surroundings. A problem-solving approach to the field of refugee education would merely build on technical solutions that cannot address the root causes of protracted conflict. Hence, as opposed to suggesting the ways to solve problems, this research rather poses fundamental questions toward the ways of defining the purposes behind refugee education. In doing so, this research provides a room to re-conceptualize refugee education in a more comprehensive way embedding community-based perspectives, practices and their contextual background.

1.4 Terminology

Despite the terms and definitions are contestable and changing over time in the field of refugee education, so it should not be read as deterministic. However, the terminologies used in this study are explained in this chapter to help with clarity for readers. Throughout this qualitative case study, the name of **Burma** and **Myanmar** are interchangeably used according to the timeframe described in the context of writing. Since the 1989 decision by the ruling military government changed the name of the country from Burma to Myanmar, adoption of the new name in the English-speaking world has been mixed (Teng, 2017). After thousands were killed in an uprising, the choice of the name among individuals and organizations has become a political act even though on paper, officially, the country's name is Myanmar. In general, scholars use both names interchangeably while those engaging in democracy movements have been persistently using the name of Burma (Lee, 2007). Rather than choosing a political stance, this study focuses on describing and analysing the research participants' views reflected by the use of the terms. Accordingly, this study interchangeably uses the term **Burmese** and **People of Myanmar** referring to people in each context[1].

The 1951 UN Refugee Convention amended by the 1967 Protocol defines a **refugee** as "someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion" (UNHCR, 2020c). Since a refugee is defined as a person who has crossed a border,

[1] For more details, see Chapter 2, Burma: History, Ethnicity, and Civil War, *Fear and Sanctuary: Burmese Refugees in Thailand* (Lang, 2002a)

according to the Commonwealth Secretariat[2], it is different from an **Internally Displaced Person (IDP).** The **host country** is the country that has received the refuge. The **home country** is the country from which the refugee has fled, also referred as the **country of origin**. Both refugees and IDPs are considered as **forced migrants**. Meanwhile the refugee is (formally or informally) an **asylum-seeker**. While waiting to be accepted as a refugee, an asylum-seeker's access to services or rights, such as the right to live outside a camp, may be limited administratively. Further, even being a fully recognized refugee still does not guarantee all the same rights as a citizen.

Refugees are deemed to have left their country because of a **well-founded fear of persecution**. Usually, the refugee has been pushed from his or her country. In many cases there is also a pull to a better economic situation or better education. When the pull is the only recognized reason for migrating, the person is not a refugee but rather an **immigrant** or **migrant worker**. The term **economic refugee**, which is commonly used, is therefore strictly speaking not accurate as it does not conform to the term 'well-founded fear of persecution'. The exception to this is when life at home has become unliveable because of the economic actions of a state, which is of course a push factor, though in practice there is often a tipping point where pull is stronger than push.

Refugee situations are expected to come to an end one day, with one or more **durable solutions**. There are three possible durable solutions, which can apply to individuals or whole refugee communities. These are: (1) **Integration to a host**

[2] The terminologies used throughout this study adopt the definition provided by Commonwealth Secretariat. It is the main intergovernmental agency of the Commonwealth, facilitating consultation and cooperation among member governments and countries. For more details, see *Educators in Exile* (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2013).

country, a rare solution these days; (2) **Resettlement to a third country**, a solution that is highly dependent on the goodwill of third countries and currently open mainly to specific vulnerable people or groups; or (3) **Voluntary return to home country** when conditions permit. **Forcible return** (also known as **repatriation**) is not permitted, though it does occur, often for political reasons.

Throughout this study, **educator** includes the educational stakeholders such as a teacher-trainer and an education coordinator (affiliated with organizations working in refugee settings, from small grassroots groups to large international NGOs) as well as a full-time teacher who gets a subsidy from Karen Refugee Committee Education Entity (KRCEE). In specific, the term **teacher** includes a classroom teacher and a school principal, who conduct teaching in primary, secondary or higher level of formal and non-formal education. A range of terms are used in practice for **teaching** such as facilitating, emancipating, and empowering based on poststructuralist and critical perspectives. The payment that teacher receives on a monthly basis is interchangeably referred as a **subsidy** or a **salary** depending on the person who describes it**.**

For the camp schools in the case of Mae La refugee camp, **Primary schools** consists of the students from grade 1 to 6. It is unique that **Middle schools** cover the students from grade 1 to 9 and **High schools** cover the students from grade 1 to 12. Mae La refugee camp, often referred as a **temporary shelter**, follows the jurisdictions of Thai government – **Ministry of Interior (MOI)** and **Ministry of Education (MOE)** – and higher education institutes built by communities inside the camp are not allowed to be called as university, but labelled as **Post-12 schools.** In Mae La camp community, the term Post-10 schools refer to post-secondary because the previous education system in Myanmar had 10 standards covering

from primary to high school (MOE, 2016). However, in this dissertation, these high education institutes are labelled as Post-12 schools in order to avoid confusion.

No distinction is made between **formal** and **non-formal education** in this study. Since the camp schools in the community of Mae La are mostly set up by refugee leaders resourced by the refugee communities and later by the international NGOs, they differ from the cases of formal schools of the state education system. Although educational institutions are conventionally "associated with formalization and legalization" (Lee, 2014, p. 127), schooling in the refugee camp takes place in a "transborder system of non-state education" (Oh et al., 2019, p. 5). In this unique context, "informality" associated with education in the camp is not an "abnormal feature" but an admissible and legitimate one within the community (Lee, 2014, p. 127).

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Prior to exploring and reflecting on how refugee education in Mae La refugee camp is shaped, sustained and conceptualized, this chapter summarizes the existing literature of refugee education and identifies the dominant approaches by the global refugee regime. It classifies the literature with three conceptual approaches that have been commonly adopted to guide the field of refugee education: *a humanitarian approach*, *a human rights approach*, and *a developmental approach* (UNHCR, 2011b).

The humanitarian approach describes the UNHCR's general institutional approach to refugee education, broadly discussed in the discourse of emergency education (Burde, Kapit, Wahl, Guven, & Skarpeteig, 2017; Kagawa, 2005; Nicolai, Anderson, & Hodgkin, 2019; Novelli & Lopes Cardozo, 2008; Sinclair, 2007; Winthrop & Mendenhall, 2006). Since the humanitarian relief focuses only on the immediate and outward crisis, not its broader politics (Kapoor, 2013), education is viewed as one component of a rapid response, providing immediate protection to children and ultimately preventing human rights violations. Exploring trajectories of refugee education, literatures identify refugee education has been a field of practice in emergency discourses with great challenges to involve collaboration with other stakeholders in local, national and global dimensions (Dryden-Peterson, 2016a). Given the protracted context of today's refugee crisis, the short-term perspective on education and emergency is rather limited because schooling for refugee children carries more of a long-term significance beyond simply life-saving medical efforts.

The human rights approach emphasizes education as a human right to be

realized and cultivated through education in any situation, including refugee crisis. It defines education as an 'enabling right', providing skills that people need to reach their full potential and to exercise their other rights, such as the right to life and health (UNESCO, 2019). This approach is evident in the discourse of Right to Education (RTE) for refugee children (A. Anderson, Hofmann, & Hyll-Larsen, 2011; Crisp, Talbot, & Cipollone, 2001; McConnachie, 2012; Momin, 2017; Moriarty, 2017; Szente, Hoot, & Taylor, 2006; Thomas, 2016; UNESCO, 2017). Like the humanitarian approach, the rights-based approach provides a normative framework consistent with the fundamental mandate of UNHCR. However, it is often too ideal or vague to implement and ensure the rights of the refugees through education, especially in the current practices of refugee education with the remaining concerns of its quality and accreditation issues.

The developmental approach recognizes education as a long-term investment for society and the lack of quality education in crisis as holding back development potential. This approach, most commonly expressed by local stakeholders, calls for a transition from relief to development discourse (Al-Hroub, 2014; Demusz, 1998; Dryden-Peterson, 2006; Mendenhall, 2014; Moore, 1999; Storen, 2016). With a long-term view of education, various education guidelines and strategies by international communities promote refugee inclusion in and through education, embedding a sense of future relevance toward individual livelihoods and societal advancement (UNHCR, 2011b, 2019a, 2019b). However, without catering the participation of refugee stakeholders in the process of a top-down approach towards refugee education, the approach will ultimately fall short of empowering the learners to claim their own development.

This chapter reviews literature of refugee education to reveal diverse

existing approaches and present the changing rationales as well as the current state of the field. Afterwards, this chapter takes a step further to suggest the need of an alternative and educational approach. Acknowledging that vulnerable group of children in the refugee camps can be seen not only as “restricted” objects of educational interventions but “resilient” subject beings (McConnachie, 2016, p. 407), it introduces Paulo Freire (1974) and his critical pedagogy. As a native of Brazil, Freire was one of the most influential philosophers of education of the twentieth century. His insights served to ameliorate the living conditions of oppressed people in and through education.

The final section of this chapter elaborates upon the conceptual framework for this research. Within the framework, it aims to initially understand the current state of refugee education more holistically. From diverse stakeholders' point of view, it describes the educational phenomenon in the case of Mae La refugee camp as education 'for' the refugees and 'by' the refugees. Then, the current educational perspectives and practices within the camp are critically analysed and discussed by adopting the Freirean notions of education.

2.1 Conventional Approaches to Refugee Education

2.1.1 Humanitarian Approach: Refugee Education in Emergencies

Various international donors have generally approached refugee education in the discourse of emergency education, that is, education in emergency situations (DFID, 2015; GPE, 2015; UNHCR, 2019c). An international network for education in emergencies (INEE) defines emergency education as ‘quality learning opportunities for all ages in situations of crisis … provides physical,

psychosocial and cognitive protection that can sustain and save lives (INEE, 2010, p. 117). There is a relatively broad scope and understanding of what constitutes emergency education. Thus, the term has been used interchangeably with other expressions depending on emphasis – for example, education in humanitarian response, conflict (DFID, 2015), or fragile contexts (GPE, 2015). While some donors have initially taken the view that it is sufficient to keep emergency-affected people from dying and to look after their physical health, scholars from the field of emergency education consider education as a critical part of humanitarian response (Crisp et al., 2001; Kirk, 2010; Sinclair, 2007; Winthrop & Mendenhall, 2006). Margaret Sinclair, one of the dominant scholars in the field of emergency education, asserts that principles of education in and after emergencies do not differ from good practice in any education situation (Sinclair, 2002, 2007).

In the current literature, emergency education is a broader concept including refugee education (Nicolai, Hine, & Wales, 2015). However, emergency education has initially emerged in the form of refugee education since the creation of the United Nations High Commissions for Refugees (UNHCR) in 1950 (Kagawa, 2005). Dryden-Peterson (2016) provides a history of refugee education worldwide in three different phases by focusing on the role of international organizations, shown in Table 2. Since World War II, refugee education has served different purposes at different points in time. In the initial phase, prior to the mid-1980s, the role of international organizations in the provision of refugee education was relatively limited in scope. The focus was on post-primary education through scholarships for an elite few. Later, schools created for refugees played a meaningful role in developing an overall strategy, with a clear vision for the connection of education in host countries to future participation in countries of

origin. At this stage, refugee education was generally organized by local refugee communities and global stakeholders merely played minor roles.

[Table 2] Means to Refugee Education and its focus

Period	Means to Refugee Education	Focus
Phase 1: 1945 - 1985	Local Provision meets Global Institutions	Scholarships to elite individuals for future participation in countries of origin
Phase 2: 1985 - 2011	Global Governance of Refugee Education	Universal Primary Education for future participation in countries of origin
Phase 3: 2012 - present	Global Support to National Systems	Integration within national education systems

Source: Constructed by Author based on Dryden-Peterson (2016a)

In the second phase, a review of refugee education programs concluded that UNHCR would shift funding away from individual scholarships to support primary school children. This shift was driven by international policies for developing countries on the movement for *Universal Primary Education* (UPE) and the wide consensus on the right to *Education for All* (EFA), reflected in the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989). Along with the development of EFA and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the normative shifts and formalization of commitments through conventions and declarations marked the development of new forms of global authority in education. With this background, it was in the 1990s that 'the long term destructive impact of armed conflict on formal education systems was explicitly acknowledged as an impediment to universalizing access to basic schooling within the EFA initiatives' (Tawil & Harley, 2003, p. 43). Refugee education was clearly under the mandate of a UN agency, outside of the structure of any nation-state. Hence, global, top-down movements had strong influence on local provision of

education and the service provision of education outside the nation-state structures was possible through segregated refugee camps. During this phase, large refugee camps were formed in Thailand, Pakistan, and eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Refugee camps were favoured by UNHCR for reasons of efficiency in delivering services to large refugee populations, and by host governments for reasons of security and allocation of financial responsibility for refugees to the global community while avoiding interventions from nation-states (Verdirame, Harrell-Bond, Barbara, & Sachs, 2005). Therefore, in this phase, it was necessary for refugee children to be educated separately as UNHCR policies primary focused on utilizing education to facilitate a swift return and enable future participation in the country of origin. With institutionalization of global influences on refugee education in this phase, international agencies acted as 'pseudo-state' for refugees (Waters & Leblanc, 2005, p. 131). Many scholars critique that by the mid-1990s, refugee education was led by policy only, not by practice (Dryden-Peterson, 2016b; Kelley & Sandison, 2004). UNHCR outsourced the provisioning of refugee education to other implementing partners, including national and international NGOs funded by donors to deliver education to refugees inside camps. During this phase, quality of refugee education was generally measured by inputs: for example, number of pupils per teacher, and the percentage of teachers who were trained (Dryden-Peterson, 2016a). In 2000, the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) was also established in Geneva to provide support to professionals in the field of emergency education, publishing *Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies* with the objectives stated in Table 3.

[Table 3] Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises, and Early Reconstruction

Objectives
To share knowledge and experience
To promote greater donor understanding of education in emergencies
To advocate for education to be included in emergency response
To make teaching and learning responses as widely available as possible
To ensure attention is paid to gender issues in emergency education initiatives
To document and disseminate best practices in the field
To move towards consensual guidelines on education in emergencies

Source: Nicolai and Triplehorn, (2003)

In the third phase, the primary responsibility for refugee education shifted from transnational actors to national state systems. Education strategy from 2012 began to emphasize 'integration of refugee learners within national systems' (UNHCR, 2012, p. 8). This major shift happened for several reasons. First, the provision of separate schooling was impractical since more than half of refugees lived in urban areas outside camps (UNHCR, 2009b). Second, it was realized that the nature of conflict has been protracted, and that refugee children would likely spend the entirety of their school-age years in host countries. Third, there was a need to share the financial burden of supporting refugee education over an extended and unknown period. By 2016, the UNHCR had formal relationships on refugee education provision with the national education authorities of its twenty-five expanded priority country operations. This formal relationship enabled the negotiation of access to national schools for refugees, and established means of coordination. While historically refugees had been absent from national

development plans and education sector plans, some countries began to include refugees in provincial and national planning documents (Dryden-Peterson, 2016a).

Along with the international policies, the humanitarian approach has been promoting the importance of the need for educational engagement in the midst and aftermath of emergency crisis (Sinclair, 2002). Restoration of access to education is regarded as one of the highest priorities of emergency-affected populations themselves, as it restores normalcy and provide hope for the future (Wallis, 2004). Education can thus be seen as an investment in solutions to crises as well as being the fourth pillar of humanitarian response, alongside nourishment, shelter and health services (Crisp et al., 2001). The humanitarian approach in refugee education provides the most prominent rationale aligned with the UNHCR's general institutional approach toward forcibly displaced people for emergency education. Overall, refugee education research with this approach tend to view education as one component of a rapid response, by focusing on how to provide immediate protection to children and prevent human rights violations (Burde et al., 2017; Novelli & Lopes Cardozo, 2008; Sinclair, 2007; Winthrop & Mendenhall, 2006). Since education is often taken as a second priority after basic needs in emergency situations (Zeus, 2011), the humanitarian rationale behind emergency education seems to have made a significant contribution to increase access to education for refugee children.

However, due to the extending period of the refugee crisis, the humanitarian approaches behind emergency education are inadequate to understand and support educational experiences in protracted refugee situations. Given that the average length of exile in 1950s was between 10 and 25 years, and it is now estimated up to three times as long (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2019), refugee children's likely

future is to be reconceived with the concept of long-term displacement (UNHCR, 2012). Since World War II, the purpose of providing education for refugee children has been to prepare them for the future, beyond a medicalized endeavour to save lives in the emergency crisis. However, the nature of the future has not been fixed between the stakeholders involved. Until recently, policy and practice of refugee education by international organizations generally continued the practice of emergency education for refugee children and assumed eventual return to their country of origin (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2019). Nevertheless, many refugee communities had different opinions for their future and struggled from the lack of consensus between the external and internal stakeholders (Yeo et al., 2020). The 2018 Global Compact on Refugees finally indicates a new trend in international refugee regime by advocating for the importance of including refugee students in broader societies, instead of isolating them with emergency type of education systems (UN, 2018). However, to date, the majority of research on education in emergencies has concentrated on the basic needs of increasing access to education often within the separate society (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2013). The literatures that focus on rationalizing the provision of education for refugee children in terms of emergency discourses tend to explore excessively on how UN agencies, host governments and international NGOs respond to these needs (Aguilar & Retamal, 2009; Burde et al., 2017; Crisp et al., 2001; Nicolai et al., 2015; Sinclair, 2001; Versmesse, Derluyn, Masschelein, & De Haene, 2017). Since humanitarian crises are eminently newsworthy - including the protracted crisis in the refugee camp setting - the humanitarian NGOs often provide sensational stories about destruction, suffering, and triumph. ‘Spectacular’ NGOs are ideally placed to help relay and construct these stories as they work on the front lines

(Kapoor, 2013). In the meantime, the resilience and coping strategies regarding how the refugee stakeholders including teachers, students, and educated community members, view and respond to their educational needs receive only brief mention in most of the literature on refugees.

Overall, assumptions that shaped short term humanitarian support and approaches also shaped earlier approaches to refugee education. These assumptions often caused use of educational curriculum from the country of origin, administered in parallel to national education systems that were neither supervised nor certified by country of asylum education authorities, and had no vision of students as eventual contributors to family or local economies. These assumptions have given way to a new understanding that short term approaches to refugee education are certainly insufficient and inappropriate to current long-term displacement realities (UNHCR, 2019b).

2.1.2 Human rights Approach: Right to Education for Refugees

Seven decades ago, the right to education was first enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948). It is also one of the key principles underpinning the Education 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) – *to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all* – adopted by the international community. For refugee learners explicitly, the right to education is articulated in the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (UNHCR, 2010). Besides, according to the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the child (CRC), it is each state's responsibility to provide children with the right to education. The CRC is the most widely ratified convention in the world

with 192 state parties and it has necessary provisions to address education in emergencies. Article 22 entitles refugee children to receive appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance in the enjoyment of applicable rights, including education. More specifically, Article 28 of the CRC emphasizes the right to education stating, "each child has the right to education. The goal is free and compulsory primary education, secondary education available to all, and higher education on the basis of capacity" (UN, 1989, p. 8).

Yet academics and practitioners assert that the realization of this right to education in the midst of a refugee crisis remains questionable, particularly in low- or middle- income countries (UNESCO, 2019). Scholarly findings in refugee education often appear in legal studies to highlight the issues in relation to enforceability of the right to education in emergencies (A. Anderson et al., 2011; Hamadeh, 2019; Nicolai et al., 2015; Willems & Vernimmen, 2018). They present the international legal instrument relevant for education, linking with policy frameworks such as MDGs and EFA as well as highlighting challenges at national, regional and international levels (A. Anderson et al., 2011). Some examined the human rights obligations a State has to bear by raising issues regarding school fees, language of instruction, and curriculum, when dealing with the influx of refugees (Willems & Vernimmen, 2018). Others call upon the need of a consolidated set of principles to cut through the complexity that has grown up around delivering education in conflict settings (Nicolai et al., 2015). While a number of global commitments have been made to ensure education for children in protracted crises, they critique that there is limited implementation of the legal frameworks and agreements. Country case studies of refugee education are also conducted in a country impacted by economic and political instability, analysing the legality of

the acceptance and continuation of refugee children in schools (Hamadeh, 2019; Letchamanan, 2013). Overall, the literature enforcing the right to education in emergencies tend to focus on how the humanitarian community can better address educational rights of children (UNESCO, 2019).

In the meantime, rights-based approach (RBA) has emerged across many UN decision making processes from the late 1990s (UN, 2003). RBA proposed for a shift from development as 'charity' with passive recipients receiving services, to an understanding of development within the framework of rights-holders claiming that duty-bearers meet their obligations. During this movement, the concept of the RBA has also emerged in education sector and it reflected rights in and through education. It was defined as 'a system-wide approach, where the principles of human rights are visible and articulated into practice at each stage of the policy, planning and delivery of education services (Moriarty, 2017, p. 9). While the RBA has gained increasing international attention with the aim to achieve SDG4 by 2030, enforcing the right to education of refugees is often negated due to a gap between humanitarian and development assistance (Mendenhall, Collas, & Falk, 2017).

Although refugee education is implicitly supported by the SDGs' promise to "leave no one behind", many questions remain relating to the process of development, monitoring and evaluating progress in academic and policy discourses of refugee education (UNESCO, 2019). It might be due to the following reasons. First, accountability for refugees is a complex issue and it is often contradictory in determining who are the duty-bearers for education under the modern state system. Second, each refugee context has its own history and context, and therefore, it cannot be analysed and assumed as a singular phenomenon. Third,

the meaning of the RBA itself is ambiguous when implemented into refugees' real-life educational experiences, especially in the segregated camp setting. Since refugees in history are categorized as 'unwanted' by the state system, the estrangement and segregation are not by-products of containment but its primary function indeed (McConnachie, 2016). Furthermore, not many academic researchers have access to researching in such environment and it is difficult to evaluate and analyse the implementation of the rights-based policy discourses in a practical setting of refugee education. Considering these circumstances, the vast amount of academic literature in refugee education with the human rights perspective, point out that there has been a serious lack of access to and quality of education for refugees, often coupled with lack of accountability under the international refugee regime (Alpaydın, 2017; A. Anderson et al., 2011; Couch, 2017; Dryden-Peterson et al., 2019; Meda et al., 2012; Oh, 2011; Yeo et al., 2020).

To enforce the right to education of refugees, international organizations recommend for their member states to perform their duty to adhere to the accessibility, availability, acceptability and adaptability of refugee education (UNESCO, 2019). However, the lack of educational access and quality for refugees is a very symbolic feature. From a human rights view, McConnachie (2016) reveals that there is an ironic gap between inhumane conditions and humanitarian rationales for refugee children, particularly in camps of containment. No matter how much global efforts are put in towards effective enactment of the RBA in various sectors, the protracted containment of the school-aged children in segregated camp setting indicate the contradiction in several aspects. To name a few, while the refugee camps are sites that can perform humanitarian functions of protection, security, and basic service delivery including health and education, the

existence of the camps simultaneously sanctioned by nation-states serve political goals of control over the unwanted population (McConnachie, 2016). While the camps are sites for the generation of human rights protection, they are also for the exception of those protections in practice. The camp sites are often characterized with "restricted autonomy" but sustained with "resilient agency" (McConnachie, 2016, p. 407). Overall, the most profound contradiction in the human rights-based approach to refugee education in the camp setting is that "the segregation of categories of people, and their (real or perceived) difference is further heightened by segregation in the camp. In this sense, protracted containment in refugee camps, then, can be understood as both a product and a cause of alienation and estrangement" (McConnachie, 2016, p. 408). A tension between inhuman conditions in protracted refugee camp settings and human rights approach behind refugee education is certainly an ongoing concern and a complex theme in the field of refugee education. As such, creating policies and practice that protect and fulfil the refugees' right to education involves a range of stakeholders to work in partnership and develop a consensus across the interests of local refugee communities, host governments and international organizations (Mendenhall et al., 2017; Yeo et al., 2020).

Like the humanitarian approach, the human rights view behind right to education discourses are insufficient to fully understand the current displacement realities for refugee children. Primarily, the limitations of the human rights view to education in protracted refugee situations are twofold. Firstly, schools are not always safe since school buildings are often active targets in conflict zones (Sommers, 2002). Secondly, creating a sense of normalcy through organized educational activities is often insufficient. Considering the proponents of this view,

some researchers believe that there should be interventions that are more appropriate and direct towards addressing psychological needs of conflict affected children, such as story-telling, drawing, drama, writing, music, and game based learning (Kagawa, 2005). Viewing education as a right, it is to be given to every child in order to develop the child's personality, as well as mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential (Kalisha, 2014). Applying it to the refugee context, the emphasis is on putting children in school to protect them from being recruited as soldiers, to give them an opportunity to interact with peers and trusted adults (Kirk & Winthrop, 2007). All children surely need a safe environment to feel loved and appreciated and to be able to study. However, once in school, there is a critical lack of discourses in relation to well-being and psychosocial development for refugee children if education insists on outcomes and fulfilling pre-set objectives set up by various external stakeholders. If the role of education is to merely assimilate refugee children into educational programs that are designed and evaluated by external stakeholders, human rights approach to refugee education may result in a "nuanced approach" (INEE, 2010, p. 5), possibly socializing them into the existing power structures without considering their local realities.

2.1.3 Developmental Approach: Refugee Education for Development

Refugee education has fallen in a precarious gap between humanitarian and development assistance for many years (Mendenhall et al., 2017). It means that development actors' responsibility to provide education for children affected by conflict has not yet been met, whereas the humanitarian actors have been focusing on providing basic needs, such as food, water, housing and health. Thus, many

academics and practitioners committed in post-conflict situations discuss refugee education within the concept of a relief-development gap (Crisp et al., 2001; Demusz, 1998; Dryden-Peterson, 2017; Maadad & Matthews, 2018; Mendenhall, 2014; Nicolai et al., 2019, 2015; Song, 2017; Storen, 2016). Since ongoing conflict and displacement are increasingly protracted (Dryden-Peterson, 2017; Song, 2017), they highlight the efforts and tensions in policy and practice of refugee education that are becoming long-term endeavours.

Until 1980s, refugee education remained as a "field of practice", deeply embedded in the experiences of locally based UNHCR education officers (UNHCR, 2011b, p. 17). The articulation of a universal rights-based framework for education, including refugee education, in the form of the 1989 CRC led to the development of refugee education also as a "field of policy" (UNHCR, 2011b, p. 17). Since then, guidelines and strategies were established by international communities coordinated by UNHCR, transforming refugee education from field-based practice to headquarters-based policy (see Table 4). Amid this shift from emergency practice to long term development policy, Dryden-Peterson (2016) critiques that UNHCR did not have a single education officer working in a refugee-hosting country between 1998 and 2011, resulting a lack of expertise in education. It encouraged several inter-agency partnerships including various NGOs as well as United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to improve capacity in refugee education (Aguilar & Retamal, 2009).

[Table 4] Refugee Education Frameworks by UNHCR

Year	Key documents
1988	Organizing primary education for refugee children in emergency situations: guidelines for field managers (UNHCR, 1988)
1992	Guidelines for educational assistance to refugees (UNHCR, 1992)
1994	Refugee children: Guidelines on protection and care (UNHCR, 1994)
1995	Revised guidelines for assistance to refugees (UNHCR, 1995)
2003	Education Field Guidelines (UNHCR, 2003)
2007	Education Strategy 2007-2009: Policy, Challenges and Objectives (UNHCR, 2007b)
2007	Safe School and Learning Environment Guide: How to Prevent and Respond to Violence in Refugee Schools (UNHCR, 2007a)
2009	Education Strategy 2010-2012: Education for All Persons of Concern to UNHCR (UNHCR, 2009a)
2011	Ensuring Access to Quality Education: Operational Guidance on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas (UNHCR, 2011a)
2012	Education Strategy 2012-2016 (UNHCR, 2012)
2019	Refugee Education 2030: A Strategy for Refugee Inclusion (UNHCR, 2019b)
2019	Global Framework for Refugee Education (UNHCR, 2019a)

Source: Author

As part of the EFA movement in 1990s, refugee education has gradually become a ‘global good’, coordinated by an increasing number of actors at local, national and international levels (Sidhu, Taylor, & Christie, 2011; UNESCO, 2019). With the realization that inter-agency coordination is critical, educational needs are similar, yet context-specific for refugee learners (Kagawa, 2005; Novelli & Lopes Cardozo, 2008). Under these circumstances, the lack of access to quality education in various refugee contexts is recurrently approached by the mixed coordination consisting both humanitarian and development perspectives. The recent trend of refugee education towards a developmental approach recognize that securing education services across the humanitarian and development action is critical to realizing sustainable development (Al-Hroub, 2014; Mendenhall, 2014; Storen, 2016). This view is also supported by the Refugee Education 2030,

recently released by UNHCR for its education strategy towards refugee inclusion. It encompasses targeted interventions to support refugees "to successfully integrate into national schools in both formal and certified non-formal education programmes and the overall strengthening of national system and capacities to deliver on SDG4" (UNHCR, 2019b, p. 10). A developmental perspective is dominant throughout this recent framework and it advocates for "humanitarian and development actors to align for quality financial and technical sector support, effective use of resources and programming that engages regional and local actors and refugee and host communities" (UNHCR, 2019b, p. 10).

Responding to the need of better coordination across the relief-development nexus, Nicolai, Anderson and Hodgkin (2019) compare and present advantages of humanitarian, development and mixed approach in providing education for refugees in emergencies and protracted crises. As summarized in Table 5, there are challenges from overlaps and gaps within and across humanitarian and development nexus. While supporting education in refugee contexts involves multiple actors, these researchers analytically present a global mapping of the approaches adopted. They indicate that various actors involved in education planning and response amidst protracted crises often have different purposes and organizations associated with them, frequently resulting in overlaps and gaps in coordination efforts (Nicolai et al., 2019). The tensions raised from these overlaps and gaps will need to be investigated carefully on a case by case basis.

[Table 5] Comparative advantages of education coordination approaches in crises

	Humanitarian	Development	Mixed
Purpose	To strengthen system-wide preparedness and coordination of technical capacity to respond predictably to humanitarian emergencies	To mobilize global and national efforts to contribute to the achievement of equitable, quality education and learning for all, through inclusive partnership, a focus on effective and efficient education systems and increased financing	Overlap and gaps between the mandates and purposes determined on a case by case basis
Membership	- UN agencies - International NGOs - Local NGOs *Leadership is context specific at the country level (e.g. UNHCR, UNICEF, Save the children). In many contexts, the national government leads with support from co-lead agencies and other partners	- National government - Development partners (i.e. financing partners, bilateral and multilateral agencies) - Teacher unions - Education implementation partners (private or NGOs) - Religious organizations - Private sector - Civil society organizations *Globally led by Global Partnership for Education (GPE) while local education groups lead at country level.	n/a
Strengths	- Linkages within and technical expertise of the humanitarian system - Strong standardized tools that present a common framework for coordinated planning and response	- High-level access to and relationship with governments, funding officials and decision makers across partner organizations - Interventions that span preparedness through to recovery	n/a
Weaknesses	- Planning and response in protracted crises when the government is weak or an unwilling partner - Funding	- Lack of technical expertise in fragile and humanitarian contexts - Lack of standards specific to fragile and humanitarian contexts - Lack of a strategy for capacity development in fragile contexts - Planning and response in protracted crises when the government is weak or an unwilling partner	- Lack of clarity and predictability around roles and responsibilities - Challenge of who steps into the gap where there is a lack of national leadership and capacity, potential for duplication, overlap and conflict, etc.

Source: Constructed by Author based on Nicolai et al. (2019)

Zeus (2011) critiques that "education has traditionally been seen as a development activity whereas refugee situations are regarded as temporary emergencies in need of basic humanitarian relief" in the context of which education is considered a luxury (Zeus, 2011, p. 262). Can this puzzle then be resolved since the global frameworks in refugee education recently calls for a development perspective? On the ground of crisis-affected contexts, can education be emphasized suddenly by merely shifting policy frameworks for the purpose of sustainable refugee inclusion? In addition to the issues concerning the relief-development transition, severe fragmentation and lack of government ownership also influence coordination and sustainability of educational provision for refugees (Nicolai et al., 2019).

Therefore, a case study research will be necessary to examine the country and crisis specific features and realities that shape, sustain and conceptualize refugee education. Education is traditionally believed to play a key role in the struggle for revolution and liberation against oppression (Freire, 1970; Magee & Pherali, 2017) whereas education in exile has been awkwardly structured by global governance, national jurisdiction, and local implementation within the dynamics of power (Dryden-Peterson, 2016a; Dryden-Peterson et al., 2019; Oh, 2011). The existing literature clearly indicate there are tensions and challenges from the recent developmental approach in emerging discourses of refugee education. Meanwhile, there is a significant lack of understanding on how refugee education in a real case is practiced and conceptualized in segregated refugee communities. Hence, a research is required to explore a specific case of refugee education and to embrace both of the external and internal stakeholders' perspectives existing in the refugee community. Acknowledging the limitations of the conventional approaches in the

field of refugee education, it also requires an alternative view to perceive refugees as transformative agents and to discuss the practice of refugee education with an educational approach. It is because the lives of refugee children during exile can be transformed beyond the connotation of temporariness and statelessness, in and through education.

2.2 Alternative Approach to Refugee Education: Freirean Perspective

Dominant discourses in the conventional literature of refugee education present, as discussed above, a shift from humanitarian relief to rights-based and developmental approach to rationalize educational provision for refugees in developing world. Such a shifting approach in the global refugee regime results in the current state of refugee education located between the emergency discourse and protracted nature of today's refugee crises. Yet, while shifting from one approach to the next, many of the same problems may persist fundamentally, as long as the refugees "are subjected to the choices of others to the extent that their decisions are no longer their own because they result from external prescriptions" (Freire, 1974, p. 4). In other words, there is a need for the refugees to be considered as a "conscious social actor who has the ability, the desire and the opportunity to participate in social and political life" (Frymer, 2005, p. 4). In this spirit, Paulo Freire's critical perspectives and insights provide valuable contribution by providing an alternative approach to refugee education, considering the refugees as a subject of education, instead of merely an object of educational interventions.

Freire claims that all men and women have a right to "name the world" (Freire, 1970, p. 69) and a capacity to critically recognize, participate and

transform the world they live in (McInerney, 2009). As a prominent critical theorist and an educational philosopher, he devoted his life to oppressed people and communities, and to realize a more just society in and through education. Freire's early work is set out in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, initially published in 1970, after he was also in political exile in Brazil. Drawing on Marxist class analysis, it articulates an educational relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed (Freire, 1970). According to Freire, the role of education is to liberate the oppressed from the conditions that subjugate them. To do so, the oppressed must first become conscious of their own reality that shape objectification through economic, social and cultural forces of domination (McInerney, 2009). This is an educational endeavour enabling local communities to become significant sites for transformation through solidarity and praxis (Freire, 1970).

Freire's pedagogical theories mainly critique a 'banking model of education' that treats the learner like a child's piggy bank, and 'an empty vessel' to be filled with the knowledge that those in power wanted the learner to acquire. Accordingly, he is very critical of teachers who see themselves as the sole possessors of knowledge and those who perceive learners as empty receptacles and objects. As all learners are human beings with their own inclinations, lived experiences, and legitimate ways of thinking, the banking approach in education is a violent way to dehumanize learners. Economic, social, cultural, and political domination from the powerful elites in society often result in the ignorance of the oppressed. Therefore, he asserts education should aim to undermine the power dynamics that hold some people above others, rather than continuing with the established cultural patterns of relating to people through a hierarchy of power. To do so, Freire proposes a reciprocal relationship between the teacher and the students in a democratic

environment that allows everyone to learn from each other. While the banking method of education is characterized as a vertical relationship, he emphasizes that a democratic relationship between the educators and learners is necessary in order for the conscientization process to take place. He suggests a 'problem-posing model of education', as opposed to the banking model, in which the oppressed can be liberated and humanized through critical consciousness and dialogue. To avoid authoritarian, structured, and hierarchical relationship between educators, learners and society, he highlights the importance of learning based on the actual experiences of learners, as well as continual shared interaction and questioning (Freire, 1970; Maadad, 2019). *Pedagogy of Hope: Relieving Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is another prominent work of Paulo Freire, centralizing the theme of hope and emphasizing the importance of dialogical and horizontal relationship between educators and learners (Freire, 1992).

Freire's theoretical view provides valuable insights with the potential to transform the world not only of those living in the urban slums of Brazil, but also the world of refugee children. Freire's pedagogical notion is grounded in the actual realities of learners' lives but emphasizing on the facilitative role of educators in order to make students aware of future possibilities. To apply this view for refugee education in the context of protracted displacement, there are two levels of teaching and learning (Maadad, 2019). The first level is, the short-term present-oriented response to the immediate learning needs of the refugee students, such as dealing with psychological trauma, finding out what sort of education is required for survival in the host country. The second level is the "longer-term future-oriented response of providing the inspiration, knowledge and practical learning pathways for refugee students to pursue their own envisaged futures" (Maadad,

2019, p. 21)**.** Regarding these future-oriented needs, Freirean perspective rejects a top-down approach embedded in the banking concept of schooling. It indicates that no matter how impoverished or illiterate, learners can develop a new awareness of self and their place in the world, gain literacy, learn how to exercise the right to be heard and how to work towards a transformed life. It clearly provides an alternative approach to refugee education by rejecting the currently ongoing application of a deficit framework. Freirean pedagogical approach suggests a key foundation to shift from a problem-solving attitude that technically focuses on the immediate needs of refugee education to a problem-posing attitude that reflect whether refugee education is indeed educational.

Problem-posing orientation in the Freirean critical approach and the problem-solving orientation of other existing approaches in refugee education are certainly different. While the banking approach – through problem-solving attitude – identifies problems for the refugees a priori and gives them the knowledge to solve those problems, Freirean perspective enables the refugee teachers and learners to raise questions, identify their own set of problems and to seek for their own solutions (Freire, 1970).

The global refugee regime, centring around the international organizations, has recently been focusing on 'integration' and 'inclusion' of refugees to so-called mainstream societies, as a durable solution for refugees, discussed in the UN's Global Compact on Refugees (UN, 2018). Accordingly, diverse stakeholders engaged in refugee education are emphasizing the significance of education for the refugee children to be integrated in nation-state systems, as announced in '*Refugee Education 2030: A strategy for refugee inclusion'* (UNHCR, 2019b). However, from the Freirean perspective, it is essential to raise question to what it

means by the 'refugee inclusion' and distinguish integration and adaptation. In Freire's another prominent publication titled *Education for Critical consciousness*, he claims:

> Integration results from the capacity to adapt oneself to reality plus the critical capacity to make choices and transform that reality. To the extent that man loses his ability to make choices and is subjected to the choices of others, to the extent that his decisions are no longer his own because they result from external prescriptions, he is no longer integrated. Rather, he has adapted… with a revolutionary spirit, maladjusted. (Freire, 1974, p. 4).

In this sense, it is important to raise a question whether refugee education is promoting the learners within the refugee communities to be integrated as a *subject* of transformation or on the other hand, to be adapted and adjusted merely as an *object* of interventions. In Freirean pedagogical view, the refugees may become easily adapted as opposed to integrated if they are incapable of changing reality, and education that promotes adaptation towards the choices made by others, certainly results in dehumanization.

> Throughout history men have attempted to overcome the factors which make them accommodate or adjust, in a struggle – constantly threatened by oppression – to attain their full humanity (Freire, 1974, p. 4).

Freirean critical pedagogy conspicuously emphasizes that to be fully human

in any meaningful sense, is to be a *subject* (McInerney, 2009). Taking this into account, the purpose of refugee education is not to transmit knowledge chosen by others but to engage refugees in their own education by inviting them to enter the process of thinking critically about their reality and participating as a transformant. Freire emphasizes critical thinking through problem-posing model for the purpose of liberation (Freire, 1970). This alternative approach is emphasized as a key pathway to critical consciousness – interchangeably known as conscientization – which is the essence of Freire's philosophy. He wrote:

> Education as the practice of freedom – as opposed to education as the practice of domination – denies that man is abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world; it also denies that the world exists as a reality apart from people. Authentic reflection considers neither abstract man nor the world without people, but people in their relations with the world (Freire, 1970, p. 81).

Conscientization occurs when the oppressed recognize the causes of their oppressive realities so that they can bring transformative actions through participation and create a new situation in "the pursuit of fuller humanity" (Freire, 1970, p. 12). Freire follows the constructivist theory of learning aligned with the work of John Dewey and Jean Piaget and assumes that knowledge is constructed by the individual learners' experiences. Indeed, the critical pedagogy is an overarching term drawn from many theoretical streams including Freirean pedagogy, liberation theology, the Frankfurt school of critical theory, feminist

theory, neo-Marxist cultural criticism, and constructivist theory of learning to name a few (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003). It seeks to expose and deconstruct conceptions of truth that privilege those in power and perpetuate injustice in and through education (Darder et al., 2003). Critical theorists change what tends to be taken-for-granted as ‘normal’. To critically respond to the extensive use of the word in today’s culture, the existing phenomena are not pregiven qualities of the universe, but imposed interpretations (Davis, 2004). With this view, the poststructuralist discourses and critical theorists describe teaching as an attitude that is oriented toward “making the familiar strange”. Thus, critical pedagogy is concerned with the simultaneous tasks of uncovering normative structures and developing alternative strategies. To critically explore practices that is considered as ‘normal’, power structures need to be explored to understand how they are established and maintained. In consequence, educators and researchers with critical pedagogical view argue that teaching do not need to operate in the service of the established social order. Instead, teaching is synonym for ‘emancipating’, ‘liberating’, ‘empowering’ and transforming (Davis, 2004, p. 142). Table 6 summarizes the guiding concepts and principles by Freirean notion of 'banking' and 'problem-posing' education in critical pedagogy.

[Table 6] Guiding concepts and principles by in Freire's critical pedagogy

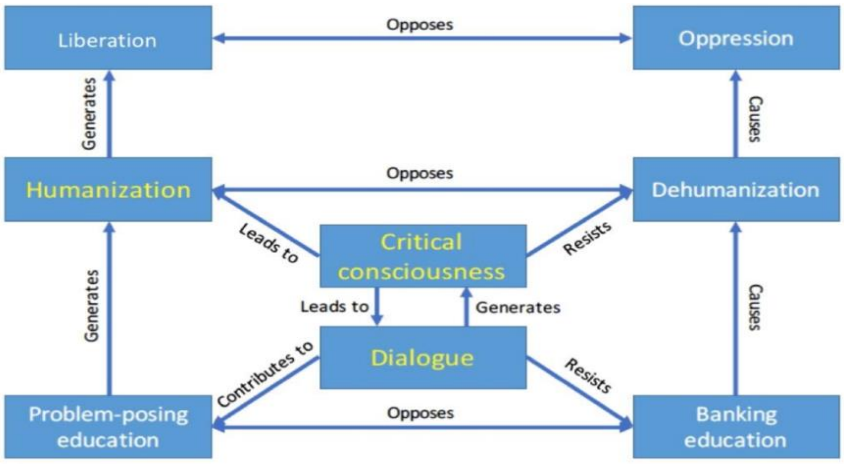
Concept	Banking Education	Problem-posing Education
Teaching Approach	- To whom	- From whom - With whom - By whom
Teaching Contents	- What educators know and possess - Initiated by systemic knowledge of the educators - Driving how to read and name the world	- Initiated by learner's lived experiences and knowledge - Learner's lived experiences to be challenged - New knowledge and experiences to be facilitated by educators and to be acquired by educators and learners together - Facilitated through a continuous process of knowing, conscientizing, naming the world - Conscientization possible only by being conscious of the existence of the oppressor - Politically significant, as teaching cannot be neutral
Learner	- Empty Vessel to be filled - The Oppressed - Objectified beings - Moving along the teachers' discourse - 'Cultural silence' with fear of freedom - To be conformed - Ignorant of the Oppression	- Already filled with the lived experiences - Subject of the learning process (in gaining critical consciousness) - 'Participation' with intention to transform - To be transformative - Aware of the oppression
Educator	- Possessing Knowledge - Perceived to be Neutral in educational process	- Both learner and educator possessing knowledge, facilitated through dialogue - Perceived to be not neutral in educational process
Purpose of Education	-New knowledge and understanding of the world without participation or transformative praxis - Towards possibly enhanced oppression (dehumanization)	- To read and name the world differently and critically, towards liberation (humanization) - Knowledge and understanding of the world with Praxis (Reflection + Action) - Active participation in society - Conflicting with inevitable tensions and negotiating in dialectic process

Source: Constructed by Author based on Freire (1970; 1992)

To a certain extent, various concepts in the Freirean perspective are interconnected (Zhong, 2018). Figure 1 illustrates the key concepts summarizing the relationship between the 'banking' and 'problem-posing' education. While the use of dialogue is the central feature of problem-posing education (Freire, 1970),

critical consciousness is generated through dialogue and is the goal of dialogue (Freire, 1970; Shor, 1992). 'Banking education' causes dehumanization of educators and learners and it ultimately oppresses them whereas 'problem-posing education' generates humanization and eventually liberates them. Critical consciousness leads to humanization and resists dehumanizing environment. Overall, the key characteristic of banking education is a vertical relationship between the educator and learner, resulting in insecurity, suspicion of one another, the educator's need to maintain control, and power dynamics within a hierarchy that are oppressive. On the other hand, the problem-posing education proposed in the Freirean perspective is a horizontal and democratic type of relationship where both the educator and learner are willing and open to the possibility of learning from each other.

[Figure 1] Interconnected concepts of banking education' and problem-posing education by Freire



Source: Constructed by Author based on Zhong (2018)

Most important aspect here is that knowledge, or the goal of education is not static nor pre-determined, since both the educator and learner acknowledge that

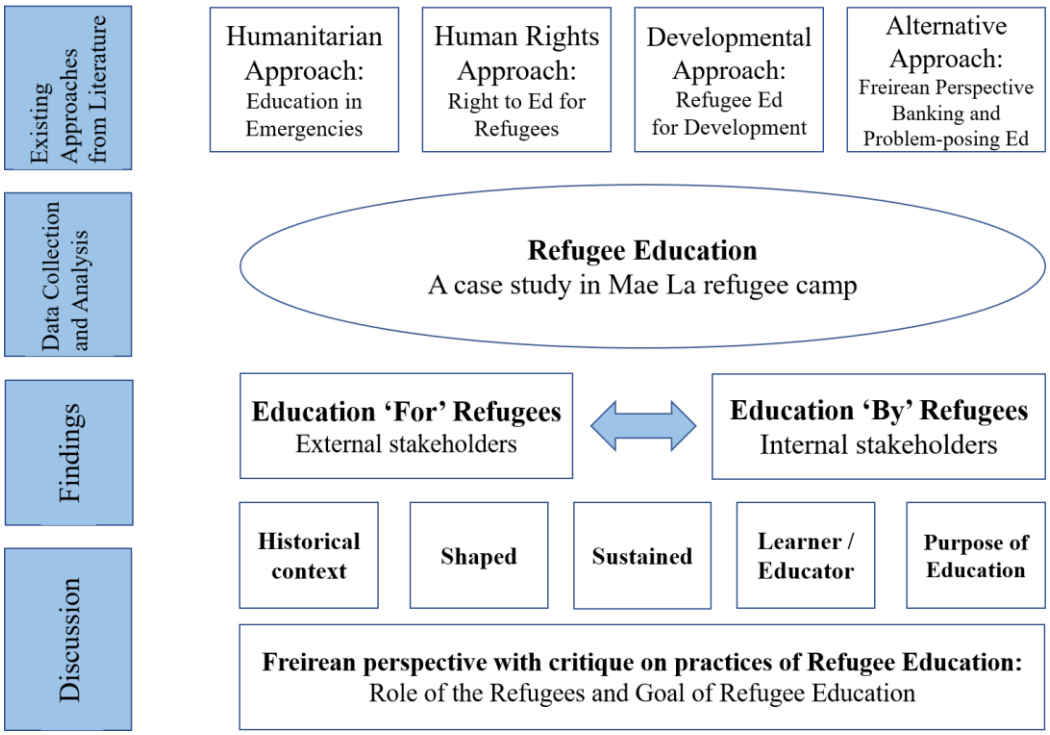
they each have different expertise and lived-experiences expertise to offer to each other. As education should bring emancipation and empowerment, it should always be transformative while both can benefit from the other to learn and grow toward humanization. Henry Giroux (2010), one of the prominent followers of Freire once stated:

> What Freire made clear is that pedagogy at its best is not about training in techniques and methods… nor does it involve coercion or political indoctrination… Critical pedagogy insists that one of the fundamental tasks of educators is to make sure that the future points the way to a more socially just world, a world in which critique and possibility function to alter the grounds upon which life is lived. That is hardly a prescription for political indoctrination. It offers students new ways to think and act independently (Giroux, 2010).

Meanwhile, some scholars have criticized that the Freirean perspective is the idealist utopian view of society (Bowers, 2006; McLaren, 2007). In this sense, it can be criticized that the binary concept of the terms used in his perspective may provide false hope for the refugees towards unreachable future. Thus, the transformative orientation underpinned by the Freirean notion of critical consciousness can be at stake for refugees with a range of intersecting factors in the real-life case. It may also be misinterpreted for the refugees to use their own schooling for isolation from any external influences and reject integration to the larger mainstream society. In other words, collective engagements with wider communities can all be perceived as oppressive to the refugee communities in a

segregated context. However, such a criticism risks overlooking the practical utility of the Freirean perspective. According to McLaren (2007), another prominent scholar among Freire's followers, problem-posing education do not mark a naïve utopian faith in the future. Instead, they presage a form of active and uncompromising hope in the possibilities of the present against the static form of education shaped and imposed by others. Thus, applying the Freirean perspective to analyse the current phenomenon of refugee education may provide insights to understand the tensions that exist due to the opposing and resisting nature in between different perspective on education.

2.3 Conceptual Framework of the Study



[Figure 2] Conceptual Framework of the Study

A conceptual framework is defined as a visual or written product, one that "explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied – the key factors, concepts, or variables – and the presumed relationships among them" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 18). Building on the existing literature in refugee education, as well as my previous experiences of teaching refugee children in classroom and preliminary research experiences with Karen refugees, Figure 2 illustrates the conceptual framework of this research. It begins with the approaches that came from prior research and literature conceptualizing refugee education so far. With the limitations found in the trajectory of refugee education, I attempt to approach refugee education alternatively by raising my concern with the lack of an educational perspective in it. To develop a holistic understanding of refugee learners' educational experiences in the context of a segregated and protracted refugee camp, the research will initially describe how the purpose of education is shaped and sustained from the viewpoint of the external and internal stakeholders. Starting with the history, it is to describe how schooling is formed and managed in a refugee context, what is the role of learners and educators, and eventually what is the purpose of education from respective viewpoints. It conceptualizes the perspectives and practices of refugee education as education 'for' and 'by' refugees. Building upon the descriptive data collected, categorized and analysed from the field, the Freirean perspective is adopted to further interpret the role of the refugees and the goal of refugee education.

By assuming the educators as the subject and knowledge holders and the students as passive object and knowledge receivers, Freire highlights that education is no longer transformative but rather it is static, predetermined, and imposed by 'others'. Instead of liberating the learners through critical

consciousness, education becomes a site for dehumanization and oppression, as emphasized in his critique for banking model. In this paradigm, learners are considered as adaptable and manageable beings. Freire critiques that “the more completely they accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them” (Freire, 1970, p. 60). With insights from ‘banking model’ in Freire’s critical education theory, education provided ‘for’ refugees and education shaped and maintained ‘by’ refugees described through a case study will be both interpreted critically.

Overall, the research will make contribution in twofold. First, it will create a pathway for a comprehensive and context-specific understanding of refugee education by encompassing the education provided ‘for’ refugees and shaped ‘by’ refugees. It leads to exploring the relationship and potential tensions between the external and internal stakeholders involved in funding and managing refugee education. Second, it will offer a meaningful interpretation of the ways that refugee education is practiced by re-thinking whether refugee education is indeed educational – in Freire’s term, ‘emancipating and empowering’. It leads to critically reflect upon the role of the refugee learners and goal of refugee education through the Freirean lens of banking and problem-posing education.

Interpreting refugee education with the discourses of critical pedagogy allows theoretical implications that promote transformative and empowering educational experiences in refugee learners' context. The dominant discourse in the existing literature of refugee education mostly deal with challenges to cater the needs of education through the humanitarian, human rights and developmental rationale as discussed above. However, the interpretation and implications within

the alternative approach reveals how refugee community members including teachers, parents and students may accept – or resist – the passive role imposed on them through education. Despite the refugee are constantly excluded from education for citizenship and economic development, it highlights the essential role of refugee education as to transform the existing social order of refugeehood deposited in them over a protracted period of displacement.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Case Selection: Mae La Refugee Camp, Thailand

Since every refugee camp has its own history and context, research is required into a real-life case in order to explore how the refugee education is shaped, sustained and conceptualized. Considering the history of prolonged conflict situations, as well as the camp location and accessibility, this research selected a community in Mae La refugee camp on the border of Thailand and Myanmar. The camp was initially established in 1984, under the name of 'temporary shelter', currently housing approximately 35,000 refugees from Myanmar (UNHCR, 2020b). It comprises predominantly Karen refugees who fled from the conflict between the country's military government and ethnic armed groups. Despite the recent movement initiated for refugees' voluntary repatriation with the ongoing peace process in Myanmar, Mae La has become a centre for political, educational and other community development activities, attracting refugees from other camps as well. It remains the largest refugee camp of the nine camps housing over the total of 95,000 refugees along the border, as shown in Table 7.

Since the 1960s, the conflict between Myanmar's military and the country's ethnic armed groups has created one of the most protracted refugee crises. Between the 1960s and 1984, Karen villages crossed the border into Thailand in order to seek for temporary refuge. They returned to their villages after each campaign ceased. However, after 1984, they were not be able to return to their homes and as a result, the Thai government permitted temporary shelter to be set

up, with special understanding that the refugees would return home when they can. In these semi-permanent camps along the border, the refugees set up their own livelihoods including schools and hospitals by adopting the village structures that they had employed in the Karen State. In consequence, despite the residents are officially not allowed to leave the camps and travel outside, cultural root of the Karen refugees in the camps come from the Karen state in Myanmar border and they continue to make unofficial visits and remain connected with relatives there. Map 1 indicates that the majority of those who live in the Thai refugee camps come from five states/regions in south-east Myanmar, close to or on the border of Thailand: Kayin (also known as Karen) State, Kayah (Karenni) State, Taninthayi (Tenasserim) region, Bago (Pegu) region and Mon state (The Elders, 2014).

[Table 7] Estimated number of refugees in 9 refugee camps on Thai-Myanmar border

Location Name	Population	Percentage	Predominant Ethnicity	Province
Mae La	34,794	37.3%	Karen	Tak
Umpium	10,871	11.6%	Karen	Tak
Mae Ra Ma Luang	10,223	11.0%	Karen	Mae Hong Son
Nu Po	9,663	10.4%	Karen	Tak
Mae La Oon	9,160	9.8%	Karen	Mae Hong Son
Ban Mai Nai Soi	8,261	8.8%	Karenni	Mae Hong Son
Tham Hin	5,845	6.3%	Karen	Ratchaburi
Ban Don Yang	2,529	2.7%	Karen	Kanchanaburi
Ban Mae Surin	2,009	2.2%	Karenni	Mae Hong Son

Source: UNHCR (2020a), Retrieved on 2 June 2020

[Map 1] Refugee Camps on the Thai-Myanmar border: Locations and Populations

Temporary Shelters	TBC Verified Caseload[1]			TBC Assisted Population[2]	MOI/ UNHCR Verified Population[3]
Province/Camp	Female	Male	Total	Total	Total
MAE HONG SON					
Ban Mai Nai Soi	4,355	4,432	8,787	8,461	9,201
Ban Mae Surin	1,084	1,078	2,162	2,095	2,179
Mae La Oon	4,355	4,215	8,570	8,446	9,409
Mae Ra Ma Luang	4,810	4,655	9,465	9,270	10,484
Subtotal:	**14,604**	**14,380**	**28,984**	**28,272**	**31,273**
TAK					
Mae La	16,785	15,817	32,602	32,285	35,666
Umpiem Mai	4,678	4,548	9,226	8,968	11,412
Nu Po	4,407	4,028	8,435	8,131	10,449
Subtotal:	**25,870**	**24,393**	**50,263**	**49,384**	**57,527**
KANCHANABURI					
Ban Don Yang	1,196	1,148	2,344	2,314	2,628
RATCHABURI					
Tham Hin	2,822	2,495	5,317	5,269	6,149
Total Refugees	**44,492**	**42,416**	**86,908**	**85,239**	**97,577**

Refugees by Ethnicity

Karen	80.2%
Karenni	10.0%
Burman	3.2%
Mon	0.6%
Other	6.0%

Refugees by Age Groups

New Born < 6 months	0.8%
6 months< 5 years	11.2%
5 years < 18 years	33.4%
>= 18 years	54.6%

Notes

1. The verified caseload includes all persons, registered or not, confirmed living in camp & eligible for rations.
2. The TBC Assisted Population is the number of beneficiaries who collected rations during the previous month. Rations are only provided to those who are physically present at distributions.
3. The Royal Thai Government and UNHCR conducted a verification exercise of registered and unregistered refugees from January to April 2015. This is updated on a monthly basis.

Source: TBC (2019), Retrieved on 10 February 2020

Mae La, meaning ‘cotton field’ in the Karen language is the largest of the nine refugee camps on the border. It is located 57 kilometres away – approximately one hour’s drive – from the Thai border town of Mae Sot in Tak Province, north-west Thailand, only 8 kilometres from the Myanmar border (TBC, 2019). Over 80 per cent of the population consists of the Karen people, most having fled due to

the constant fighting between the Myanmar central government and the Karen National Union (KNU) and its armed wing the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) (TBC, 2019). Several religions represented among the residents are: 54.5 per cent of Buddhists, 34 per cent of Christians, 10.5 per cent of Muslims and 0.7 per cent of Animists (The Elders, 2014). Due to its size, the services available in the Mae La camp – access to healthcare, education and the greater possibility of resettlement to a third country – have attracted the internally displaced people (IDPs) within Myanmar as well as the refugees from the other smaller camps (TBC, 2019).

[Photo 1] Rooftops of Mae La Refugee Camp

Source: TBC (n.d.)

For education in the camps, the Karen refugees were proactive in setting up schools and the accompanying administrative structures. Although refugees have no official means of earning an income and they have limited educational opportunities, education in the camp is far better than any education available to civilians inside Myanmar. In particular, Mae La has a wide range of educational opportunities and is considered a centre of education for Karen refugees up until today. It is principally funded by international NGOs which work through the

approvals and sanctions of the Thai government. However, due to the funding cuts experienced under the recent enforcement of voluntary repatriation as a durable solution for refugees, community driven donations have been filling the gap of financial supports. Such donations are made by alumni students resettled in third countries, as well as parent teacher associations and religious groups within the camp. On the ground level, the schools in the camp are managed by Karen Refugee Committee Education Entity (KRCEE) – under the Karen Refugee Committee (KRC) – which is a local CBO funded and partnered by international NGOs. While the KRCEE office is located outside the camp in the border town of Mae Sot and oversees all of the Karen refugee camps along the border, Office of Camp Education Entity (OCEE) is built inside each camp including the Mae La to assist the KRCEE by coordinating and managing the regular activities at schools. More information regarding the structure of coordination by different actors are further explained in chapter 4.1.2.

[Photo 2] Refugee Camp School in Mae La: During Weekly Assembly

Source: Author (photographed on May 20, 2019)

[Photo 3] Refugee Camp School in Mae La: During Classroom Teaching

Source: Author (photographed on May 7, 2019)

According to the recent statistical information shared by the KRCEE for academic year of 2019 to 2020, there are currently 23 schools, 6,977 students and 420 teachers in Mae La refugee camp. They comprise primary schools with students from grade 1 to grade 6, middle schools with students from grade 1 to 9, and high schools with students from grade 1 to 12. The subjects taught at the schools in the camp are usually: Karen language, English language, Myanmar language, Mathematics, Science and History. As shown in Table 8, the number of students enrolled at schools in higher education remain only 11% of the total.

After graduating secondary schools in Mae La community, they have limited opportunities to pursue higher education. There are certainly limited prospects for refugee students to go on to higher education. Although some of them receive support to undertake further studies in Thailand and abroad, these opportunities are rare. Some students enter the ‘post-12 schools’ that are run by the community which largely remain unrecognized as higher education. Some of the high school graduates leave the camp through obtaining scholarship from private or religious

organizations to study abroad or in Thailand outside the camp.

[Table 8] No. of Students and Teachers enrolled at Schools in Mae La Camp

Level	Students				Teachers		
	M	F	Total	Percentage	M	F	Total
Basic Education	3,022	3,262	6,284	89%	115	242	357
Higher Education	355	338	693	11%	39	24	63
Total	3,377	3,610	6,977	100%	154	266	420

Source: Constructed by Author based on information accessed from KRCEE in January 2020

The community-run camp education system struggle with the lack of accreditation and citizenship in a serious gap in the field of education in emergencies and protracted refugee situations. While there is no official means of earning an income inside the camp, the greatest challenge in refugee education – similar to other cases in different parts of the world – is lack of access to, quality of, higher education due to the large-scale resettlement and brain drain of the educated people leaving the camp (Zeus, 2011). Another distinctive challenge remains to be a serious lack of teachers due to a salary that is significantly lower than other jobs available in the camp. It results in the high turnover of staff members at the school, with many resettling to third countries. These unique features and challenges in refugee education of Mae La will be further explored and analysed in chapter 4 and 5.

3.2 Research Approach: Ethnographic Case Study

For this study, I adopted an ethnographic case study approach to explore how refugee education in Mae La is shaped and sustained in practice. The primary focus was to understand how Karen refugee educational stakeholders living inside the community of the Mae La camp – as well as those who work for the funding and managing organizations outside the camp – conceptualized the meaning and purpose of education while dealing with the long periods of uncertainty. I conducted field research in Mae La, using ethnographic methods of in-depth, semi-structured interviews and participant observations, all carried out inside or nearby the camp between 2019 and 2020. I first visited the camp in January 2019 with the help of a local missionary, and professor from Chiang Mai University, where I was attending research affiliate program to search for access to refugee education site on Thai-Myanmar border. As I came across many Karen researchers who were refugees themselves, I listened to their narratives behind their research areas: regarding Burma, civil war, and the refugee camps that became their home community. From their remarkable stories, I could learn that Myanmar was in a state of rapid transition and there was no certainty about when and how the protracted refugee situation along the Thai-Myanmar border could end. Hence, I decided to proceed with my dissertation as a case study in a Karen refugee camp on the border. With their abundant support, I could enter the camp and conduct a research with ethnographically informed methods. It was my bold attempt to unravel how education is shaped and sustained by not only the stakeholders from outside but also by the ones residing in the camp.

[Photo 4] Researcher spending time with teachers after school in Mae La camp

Source: Author (photographed on May 24, 2019 for the left and March 19, 2020 for the right)

[Photo 5] Researcher teaching English subject in a classroom in Mae La camp

Source: Author (photographed on January 30, 2020 for the left and May 23, 2019 for the right)

Over a combined five months of full-time stay in the camp community and the nearest border town of Mae Sot, I built intimate relationships with those who are involved in planning and delivering refugee education in the camp schools. I spoke to education coordinators from the local CBOs including KRCEE and KECD, international NGOs and UNHCR, as well as in-service teachers, parents, students, and community leaders. The qualitative data in the form of audio

recordings, transcripts of conversations, and field notes have been analysed and synthesized into general observations. Data is collected from a broad sample size of research consultants and countless hours of formal recorded interviews as well as informal conversations and experiences in the form of participant observation, as are characteristic of ethnographic methods.

Qualitative research is dynamic with a great deal of attention to process and assumes change is constant and ongoing (Patton, 2015). To precisely understand the practices of refugee education uniquely conceptualized from the perspective of local stakeholders in the field, a qualitative approach is found to be appropriate. With the qualitative approach, case study is defined as the 'study of things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them' (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2). Stake (1994) points out that it seeks out both what is common and what is particular about the case, the end results being generally something unique. Since each refugee context and the educational phenomenon is unique with its own history and background, a case of Mae La refugee camp community is chosen to be studied. Qualitative case study approach is naturalistic, where real-life experiences are allowed to emerge in an inconspicuous manner (Patton, 2015). It is useful to provide a descriptive and analytical portrayal of the phenomenon by capturing individual's personal perspective and experiences. A qualitative research design is emergent in nature, as it presumes that meaning is determined to a great extent by its context. Qualitative data allow the access to research participants' thoughts, feelings, values, and actions to help researcher understand how they make meaning of an experience and develop their perspectives. For the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, the research participants are encouraged to share their

stories and rich description by being adaptive and responsive as they describe in-depth accounts of their experiences from their own point of view. The essence of qualitative study is to allow meaning to be socially constructed and interpreted as individuals interact with their world. The inductive nature of qualitative research allows the researcher to collect data in order to build concepts and themes that may emerge from the data (Patton, 2015). Eiser (1999) asserts that often a situation or phenomenon speaks for itself and in that, researcher may focus on selected common themes that become the major object of the researcher's attention. Throughout this case study, I utilized Freirean notion of education to critically examine how refugee education is conceptualized by the diverse stakeholders within a protracted refugee situation.

By adopting an ethnographic perspective, this research aims to study particular aspects of everyday life and cultural practices of a social group. Using theories of Freirean notion of critical theories to guide the research, I used ethnographic methods and techniques such as observation, interviews, analysis of documents, and others to discover the cultural knowledge that people hold in their minds, how it is employed in social interaction and the consequences of its employment throughout the study (Spindler & Spindler, 1992). Adopting an ethnographic case study approach means framing, conceptualizing, conducting, interpreting, writing, and reporting associated with a broad, in-depth, and long-term study of a social or cultural group (Canen, 1999). With an anthropological attitude, I had to set aside my own definitions as an ethnographer of educational research, as explained below:

> Ethnographers must set aside their own definitions of actors, places, time(s), actions, events, and other aspects of everyday life and identify and describe the emic (insider) terms for these dimensions of everyday life. In other words, the ethnographer seeks understanding of the ways in which members of the group name, organize, and interact both in local events and across events over time. In this way, the ethnographer can identify what counts as education, who has access to education, who the actors are that are involved in education within and across events, what relationships exist between and among actors and events, and what factors support and constrain participation among other issues (Canen, 1999, p. 9).

During the fieldwork, I identified myself both as a researcher and a volunteer teacher while staying in the camp community. To engage in daily educational practices and enhance understanding of the context, I followed the community leaders' suggestion that I would teach English to the Karen refugee students at schools. Working at primary and secondary schools that are managed by KRCEE and post-secondary schools that are run by communities, I had to encounter dilemmas that illuminated my own social and cultural assumptions on a daily basis. One of the significant perspective transformations that I have experienced was that refugee teachers, parents and students, as well as other educational stakeholders residing inside the camp, have strong ownership and pride over their educational practices. While they were exposed to a prolonged period of uncertainty and conflict, they tend to have been perceiving education as a site to imagine their future beyond refugeehood and bring normalcy into their presence. As

autonomous agents of their own educational practices with strong future relevance, refugee stakeholders' rationales behind education differed from those outside the community who are involved in decision-making process of planning and delivering education to the camp schools.

As an ethnographer, I tried to interpret events from the perspective of the research participants rather than from my own point of view. Making 'emic' – rather than 'etic' – interpretations was challenging, however, I admitted that I cannot become an 'insider' to all participants and even 'insiders' have various unique perspectives. In acknowledging this, the concept of education in the everyday life of Karen refugee learners and educators were carefully examined. Like what Canen (1999) emphasized for the value of ethnographic research approach, it allowed me to explore and identify the norms and expectations, roles and relationships and rights and obligations of membership in a Karen community of Mae La as well as a group of educators and learners in a school setting. In this way, this research makes extraordinary the ordinary, and makes visible the invisible patterns of ordinary life within educational stakeholders in Mae La.

[Photo 6] Researcher attending a zone meeting with teachers in Mae La camp

Source: Author (photographed on May 22, 2019)

3.3 Research Process: Fieldwork in Mae La

3.3.1 Timeline of the Research

Table 9 indicates a process of this research from January 2019 to the end of 2020. With the initial aim to widely explore the phenomenon of refugee education through an ethnographic case study, grounded and inductive methods were used in order to gain access to the refugee community members residing inside the camp. The two-years long process consisted of feasibility and preliminary study, funding search, institutional review boards process, field research, data transcription, credibility, transferability, dependability check, and data description, analysis and interpretation. Relying heavily on participants, as navigators of this field-based research, was often very challenging for sequential implementation of the research timeline.

Making numerous visits and living inside the refugee camp with an ethnographic approach was an inspiring experience indeed, as it changed my own perspectives on refugee education. While refugees in Mae La community are undoubtedly challenged with a great deal of trauma and crisis, they simultaneously indicated significant effort to make the most out of conflict situation and to prepare for the imagined future by resuming their normal way of life through education. Despite the funding available for refugee assistance programs has become progressively tighter, their determination to pursue education was seen clearly throughout the fieldwork.

[Table 9] Research Process and Timeline

Year	2019				2020			
Month	Jan - Feb	Mar - Apr	May	Jun - Dec	Jan - Mar	Apr - May	Jun - Aug	Sep - Dec
Preliminary and Feasibility Study								
Funding Search								
IRB Process								
Field Research: 1st Phase								
Description								
Verification for Credibility and Dependability								
Field Research: 2nd Phase								
Data Transcription								
Description								
Verification for Credibility and Dependability								
Analysis and Interpretation								

Source: Author

3.3.2 Preliminary Research and Feasibility

I began my fieldwork in January 2019, spending 6 weeks as an affiliated researcher at the Chiang Mai University's Regional Centre for Social Science and Sustainable Development (RCSD) in Thailand. It allowed me to carry out a preliminary research to examine feasibility of the study. It was an opportunity to objectively and rationally realize the opportunities and threats present in the research field, the resources required to carry through, and the prospects for success. To judge feasibility of my research in refugee camps on the Thai border, I had to immerse myself in learning existing structure and stakeholders involved. I built rapport with the group of academics and practitioners involved in refugee education for the Karen on the Thai-Myanmar border. Researchers and faculty staff at the Chiang Mai University provided comprehensive literature concerning refugee education in Karen context. Moreover, they introduced the key informants who have Karen refugee background as well as those who are working with the CBOs and NGOs engaging heavily in supporting education in the refugee camp. Some of them later became crucial gatekeepers for my field research. With their assistance and commitment, I gained access to the Mae La refugee camp for the first time in February 2019.

The goal of this pilot phase undertaken through the affiliation at Chiang Mai University was not only to gain access the refugee camp on the Thai border, but also to develop my understanding about Karen refugees in terms of their historical and sociocultural background. It was also essential to get the gist of the key refugee education actors and their approaches for the real-life case of refugee camps. Overall, I was attempting to answer the following questions by immersing myself

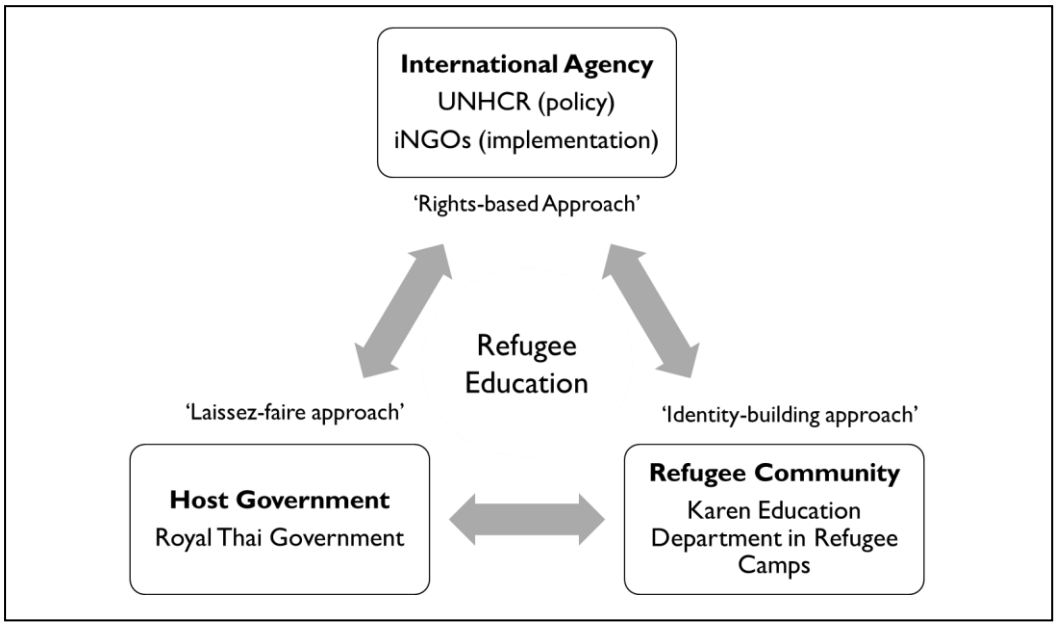
into the group of researchers and practitioners who were closely involved in CBOs, NGOs, Thai government and UNHCR.

(1) Who are the key actors involved in providing refugee education through schooling in the Karen refugee camps, on the Thai border?
(2) What are the key challenges in sustaining access, quality and accountability of refugee education in the Karen refugee camps, on the Thai border?
(3) How are their purposes and approaches in refugee education appear differently (or similarly)?

In answering these questions through the preliminary research, I came across a very complex picture of relations between the international organizations, host government, and Karen refugee community concerning their handling of education for refugees on the border. Figure 3 indicates that there are diverse actors involved in education of Karen refugees in Mae La, in terms of its policymaking and implementation. International organizations including humanitarian and development NGOs generally portrayed a rights-based approach whereas the refugee community in refugee camps held a strong purpose of identity-building to achieve through education. Meanwhile, Thailand – as a host government – seemed to practice a laissez-faire approach attributing mostly to its longstanding stance accepting refugees from Myanmar since 1980s. Thailand is not a signatory to the United Nation's 1951 Refugee Convention, and therefore, officially has no obligation to offer refuge or asylum to those seeking it from neighbouring countries. Nevertheless, the existence of the refugee camps on the Thai border for

almost 40 years tend to symbolize Thailand's commitment to human rights and generosity of spirit (Perkins, 2019). While Thailand's ratification of the 1966 Bangkok Principles on the Status and Treatment of Refugees lays out essentially the same sort of protections as the 1951 convention, it has a much more complicated past of forcefully returning ethnic minorities to Myanmar or subjecting them to various forms of human rights violations.

[Figure 3] Diverse actors involved in Refugee Education in Mae La



Source: Author

3.3.3 Data Collection

To collect data, I used ethnographic research methods in multiple forms including (1) individual interviews, (2) focus group interviews, (3) participant observations and (4) field documents. It involved over 40 individuals who could be categorized by three groups as shown in Table 10. To be specific, first group

consists of the Karen refugee community members residing in the camp including teachers consisting both principals and administrative staff at schools, community leaders, and parents and students. Second group consists of Karen refugee educational stakeholders residing outside the camp including teacher-trainers at KRCEE, and education coordinators at KRCEE and KECD. Third group consists of humanitarian and development workers including project officers at the UNHCR and INGOs.

[Table 10] Research Participants categorized into three groups

Category A Karen Refugee Community Members residing in Mae La	**Category B** Karen Institutional Stakeholders involved in Mae La	**Category C** Officers affiliated with International Organizations
- Teachers including principals and administrative staff at schools - Community leaders - Parents and Students	- Education coordinator at KRC - Teacher-trainers at KRCEE - Educational secretary and coordinators at KRCEE - Educational secretary and coordinators KECD - Community Leaders/Faculty Members at Post-12 school in Mae La - Volunteers from overseas teaching and donating at Post-12 school in Mae La	- UNHCR - NGOs

Source: Author

For individual and focus group interviews – as the main source of data – I have formally recorded over seventy-five hours of individual interviews as well as countless observations and informal conversations with focus groups in and around the camp. As a qualitative researcher, I observed the participants in interaction in ordinary settings, for example, in school classrooms, houses, and teashops either within the camp or the neighbouring town of Mae Sot. It discerns pervasive patterns to capture voices of the local stakeholders. For the privacy and

well-being of the research participants, all names of individuals and schools have been changed with pseudonyms to ensure the plausible deniability of identities in the camp community. Table 11 indicates minimum level of information for the interview participants quoted in the text. Out of concern for the privacy and well-being of the gatekeepers, all names of individuals and schools have been omitted. Additionally, some personally identifying information has been changed, in spite of the fact that many of my research participants and assistants have expressed the wish that I use their real names in the research. Since Mae La camp is a relatively small society, there are serious issues for ensuring the plausible deniability of my research participants' identities. Thus, I have intentionally chosen not to share detailed biographical information about some of the research participants whose voices are highlighted in the research. Nevertheless, in the interest of transparency, Table 11 provides some context for the individuals quoted in the study. Again, while this itself is a small number of individuals, it is representative of the qualitative data collected from over 40 participants I have interviewed.

[Table 11] List of Interview Participants

No.	Age	Gender	Occupation	Affiliation	Category
1	40s	M	Education Coordinator	Karen Refugee Committee	B
2	50s	M	Faculty member / Community Leader	Post-12 school in Mae La	A
3	30s	M	School Teacher	High school in Mae La	A
4	40s	F	Teacher Trainer	Karen Refugee Committee Education Entity	B
5	40s	F	School Teacher	Post-12 school in Mae La	A
6	40s	M	Education Secretary	Karen Education and Culture Department	B
7	40s	F	Teacher Trainer	Karen Refugee Committee Education Entity	B
8	40s	M	School Principal	Post-12 school in Mae La	A

9	40s	F	School Teacher	Middle school in Mae La	A
10	30s	M	Teacher Trainer	Karen Refugee Committee Education Entity	B
11	40s	M	Associate Protection Officer	UNHCR Field Office in Mae Sot	C
12	10s	M	Student	Post-12 school in Mae La	A
13	40s	M	Academic Dean	Post-12 school in Mae La	A
14	40s	M	Field Coordinator	International NGO	C
15	70s	M	Former head	Karen Education and Cultural Department	B
16	10s	F	Student	Middle School in Mae La	A
17	10s	M	Student	Middle School in Mae La	A
18	10s	M	Student	High School in Mae La	A
19	20s	F	Student	High School in Mae La	A
20	20s	M	Student	Post-12 school in Mae La	A
21	40s	M	Administration Staff	Post-12 school in Mae La	A
22	40s	M	School Teacher	High school in Mae La	A
23	40s	M	School Principal	High school in Mae La	A
24	50s	M	Pastor/Missionary	Affiliated with Post-12 schools in Mae La	B
25	40s	F	School Principal	Middle school in Mae La	A
26	40s	F	Administration Staff	Office of Camp Education Entity	A
27	40s	M	Resident Teacher Trainer	Karen Refugee Committee Education Entity	A
28	30s	F	Resident Teacher Trainer	Karen Refugee Committee Education Entity	A
29	30s	F	Faculty member	Post 12 school in Mae La	A
30	10s	M	Student	Post 12 school in Mae La	A
31	10s	F	Student	High school in Mae La	A
32	10s	M	Student	Post 12 school in Mae La	A
33	10s	F	Student	High school in Mae La	A
34	10s	M	Student	Post 12 school in Mae La	A
35	10s	M	Student	Post 12 school in Mae La	A
36	10s	M	Student	Middle school in Mae La	A
37	10s	M	Student	Middle school in Mae La	A
38	30s	M	Teacher	Middle school in Mae La	A
39	40s	M	Teacher	Middle school in Mae La	A
40	30s	F	Teacher	Primary school in Mae La	A
41	50s	M	Project Officer	International NGO	C

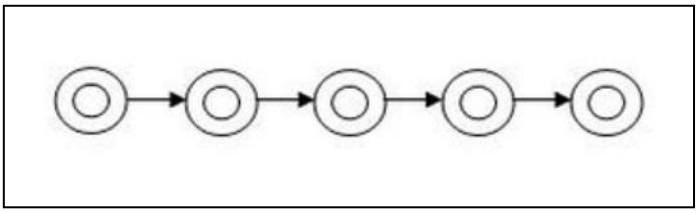
Source: Author

In addition to the interview data collected, data collected during the fieldwork in 2019 and 2020 included a total period of 5 months of participant observation and ongoing analysis of local publications, media, art and music related to the refugees' educational experiences. The time spent living in the Mae La camp community helped to refine and improve the accuracy of data I collected through participant observation. Throughout my fieldwork, my key strategy was to simply say yes to all the invitations by the community members. It provided valuable opportunities to observe a camp-wide teacher-training sessions, food ration day, sports tournament, school graduations, faculty meetings, birthday celebrations, wedding ceremonies, multiple religious ceremonies including thanks-giving gatherings, and many shared meals to engage with the population. This engagement allowed significant opportunities to experience and explore the dynamics of daily life and community interaction, which deeply strengthened the process of my data collection and analysis. The data I collected during participant observation, focus group meetings and the analysis of local documents and media such as *Karen News, KRC newsletter, Facebook* was also strengthened tremendously by the input I was able to receive from my fellow teachers and students inside the camp who graciously offered help in clarifying and translating.

Recruitment process of research participants involved sensitive procedures. With the help of gatekeepers standing between the researcher and potential respondents in and nearby the Mae La camp community, I selected key research participants through snowball sampling and convenience sampling (Saldana & Omasta, 2016). When I visited Mae La camp again in May 2019, I recruited research participants using linear snowball sampling as illustrated in Figure 4. I asked the key informants, who I have been building rapport for over a few months

both online and offline, to kindly introduce me to educational stakeholders in Mae Sot, the nearest town from Mae La camp. One of the professors at RCSD, Chiang Mai University introduced me to another professor at Payap university. Then he introduced me to one of his doctoral students who were already conducting fieldwork in Mae La camp for different research themes.

[Figure 4] Linear snowball sampling



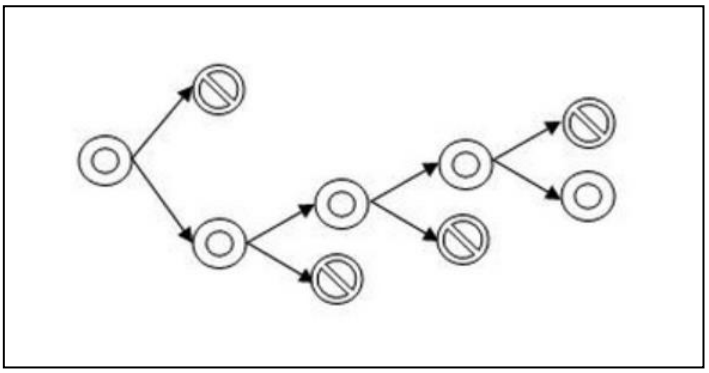
Source: Saldana & Omasta (2016)

In this way, I could connect and develop relationship with more informants who have not only academic research experience, but also Karen refugee background and networks into the communities in Mae La. While the Karen people (or Kayin as they call themselves in Karen language) were found to be closely related to each other, often gathered around on the Thai-Burma border areas, it was necessary to approach the community in Mae La through snowball sampling method. Since they had a rich cultural history as an ethnic group, prior knowledge and experiences acquired from the existing informants helped me to interact with new informants. They were very humble and collaborative to assist my research in any possible ways once I shared my background, connection with Karen networks, and research purpose.

Connecting with Karen Refugee Committee (KRC) was a critical opportunity to gain access to other refugee institutional stakeholders. Once I developed my network by visiting Karen Education and Culture Department in

Mae Sot office and other various Karen CBOs, I often came across the fact that the new respondents were related to my existing informants to some extent. Thus, I sometimes had to use exponential discriminative snowball sampling method to my convenience.

[Figure 5] Exponential discriminative snowball sampling



Source: Saldana & Omasta (2016)

I collected data over two phases in May 2019 and January to June 2020 to make use of the available research grants from Seoul National University. Continuously building and sustaining rapport with both gatekeepers and respondents from the former visits was crucial part of the data collection process. It allowed me to be able to plan the fieldwork ahead of time with the Karen refugee community-based stakeholders' official approval to access the camp. Upon their suggestion, I ended up teaching English subject as a volunteer teacher in Grade 3, 5, and 9 classrooms at a middle school inside the camp. It was a great opportunity to immerse into the community and mingle with the group of educational stakeholders on a long-term basis. I could start with addressing the questions posed during the preliminary research again from the viewpoints of local stakeholders including project coordinators at NGOs and CBOs, as well as teacher trainers,

teachers and parents. I could then develop more specific questions concerning their educational practices and perceptions in terms of the ownership, stakeholder relationship, and purpose. Respectively, it is later described and analysed into education *For refugees* and *By refugees* through adopting insights from Freirean notion of education for critical consciousness and liberation as illustrated at the end of chapter 2.

Throughout rapport building, recruitment of participants, and data collection, it was often very challenging due to unpredictable issues raised. Research participants were key navigators of this research and I had to rely heavily on their availability. Most unpredictable part of the data collection period was the emergence of COVID19. As this global pandemic has rapidly grown in the middle of my stay in the second phase of data collection in the camp, the safety of all the residents was threatened severely. By consulting with community leaders and officers at the camp authorities, I ended up having to leave the camp earlier than planned. Once the Thai government announced to lock down the gates of the Mae La camp, I was advised to leave the camp for health and political concerns. To follow the guidelines and suggestions by the camp authorities, I made a positive closure of the fieldwork at the end of March, 2020.

3.3.5 Data Analysis and Interpretation

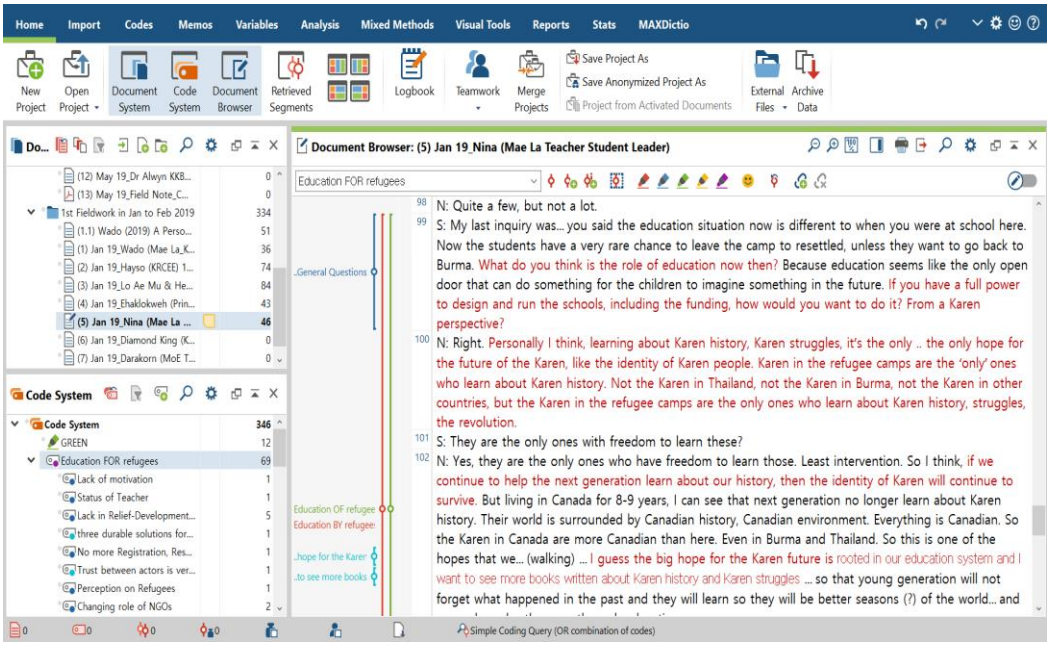
According to Creswell (2007), analysing the data in the qualitative research is an on-going process that consists of several steps as following:

1. Organize and prepare the data for analysis
2. Read through all of the data to gain a general sense of the information and its meaning
3. Begin the coding process of organizing the material into chunks of text before brining meaning to the information
4. Use the coding process to generate a description of the setting or people as well as the categories or themes for analysis
5. Advance how the description and themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative to convey the findings
6. Make an interpretation of the data by asking ″what are the lessons learned?″

As a first step of the data analysis, I organized the data I collected throughout the fieldwork into computer files. The recorded interview files were transcribed and converted into text and the fieldnotes and observation photos were saved as computer files. I printed out the materials and made into a book to read through all of the raw data and gain a general sense of the information by highlighting and taking notes on the recurring themes and concepts. Then I transferred the interview transcript files on a computer into a software program called MAXQDA. As it is a widely used software package of managing and analysing qualitative data, I used the program to classify the data and perform open coding and focused coding. Out

of many functions available in the MAXQDA, I utilized its visual tools to explore the connections between the coded segments and produce categories through review and re-review of the text. I also utilized the codebook function to produce the list of all the *in vivo codes* (Creswell, 2007) representing the exact words used by the research participants, categorized into the main themes.

[Photo 7] Screenshot of the MAXQDA software program for the coding process



Source: Author (photographed on June 1, 2020)

To begin with the coding process, **open coding** is first used to explore the data line by line and identify recurring themes that seem to emerge as an initial process of coding. According to the recurring themes, conceptual labels are given for conceptually similar events and actions are grouped together to form categories and subcategories (Saldana & Omasta, 2016). Through this initial coding process, data and concepts are arranged in appropriate classifications by breaking down

qualitative data into discrete parts and examining for similarities and differences.

As a second cycle of coding process, **focused coding** extends the work from initial open coding. The purpose is to strategically reassemble data by searching for the most frequent or significant codes. It categories coded data based on thematic or conceptual similarity (Saldana & Omasta, 2016). Focused coding generates in-depth follow-up discussion questions with the frequent code segments in mind. Using this elemental coding method, as well as in-vivo coding to use the actual terms and phrases by participants themselves in honouring the participant's voice (Strauss, 1987), the frequently recurring themes and codes emerged are structured in a way that is relevant for discussion to answer the research questions of this study. During this process of data analysis, direct quotations are used as a fundamental source of raw data revealing local stakeholders' perspectives. It reflected the ways they have organized their thoughts to explain the meaning of refugee education in their context. It was to see how they name the world, their experiences, as well as their basic assumptions and perceptions behind their actions (Patton, 2015).

In attempt to make emic interpretations from the perspective of the research participants, I spent quality time with the individuals in and around Mae La. My experiences represent a unique perspective on life in the camp, informed by a level of everyday familiarity and depth of connections that is not often possible for many researchers. Although I analysed a very broad base of data and experience, I highlighted the voices of key research participants whose words especially powerfully expressed sentiments I heard voiced again and again across multiple interviews. Therefore, the quoted passages shared throughout this study are ones

that are representative of much wider patterns I found in the research data.

Additional field data including reports, participant observation and expert meetings are used to cross-check the findings as well as to contribute to the analysis. This qualitative research uses direct quotations, however, the representation of their words reflects the researcher's interpretation of their experience, as their voices are filtered through the researcher's lens as the primary research instrument for the discovery and interpretation of meanings (Josselson et al., 2003). Using the qualitative data collected through interview, observations, and field documents, the research provides the educational stakeholders the opportunity to think aloud about the meaning of refugee education in their surroundings. Probing questions are used in order to ensure the clarity in interpretation (Maxwell, 2005). Questioning allowed the best chance of hearing participants' voices expressing feelings and describing their experiences. The voices reflected not only obstacles and challenges but also their strategies to remain resilient and sustain education with certain rationales. It is important to note that these qualitative data collected through ethnographic methods are perceived and analysed through the lens of the researcher, as a key instrument of the study (Wolcott, 2008).

3.3.6 Credibility and Dependability

To verify credibility and dependability of the data that I have collected from the field, I constantly asked the following question: How congruent are the collected data with reality? It was important to question myself throughout the process of this qualitative research whether the reality is fixed and stable as the positivists believe, or constructed and interpreted as qualitative researchers believe (Merriam, 1998). This qualitative case study views the reality of how education is implemented in the refugee camp community is constructive and interpretive reality. By describing and analysing the viewpoints of the local stakeholders involved, hermeneutics involved reappraisal and reinterpretation in relation to is cultural contexts.

The accuracy of data collected from refugee populations can sometimes be problematic as it has been argued that refugee informants may have an interest in obscuring or falsifying data in relation to a perceived connection to the success or failure of bids to receive aid or resettlement (Perkins, 2019). Therefore, I had to explicitly explain every time before the beginning of each interview, that interview answers and casual conversations would in no way affect their personal situation regarding external assistance or resettlement opportunities. My preliminary visits and extended presence in the camp prior to conducting semi-structured interviews helped lessen the initial distrust that could have affected the accuracy of the data collected.

To ensure external credibility, I also asked another question: To what extent, can these findings of the study be applied to other cases within the context of Karen refugee camps? In fact, it is risky to generalize this study with the sense of

extrapolating from a sample to a wider population. While this lack of generalizability can be viewed as a limitation of the method, however, this study prefers to take generalizability as something different than going from a sample to a population (Merriam, 1998). Overall, the goal of this qualitative case study, with ethnographic approach, was to understand the particular phenomenon in-depth, rather than finding out what is generally true of many. Drawing on a broad base of first-hand data and experience, the research provides information-rich analysis of the local approaches in conceptualizing refugee education. Furthermore, dependability is concerned with the question of: would another researcher readily follow the decision trail used by the procedures documented in this research? While this qualitative study assumes that reality is constructed, multidimensional, and ever-changing (Merriam, 1998). However, I utilized multiple strategies to improve the credibility and dependability of this study.

According Creswell (2007), triangulation and member checking are useful strategies in the process of assuring accuracy of findings (Creswell, 2007). Thus, for triangulation, I took diverse approaches to collect data. Instead of relying solely on interview responses directly from the selected educational stakeholders from the camp community, Karen institutions, and international organizations, the data included responses from participant observations as well as field resources. In addition, I conducted several member checking processes by sharing the key themes and written transcripts and initial drafts with some of the main research participants. This was to confirm the finding and to ensure that the key themes and categories represent the respondents' perspectives correctly.

3.3.7 Ethical Challenges and Considerations

Procedures for ensuring ethics have been developed by professional bodies across many academic fields, predominantly drawing on western legal frameworks and conceptions of agency. However, these procedures may not have applicability to certain cultural, social and political settings (Bailey & Williams, 2018). In this sense, despite I followed the procedures of the ethical review board at Seoul National University, conducting research with refugees in Thailand involved various challenges and limitations.

I was often asked to disguise my identity as a researcher into a volunteer teacher at a middle school in order to remain approved to access the camp. Although I informed the community leaders and officials – as well as all of my research participants –my research objective by sharing IRB approval letter alongside the methods proposed for research, they recommended me to 'act like a volunteer teacher' whenever the Thai camp authorities could spot me, as they did not want to risk any conflict with them. I was fortunate enough to gain access to the community as I had teaching experiences as a formal primary school teacher with refugees resettled in Australia. Though I was approved to conduct my research by the refugee stakeholders within the community, however, I was advised 'to stay low' in certain areas of the camp. It meant that I had to present myself to the community members both as a teacher and a researcher. Though I was more than happy to be involved in teaching English at a middle school and Korean language as an extracurricular activity after school, I often felt my research participants were potentially giving answers that they assumed I wanted to hear. Being acutely aware of this possibility, I had to constantly explain to the

participants that I welcome all kinds of responses because my research objective was to describe their perspective, not mine. Often, I could not avoid the situations where the participants asked for my opinion first before they responded to my interview questions. I tried not to influence their responses by promising them that I would share my perspective after they share theirs.

The school that graciously agreed to host my stay was a strong religious institute as a post-12 school in the camp. Though I deeply appreciated for their hospitality - as the Karen refugee leaders and officers as well as my fellow teachers at the school were incredibly gracious to me - there were situations where I had to reject their suggestion to teach religious classes to university level students. There were several times when I felt it was assumed that I was supportive of their separatist and nationalist orientation in and through education. Although I only presented myself as a volunteer teacher at a middle school, I felt it was polite to participate in activities of the post-12 school I was staying at. It was extremely challenging to find a balance between being polite and unauthentic. Upon reflection, my fieldnote indicates several times that I felt I was expected to agree and participate in the activities because I am benefiting as a researcher hosted and welcomed by the community in the camp. In other words, as a qualitative researcher, I constantly had to balance myself between admitting that I have my own perspective as a research tool and that I must participate in the community activities without expressing my own perspectives or opinions. Finding a balance between the personal stance and what I choose to share without negatively affecting my integrity as a researcher was challenging.

In addition, as an Asian female researcher, I was often misperceived with the role established by previous Asian visitors. Despite my extended stay in the same

community, I was frequently invited to play the role of a missionary or volunteer teacher donating money to the church and schools. The refugee community members including the teachers and students assumed that I would somehow do similar chores as There were also already an established role of visiting person or volunteer as an Asian person had previously been played to the refugee community members in the camp by a missionary or teacher. At other times, I was misperceived as an expert dispatched by international NGOs or Thai government to secretly monitor the internal activities within the community. To be honest, I regret that I was not aware how my own identity may intersect with what my research population has previously encountered with. In this sense, it is imperative to take conscious inventory of the ways in which field researchers' identity may intersect with the research population is an important step in preparing for the field (Perkins, 2019). The lesson I learned from this fieldwork is that while it is important to receive ethical approval for a study from institutional review board prior to visiting the field, it is equally important to be prepared for potential issues and challenges generated through personal identities.

CHAPTER 4. REFUGEE EDUCATION IN MAE LA REFUGEE CAMP

4.1 Education 'For' Refugees in Mae La: Towards Objectification

4.1.1 Historical Contextualization of Assistance in Protracted Emergencies

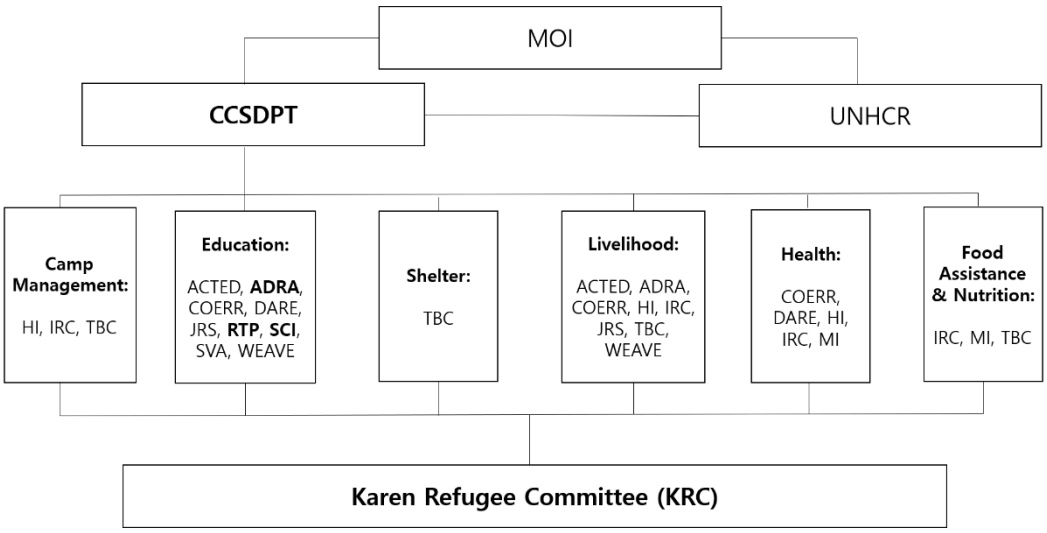
UNHCR defines a refugee crisis as a 'Protracted Refugee Situation (PRS)' if 25,000 or more refugees from the same ethnicity or nationality have been in exile for five or more years in a given asylum country (UNHCR, 2020a, p. 24). According to this definition, the Mae La community is also identified as one of the major protracted refugee situations, while it existed for almost four decades. The Karen refugees in the camp, facing this protracted displacement, have been suffering from a lack of physical security, legal status and protection of their fundamental human rights. Their presence lead to tensions with the local population in Thailand, as well as to the exacerbation of regional conflicts between Thailand and Myanmar.

Due to the ongoing conflict between Myanmar's military and the country's ethnic armed groups, Karen people fled into Tak province of Thailand and could not return home since 1984. The refugee camps on the Thai border were established as temporary, which is still existing now as semi-permanent. According to my research participants who lived in the Mae La camp since it was established, the Thai government's initial response as a host country was a genuine gesture that granted temporary sanctuary to the refugees on the humanitarian ground. Influx of the Karen refugees at that time was initially perceived as a short-term phenomenon and the Thai government expected that they would promptly

return to Burma once the fighting has ceased, as in the past. In February 1984, a range of voluntary relief agencies were invited by the Thai Ministry of Interior (MOI) under the name of Coordinating Committee for Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand (CCSDPT). Under the umbrella of the CCSDPT, a consortium of various NGOs agreed to provide humanitarian relief assistance. Although they were originally working with the Indochinese refugees in Thailand, it is now a primary organization engaged to provide emergency assistance to the displaced people from Karen ethnic communities across the border. For 36 years now, it has been aiding through working closely with Karen refugee communities. Meanwhile, the Karen Refugee Committee (KRC) was formed by the Karen refugee community leaders and members to administer their own population over seven Karen refugee camps located along the border. This administrative system was established and sustained while different relief organizations have joined and left the consortium throughout the protracted period of exile.

Figure 6 illustrates the structure of the coordination for refugee assistance between the Thai MOI, international NGOs, and the KRC for the camps along the Thai-Myanmar border. Most relief and development agencies involved in the camps are part of the CCSDPT and they cover refugees' activities throughout all sectors. The sub-committee group, often called as working group, is formed for each sector; camp management, education, shelter, livelihood, health, and food assistance/nutrition. A research participant who is affiliated with an NGO in education sector informed that "representatives from the NGOs in each sub-committee group of the CCSDPT gather and discuss various agendas in a bi-monthly meeting either in Bangkok or Mae Sot" (Individual interview with Participant 1).

[Figure 6] Current Structure of Coordination for the Refugee Camps along the Thai border



ACTED – Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development
ADRA – Adventist Development and Relief Agency
CCSDPT – Coordinating Committee for Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand
COERR – Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees
DARE – DARE Network
HI – Handicap International
IRC – International Rescue Committee
JRS – Jesuit Refugee Service (Asia Pacific)
MI – Malteser International
MOI – Ministry of Interior, Thailand
RTP – Right To Play
SCI – Save the Children
SVA – Shanti Volunteer Association
TBC – The Border Consortium
UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WEAVE – Women's Education for Advancement and Empowerment

Source: Constructed by Author based on information from CCSDPT (2020)

As the NGOs have extensive networks established in the refugee camps for a long time, the camp community including refugee teachers, parents, and students are generally perceived as intended beneficiaries. CCSDPT is determined to provide resources that match local needs and allocate appropriate support in every sector (CCSDPT, n.d.). However, the structure of coordination for the camps

ensure their priority to be using their contribution aligned in accordance with the MOI policies, as well as in cooperation with the UNHCR for future plans. The UNHCR is responsible for official registration and camp relocation issue in relation to the three main durable solutions: *Local integration*, *Voluntary Repatriation*, and *Resettlemen*t. However, towards the durable solutions, NGOs are in charge of practical assistance such as health, education, and food, closely working with the KRC and community members inside the camps on the ground level.

According to one of the community leaders at a post-12 college institute in the Mae La community, the Thai MOI has initially "restricted aid to essential emergency provisions in order to avoid the displaced people staying longer than necessary". Thus, the humanitarian relief effort by the CCSDPT at an earlier stage was operating on a "month-by-month short-term basis" (Individual interview with Participant 2). However, as the Burmese army was not retreating, the Karen refugees could not return safely to their homes in Burma in the usual way. Under these circumstances, the Karen refugee administrators gained approval from the governor of Tak province to establish basic camp facilities as 'temporary shelter' in February 1984 (Lang, 2002d). Even though the "special understanding between the local province and Karen ethnic administrators could enable the initial establishment of the camps" (Individual interview with Participant 1), the Bangkok-based authorities including the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs and MOI revoked the decision of Tak province in November 1984. Then, the governor of the Tak province instructed to order all Karen refugees to return to Burma within a month. However, this instruction was not strictly implemented "in practice" because there was "room for negotiation" (Individual interview with Participant

1). It demonstrates a critical incongruence between the official stance of the Thai central government and the implementation of the local province of Tak. The government has initially expressed its reluctance to become host to displaced populations and it is officially not a signatory to the Refugee Convention up until today. However, the camps have been existing as temporary shelter under the "special understanding" between the Karen indigenous administrators and the Tak province. In practice, as different to the official policy, Thailand took a relatively accommodating approach since they permitted the Karen camps to remain. Overall, this was a starting point of the refugees' lives in limbo.

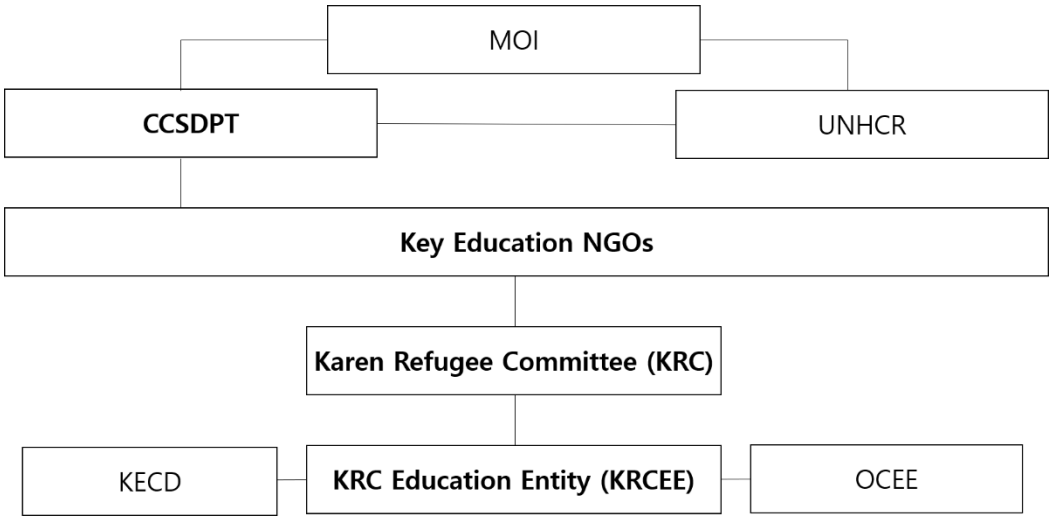
With this root, the traces of diplomatic and military tensions associated with the presence of the camps are evident up until present. This explains why the Karen refugee camps still exist under the name of 'temporary shelter' for a protracted period. The MOI of Thailand allows the international provision of assistance to the Karen refugees based on humanitarian principles, while at the same time keeping in mind the diplomatic relations between Thailand and Myanmar. It is understandable that hosting Burma's anti-Rangoon insurgents was risky for the Thai authorities for their diplomatic repercussions. It is aligned with the current stance of the Thai government emphasizing the 'temporary' and 'minimal' nature of its humanitarian commitment, while extending physical sanctuary. There remains a system of indigenous administration within each camp community – with camp leaders, committees, and sections – reflecting the traditional structure of village management within the Karen state of Burma (Lang, 2002d). However, the protracted nature of the community relying on the external assistance leads to a tradition of the oppressed that teaches the 'state of emergency' in which they live is "not the exception but the rule" as time pass (Walter, 1968, p. 257).

4.1.2 Educational Provision shaped by Global Refugee Regime

Since this 'warehousing' of refugees (Couch, 2017) has existed along the border over a protracted period of time, children in the camp tend to spend their lives in limbo. The plight of the Karen refugees in Mae La involves large populations including children that are long-standing, chronic or recurring, and for which there are no immediate prospects for a solution (MacLaren, 2010). My observations in Mae La indicate that once refugees have met their basic needs such as food, water and shelter, their primary concern is to ensure that their children can access quality education. Karen children who are born in the camps or those who have spent the most of their lives in confinement, tend to ambitiously progress through the camp education system in order to find themselves with few opportunities to further their studies.

Educational activities available for the Karen refugees in the Mae La camp are mainly provided by the NGOs affiliated with CCSDPT, as illustrated above in Figure 6. Explicitly, the key NGOs that are currently providing education services in Mae La are: Save the Children (SCI), Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), and Right to Play (RTP). On the ground level, they are coordinating with the Karen Refugee Committee Education Entity (KRCEE), which is an education department of the Karen Refugee Committee (KRC). Figure 7 illustrates that basic and secondary schooling within the camp are funded and controlled by the international NGOs while partnered and managed by the KRCEE. While the KRCEE oversees all the refugee camps alongside the border, Office of Camp Education Entity (OCEE) is also established inside each camp to assist the KRCEE by coordinating and managing the regular activities at schools.

[Figure 7] Structure of Education Coordination in the Camp



KECD – Karen Education and Culture Department
OCEE – Office of Camp Education Entity

Source: Author

When the KRCEE and OCEE are working closely to manage the primary, middle and high schools in the camp community, they are heavily influenced by the Karen Education and Culture Department (KECD, formerly known as Karen Education Department, KED). KECD is an education wing of the Karen National Union (KNU) and it currently manages the schools in Karen state on the Burmese side of the borderland. Prior to the existence of the KRCEE, the KECD was originally managing the schools on both sides of the border for IDPs in Karen State of Myanmar and refugees in the Thai camps. It was only 2009 when the KRCEE was formed as a separate managing authority to oversee the schools on the Thai side of the border. According to the education coordinator at the KRC, “after the establishment of the KRCEE, it could attract more aid from international NGOs and play the central role of education bureau in the refugee camps” (Individual

interview with Participant 1). It was possible because it became an education CBO that represents Karen refugee communities as a new entity, that is "seemingly separate from the Karen armed group" (Individual interview with Participant 1). Nevertheless, it is important to note that "the KRCEE practically continues to coordinate their efforts with the KECD and consequently, they share the legacy of the same curriculum and training staff with the purpose of education strongly oriented towards building a Karen ethnic identity" (Individual interview with Participant 1). In consequence, it tends to cause confusion for the KRCEE staff whether they should place the priority to meet the requirements of the NGOs or to follow the direction of the KECD for its imagined future of building a Karen nation.

> Basically, KED took charge of education in Karen State [in Burma] and KRCEE took charge of education only in refugee camps [in Thailand]. With the same root though. The overall purpose of Karen education is to maintain our identity, of course. To maintain our own education system, our own language, our own history. I think this purpose is the same whether in Karen State or in the Refugee Camps along the border of Thailand. The international NGOs provide funding through donors, but they cannot really interfere with our curriculum we have been sharing between KECD and KRCEE (May 3, 2019, Individual interview with Participant 1).

In the case of Mae La, unlike other refugee situations, "the UNHCR does not run the camps nor implement education programs" (Individual interview with Participant 11). Initially, the Thai authorities "were concerned that the presence of

the UNHCR might attract more displaced people from Myanmar, as it did during the Indochinese relief effort" (Individual Interview with Participant 41). Hence, the government restricted the UNHCR's role until 1998 (Lang, 2002c). Up until now, "the UNHCR has a minor role in coordinating the CCSDPT while the NGOs have actively taken roles to cooperate with KRCEE for the educational management and administration in Mae La" (Individual interview with Participant 11).

In the midst of the tensions raised between the reliance on external funding and the structure of education coordination left as a legacy of the protracted refugee crisis in Mae La community, there are many challenges and limitations for education that is provided 'for' refugees. The community members of Mae La, including the refugee parents and teachers, expressed that the external stakeholders from international community tend to place less value on education compared to themselves. This was observed that while the overall international assistance is consistently declining for the camp community, the resources and funding available for education, in particular, have declined rapidly. An education secretary at KECD expressed that the refugee learners in the camp have no choice other than adapting themselves to the current situation.

> We are actively adapting and responding to the changing and evolving situations. Because we are not receiving the amount of the support that we used to receive. So we have to find the best possible ways to cater the needs and integrate to cope with the situation … From the donors' sides, they say, "this is the pipeline we can provide" and the KRC and the Camp Committees have to deal how to use and live with it (March 3, 2020, Individual interview

with Participant 2).

As the global refugee relief regime is focused on humanitarian coordination, while declaring 'integration' as a long-term solution at the same time, various actors including international NGOs have been acting as key players of the 'pseudo-State' (Waters & Leblanc, 2005). It means that NGOs have been in overall control of the community, profoundly influencing the ways in which the camp schools operate by providing project-based funding.

For example, the curricula for subjects such as English, Mathematics, and Science were designed by international NGO staff in consultation with the KRCEE. According to an education coordinator at KRCEE, "through external assistance, ideas focusing on very much of neoliberal values are naturally incorporated into the curriculum as well as teacher training used in the camp schools" (Individual interview with Participant 1). In their decision-making in technical areas to do with curriculum, pedagogy and school administration in refugee camps, the educational stakeholders that are heavily influenced by the NGOs tend to plant the seeds to direct into certain future (Waters & Leblanc, 2005). This future might be limited as "repatriation, resettlement, or remaining" without much of a choice in limbo (Oh, 2012a).

Since the Karen refugee stakeholders have limited choices about the evolving situations with the funding cuts, they seem to be subjected to the choices of 'others' in regards to sustaining their schooling. For example, due to the recent funding cut in education sector with a ceasefire agreement currently proceeding in Myanmar, the decisions they have to make to close down some of the schools are no longer their own, but they result from external prescriptions. It is important to

note that due to the lack of belonging to a nation-state, refugee communities have gradually grown much dependency on the international NGOs. Applying Freirean perspective of critical pedagogy in this context, it is important to distinguish 'adaptation' and 'integration'. They are in a position of the oppressed, being 'adapted' and 'maladjusted' into the protracted refugee crisis rather than being invited to be 'integrated' (Freire, 1974). In the international system of refugee relief, refugees are frequently perceived as victims who have been denied access to basic needs such as food, shelter and medical care. Despite the fact that thousands of children live for years and sometimes even decades in refugee camps This deficit perspective with the 'medicalized' focus mainly occurs in the structure of educational provision for refugees (Waters & Leblanc, 2005). This structural limitation demonstrates, irrespective of rhetoric to the contrary, planning for education is often done 'for' refugees rather than 'with' refugees.

4.1.3 Refugee schooling sustained with "Challenges in the Camp"

The unique aspect of education provided 'for' refugees in Mae La is that the system of schools and learning is perceived to be sustained by project-based assistance from various international organizations, although it was indeed staffed and managed by the local refugee stakeholders. Karen refugee communities are often described as a stateless nation (Yeo et al., 2020) initially set up and resourced "an independently administered transborder education (Oh et al., 2019, p. 5) with minimal assistance from the state authorities. Schooling in Mae La is therefore shaped independently from state systems of both Thailand and Myanmar, while being sustained by the external assistance. From this point of view, there are many

challenges perceived in ensuring sustainability of education in the camp, due to the disjuncture between the nation-state and the provision of formal schooling.

First, the link between education and employment is severely limited. As education in the camp community is far better than any education available to civilians inside Karen state on the Burmese side of the border, many have crossed the border in order to go to a camp school. Some parents send their children across the border from the Karen state, to attend schools in the refugee camp, as they traditionally place a high value on education. This is evident in an interview with a teacher at one of the high schools in Mae La:

> My home village is in Brigade 5 of Karen State. My father told me that I can learn better education in Thai refugee camp schools. So they sent me here. I was only grade 10 at that time and I lived in a school dormitory in Zone B. I grew up in that school dormitory and now I am working as a teacher at the same school and I am in charge of that dormitory (March 9, 2020, Individual interview with Participant 3).

In modern societies, the link between education, skills and employment is mostly taken for granted and it provides enough rationale to sustain education. However, in Mae La community, this link is often missing while there is no official means of earning an income. Since the camp community is permitted to remain only in terms of temporary manner, the uncertainty is a critical issue for many young students. They cannot plan what to do after they finish a post-ten school, the highest level of education available in the camp. Furthermore, employment is

the exception rather than the rule for them. Considering that two-thirds of the camp population consists of adult and there are so few paid jobs available to the refugees, educational and learning opportunities – especially in higher education – that prepare them for paid employment is perceived as unnecessary. A teacher-trainer at KRCEE who works closely with in-service teachers as well as the students in different age enrolled at the camp schools, shared her concern with decreasing motivation for both teachers and students to pursue education in the camp.

> Education should provide a good job ideally. But it is different in the camp. We want to say to our students "you need to study hard for a better life". But even if they pass the post-ten college, they have not many choices. They become teachers or work for the community… something like that (January 20, 2020, Individual interview with Participant 4).

As Freire highlights the oppressed learners are the ones who conform to the oppressive structures in the society, external actors perceive refugee learners in the camp as the ones who need to conform to the life in limbo where employment is the exception. Whether or not the students are critically conscious of the oppressive structures surrounding them, thousands of capable young adults are left with no means to pursue their dream of higher education. Many of the young students in primary, middle and high schools find motivation to pursue education from their determination to help their own people and community for better future. However, after completing high schools, they often end up opening a shop or becoming a nurse or a teacher in the camp not because they find it is the best means to help the community, but because it is the only option left for them. Although by

law, they are not allowed to leave outside the camp and obtain employment in Thailand, they are exposed to the chances to be employment illegally. As of 2012, it has been reported that approximately 10% of the respondents residing in Mae La had their main occupation as 'day labour outside camp', while the half of the entire respondents reported to have 'unpaid housework' and the about 7 % reported to 'work in an NGO or CBO' (Oh, 2012b). The lack of choice for employment and the insufficient link between education and employment are mentioned as the main challenges that the community members face. This is also expressed by a Karen teacher at a post-ten college, who has previously worked as an NGO worker as well as a teacher trainer at CBO.

> I worked as a teacher for 3 years at a post-ten college [name of the institute]. Before that, I was working as a Resident Teacher Trainer of Science subject for 2 years, we call it RTT at KRCEE. Before I became a RTT, I used to work at a NGO on gender-based violence project for 3 years. Before working at NGO, I was a student in a post-ten college in Mae La. I guess I was lucky to find paid jobs here in the camp even though it pays little money. However, before I came to the camp, I was going to work in law. I got a diploma in law in Burma (March 16, 2020, Individual interview with Participant 5).

Second, funding and management of the schools are not sustainable during exile without a nation-state. Due to the temporary view held by the external stakeholders involved in education provision for refugees, financial commitment from NGOs tend to be unstable, as commonly expressed by many refugee

educators and community leaders. A young community leader who has spent his entire life within Mae La camp and committed in teaching for post-ten college level students demonstrated his main concern for their situation heavily relying on external support which is unstable. He demonstrated the current situation is in limbo between the external stakeholders reducing their support rapidly due to the ceasefire peace agreement in Myanmar, and the internal stakeholders not considering 'return to Myanmar' as a safe option yet due to the continued civil wars that broke out.

> Couple of countries and couple of governments pulled out already. So we have to live with it as well … To sustain and maintain their support, for example, in the past, 20 countries contributed to CCSDPT. Now only less that the half of the donors are remaining. We call the reduction as 'cut' but the donors who are still committed do not use the word 'cut'. They will say it is a 'change' (February 7, 2020, Individual interview with Participant 6).

While education provision without a nation-state is influenced heavily by the external international organizations, lack of sustainability is a critical issue not only in finance but also in management of the schools. Even though the Thai government genuinely permits the refugees to manage their own schools and allows the consortium of international NGOs to fund infrastructure, it has imposed various restrictions. Embedding the temporary and emergency perspective, Karen students and teachers are not allowed to use permanent building materials at school. It means that NGOs – in cooperation with the KRC – are allowed to fund

infrastructure, provide teacher training, school materials and resources, and establish systems for providing education services. However, both NGOs and CBOs are structured to commit to the humanitarian enterprise with temporary and minimal stance (Lang, 2002b). Restrictions on educational activities are shown in Table 12, which set the parameters within which the refugee community, with the assistance of NGOs and management of KRC, sustain its educational endeavours.

[Table 12] Thai government's Restrictions on Education in the Refugee Camp

Restrictions on Schooling in the camp
1. No permanent school buildings may be constructed. It has been amended recently and it is now possible to construct semi-permanent buildings; iron poles, small wooden poles and steel roofs can now be used in place of leaves and bamboo poles. Concrete cannot be used.
2. The area designated for school buildings cannot be expanded.
3. NGO personnel are allowed to work as advisors to teachers, but not as teachers.
4. Publications distributed in schools may not contain political ideas, attitudes or values.

Source: Oh (2012b)

In consequence to these restrictions, Karen refugees struggle with not only poor infrastructure and resources, but also with limited staff capacity who can implement and sustain the schooling activities. As the NGO personnel are not allowed to work as teachers, most teachers in Mae La – except the foreign teachers who stay as a volunteer teacher on a short-term basis – are the Karen refugee teachers who live in the camp. According to an education coordinator at KRC, the teachers are prepared through teacher training sessions organized only twice a year for in-service and pre-service teachers respectively.

KRCEE, along with the international NGOs providing education services, helps to organize the trainings with the support of OCEE staff. Subject content training is provided only once a year to help the teachers feel more competent in their teaching. Higher education teacher trainings are provided only upon the request of schools, but most of the time the teacher trainings are self-organized to meet the teachers' own needs. Trainings commonly requested by the schools are for curriculum development, classroom management, lesson planning, and financial management. Due to limited time and resources, the trainings are usually conducted for only one or two days (May 22, 2019, Individual interview with Participant 1).

[Photo 8] School materials delivered by CBOs and NGOs for new semester

Source: Author (photographed on May 20, 2019)

Teachers can use their credentials gained from these training programs in KRC— and KNU—administered schools in Thailand and Myanmar. Nevertheless, those who arrived in the camp prior to 2005 and have plans to resettle in a third country, do not have motivation to become a teacher. In addition, teachers receive

approximately 35 US dollars a month as a salary. This is lower than any other jobs available in the camp such as medic, agricultural labourer, or NGO worker. Although the Karen refugee stakeholders place a high value on educating for the young generation and their own future as a Karen nation without a state, sustaining high quality teaching staff is a serious predicament, as expressed by an education secretary of KECD.

> It really depends on the donors… We have to heavily depend on the external donors, so the educational curriculum content sometimes changes. We are also not very ready for this ruthless change. Where in the past, we operate on the relief and emergency, the humanitarian aid. But now, they changed to development aid. With this developmental thinking, teacher salary and teacher subsidy is not on their list. So they perceive that as the responsibility of the Thai or Myanmar government… and as our situation is not ready to receive aid directly from either government yet, there is a gap where the international organizations do lots of development related activities under development aid. It is very hard for us to maintain our teachers. We cannot sustain our system and that is the main challenge we are facing nowadays (February 9, 2019, Individual interview with Participant 6).

Third, there is clearly a lack of consensus between the education actors causing dilemma for teaching contents and approach in Mae La community. While it is challenging in the camp to commonly define the rationale behind education, and its end goal, it is thought-provoking to investigate what are the teaching and

learning contents and how they are evaluated. At schools in the camp community, examinations are conducted by KRCEE as part of the standardization of the school system along with other camps on the Thai-Myanmar border. Although the KRCEE is an independent education department in charge of managing and evaluating education for the refugee learners within the camps, it is recognized neither by Thailand nor Myanmar's education departments. Therefore, evaluation results are only applicable within the camps, leaving the students who successfully graduate from refugee camp schools with no opportunity for further studies or career selection in the modern state systems outside the camp communities. In addition, the international NGOs providing financial support and working in partnership with the KRCEE often have their own evaluation criteria for their education projects involving teachers and students. The refugee teachers design their lessons by mainly relying on textbooks that were developed by KECD and NGO consultants long time ago. However, they are faced with the dilemma in balancing the requirements from external actors with the beliefs they have about what students need in their mundane life. A teacher-trainer from the KRCEE expressed the opinion that substantive solutions for the daily struggles of the in-service teachers with this on-going dilemma must be treated as a priority by the external actors in order to properly meet the local needs.

> Teachers have a big dilemma in what to teach and how to teach… Currently, it is hard for us too. Usually we have partners who work with us from NGOs. We are grateful for their help. But when they provide funding, they are also involved in training. In terms of activities, we would like to do our own monitoring and activity planning, but it is very hard for us. OCEE may have a

different opinion about this, but it is indeed hard. NGOs give the funding, but I don't think they are much interested in how to solve the Karen teachers' struggles and dilemmas (May 23, 2019, Individual interview with Participant 7).

While both the refugee community and the NGOs work under the ultimate authority of the Thai government, the international NGOs have much more room to negotiate with the Thai government and to influence policy on education (Oh, 2012b). Thus, the Karen community relies on both the funding and the influence of the NGOs that come from donor agendas. It means that the present content and form of education provided 'for' refugees are mainly the result of negotiation between the groups with mixed rationales and approaches. The refugee community leadership perceives the key purpose of providing formal schooling in the camp community is clearly for the Karen nation and identity building. Meanwhile, NGOs mostly work on the humanitarian ground that is recently shifting towards development discourses and global durable solution of 'integration' to the system of nation-state.

In the midst of the refugees' identity-building purpose and the NGOs' humanitarian purpose, the Thai government consistently adopts a laissez-faire attitude regarding education provided in the camp, officially emphasizing the temporary and minimal nature of its humanitarian commitment. In this context, educational provision 'for' refugees reinforce the Karen refugee students and teachers to merely survive without critical consciousness, and remain oppressed as 'uninvited temporary guests' (Oh, 2012a), who are perceived to have no capability to transform their own surroundings. This is explored in more detail in

the next section discussing perception on refugee students and teachers when education is provided 'for' refugees from external perspectives.

4.1.4 Concept of Refugee Students and Teachers from *"Outsiders' Perspectives"*

To describe how refugee education in Mae La community is conceptualized as education 'for' refugees, it is important to explore how refugee students and teachers are conceptualized from external perspectives that heavily influence in shaping and sustaining education in the community. In economically developed societies of the Global North, refugee children and youth are frequently portrayed as helpless victims, burdens of the host society, or potential criminals (Ryu & Tuvilla, 2018). Likewise, the external stakeholders who are closely involved in providing educational services in cooperation with the refugee community in Mae La have tendency to focus on what the refugees lack. Even with decent intentions and commitment to help the refugee community, a deficient perspective that may emphasize merely the refugees' needs and predicaments can possibly neglect the various important narratives and lived experiences the refugees have to offer.

Freirean perspective provides an important perception that the oppressed are treated as an 'empty vessel to be filled', being ignorant of the oppression. Observations of the Karen refugee students living in the Mae La community alongside numerous interviews with their parents and teachers reveal that there is a significant dilemma between the perceptions of the 'outsiders' and 'insiders'. A principal at a post-10 college level school in the camp described how the external stakeholders who assist in providing education tend to perceive the refugee students merely as objects of development interventions through providing

emergency education. Meanwhile, he believed insiders' perspective should be more critical and different to those who are not residing in the camp. He implied that the role of education is to empower the Karen refugee students to claim their own rights and think differently to those who conform to the oppressive structures that has been strengthened over a protracted period, whether it was intended or not. He emphasized the important role of teachers in the community, as they have strong influences on the 'imagined future' of the students in exile. He demonstrated his deep concern of both teachers and students in the community being objectified through conforming to the existing structures that are not often democratic to the refugee members. He expressed how they tend to unconsciously 'follow the wind' of the 'outsiders financing and managing education in the camp' (Individual interview with Participant 8).

> For the outsiders' perspective, refugee education is like emergency education. It is to survive and overcome traumatic experiences and not to fall behind while they are in the camp. They think Burmese language is the most important subject in the curriculum because education in the camp should not be too far from whatever is going on inside Burma. However, the perception between outsiders and insiders is very different though. What is the insiders' perspective? We don't want to learn anything to do with Burmese. 99 percent of the students here, in fact, will refuse to speak in Burmese language and learn Burmese history. They get this from their teachers, of course. We don't want to integrate into Burmese education. For us, it is not all about integration (March 9, 2020, Individual interview with Participant 8).

Aligned with the Freirean pedagogical thoughts that critique the banking model of education, this local principal shared his concerns regarding the "outsiders' perspective", which treats the Karen refugee learners in Mae La like an empty vessel. He stressed the point that without critically realizing this aspect, they are to be filled with the knowledge that those in power – outside the camp community – wanted the learners to acquire. The ignorance of the oppressed result from the powerful stakeholders in society through economic, social, cultural, and political domination. It provides useful insights to understand how refugee education in the camp setting can gradually be dominated by the global external actors over a protracted situation in limbo. Although education in the camp has been uniquely initiated, implemented and sustained partially by the locals, it is being immensely influenced by the external refugee regime involving outsiders due to their input in terms of funding and management. These outsiders' perspectives strongly influence the students' perspectives in Mae La. Photo 9 shows an image of a diagram created by a student at one of the post-ten college institutes in Mae La explaining her understanding of the power structure of the camp that she regards as home.

It is particularly interesting the ways in which students understand the various actors in the camp – from UNHCR to the Thai government and KNU – fitting together in a social hierarchy that results in the peculiar and total institution that is the 'camp'. Such a visual representation in Photo 9 lays bare the inherent tensions present in the camps, as the various actors have sharply contrasting visions for the camp, for refugees, and highly differential motivations for their own involvement. These same tensions, which make it difficult to delineate what

a refugee camp should be, and whether it should even continue to exist, also make it extremely challenging to define education and its end goal within the context of this liminal, non-state space.

[Photo 9] Students' Representation of Social Hierarchy in the Camp

Source: Yeo, Gagnon & Thako (2020)

A critique of the conditions in the camp that make it impossible for one to decide one's own fate, to have autonomy, were echoed frequently by students and community leaders alike in interviews. Often, this lack of ability to "decide our own life" (Individual interview with Participant 2) was scaled up and down, from the individual, to the Karen refugee community at large by interviewees. In these conversations, interviewees acknowledged their need for the support of the

UNHCR and NGOs operating in the camp, while also bitterly criticizing the effect that their over-determining force has on their ability to make choices and find meaning in their daily lives. In an interview, one in-service teacher pointedly commented on organizations operating in the camp and exerting their managerial power: "for humanitarian organizations, they can be so inhuman" (Individual interview with Participant 20). However, alternative perspectives that noted the more positive aspects of humanitarian organizations and NGOs were also heard in interviews. One such example is a student who expressed a feeling of immense thankfulness for the presence of such organizations – even while hinting that they might commonly be seen as imperfect by camp residents – because without their aid, they and other refugees would be in an even worse situation.

> I just think that if there is no organization … especially like NGO, if there is no Save the Children, we cannot get any education. If there is no TBC, we cannot get food or shelter. When I was a child, I remember that we didn't have any books to study, any pencil, any eraser… Thanks to God for all the organizations! UNHCR too, right? I am so grateful for that. Because they came to help us, we can get education (Feb 3, 2020, Individual interview with Participant 12).

Meanwhile, the same student also expressed the limit of this help. He went on to discuss how all the education they had received, which they were so grateful for, pointed to an uncertain outcome. This is due to the lack of accreditation of colleges in the camp that forecloses opportunities for students after graduation. There are few opportunities for work in the camp, and it is not generally possible for residents to leave to find work or seek further educational opportunities outside

the camp. The students who were attending the post-ten college level institutes after high schools explained their conundrum with sincerity and openness, stating:

> After graduating from this college, I just plan to further my study in music. But where? There is no university where I have decided to go, because [there is] no more [financial] supporter … no one to encourage me (Feb 3, 2020, Individual interview with Participant 12).

As the student expressed, lack of funding for further education is a significant barrier, but so is lack of legal documentation for many camp residents to leave the camp for more advanced study, and just as significantly, lack of accreditation for schools in the camp that makes it difficult for students to gain acceptance to educational or professional opportunities outside the camp in the first place. In this context, education in the Mae La community, that is provided 'for' refugees tend to influence the discourses in refugees' future under the complex predicaments and the mixed rationales by the diverse actors including the Thai government, the international NGOs and the Karen CBOs. The Thai government's restrictions reflecting its standpoints with temporariness and minimalist intervention have set a range of rules. For example, school buildings in the camp may only be constructed using temporary materials like bamboo and eucalyptus. An individual interview with one of the in-service Karen refugee teachers who spent her entire life in Mae La since the camp was established as a temporary shelter, describes that education has long been provided on the humanitarian ground.

> What is important here is how we view the situation … temporary or permanent. Since the beginning, Thailand is not a signatory to the Refugee Convention, so the status of refugee camp is still officially a temporary shelter up until today. But these camps have been here for almost my whole life, nearly 40 years already. They still call it temporary by the external definition. Thai government has been very tolerant toward Karen refugees, not forcing repatriation only. However, it became home for me, and many students who are born here. For us, it is not temporary at all (February 7, 2020, Individual interview with Participant 9).

According to many teacher trainers and teachers under the management of KRCEE, education has been provided for refugees as an immediate need in emergency situation, like food and shelter. She expressed there is a strong dilemma for teachers on how to motivate the students in the camp to pursue education for a better future, when their learning environment carries a strong connotation of temporariness. She shared her opinion that substantive solutions for the daily struggles of the Karen refugee teachers with this on-going dilemma must be treated as a priority by the external actors in order to properly meet the local needs.

> It is getting harder these days. Before, in the refugee camp, the food rations cut and all the stuff… 1000 baht a month for teachers is just a subsidy for them. Enough for just to buy something extra they need. But now they call it a salary and they have to use this little amount of money to pay for their living cost. It is almost impossible. It is getting harder for the teachers to survive. Especially

the teachers who have their own children to look after (May 19, 2019, Individual interview with Participant 10).

For the locals who unexpectedly end up in the camp for the long term, education is generally regarded as the only remaining hope to sustain their normalcy in everyday life. Therefore, education is to give something more than a basic right in exile – for example, learning how to read and write – as in other societies. Throughout the protracted period of their displacement, education plays the role of increasing the consistency of their social and cultural identity. Despite this importance of education for ordinary people, various actors that consist pseudo-state for the refugees in the camp, have different rationales for education, and this creates tensions both inside and outside the community. Although many external actors from outside the community seldomly visit the field, they have long been adopting a rights-based approach to provide education programs based on the 'medical model' (Waters & Leblanc, 2005). A teacher trainer from KRCEE emphasized the issue of brain drain in quality teaching staff due to the teaching environment that is neither temporary nor permanent in the camp. While teachers struggle with extremely low pay, which they regard as 'subsidy' rather than 'salary', KRCEE can only seek for voluntary sacrifice for the community in order to ensure that they have enough teachers and trainers needed for the schools.

We cannot control the reality and the political problems and the economic situation. Every day, they are trying to squeeze our neck, you know. Food ration, not enough. Income, not enough. Some people quit their job and look after their family first. Only to survive. The other day, an NGO came with us for a

project. They gave more higher salary. People who work in education field, they apply for more money. So, we tend to lose our quality staff. We had to recruit a new staff. Even though we recruit, people don't want to apply. In this environment, even though we want to maintain quality education, we cannot maintain. So, we try to maintain our system just to sustain whatever is available (May 19, 2019, Individual interview with Participant 10).

From focus group interviews with in-service teachers at a middle school in Mae La (Participants 11 to 15), it was reported that "low income" is their most urgent concern, which makes it "hard to continue their teaching job". Trainers and administrators at KRCEE agreed that the low income is a major challenge, but they could only encourage teachers to continue their job by comparing with the past that was in a worse situation. They learn to conform to the challenging environment in order to sustain their educational system, like the ways they want to sustain their temporary shelters and food rations. Over a prolonged period of being dependent on external sanction and aid, they rather develop cultural silence with fear of losing whatever they have left. It indicates how the influential educational leaders in the camp community can certainly create or maintain a 'culture of silence' without consciousness.

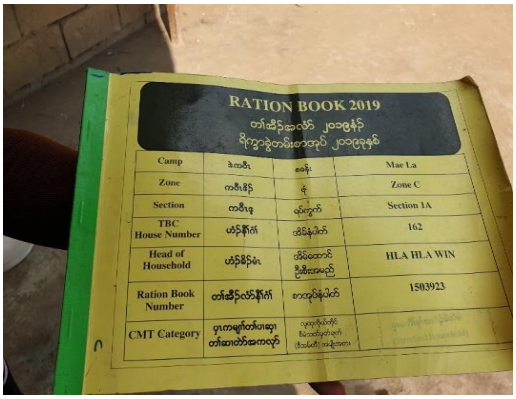
We can only imitate and copy the work from our previous leader at KRCEE. At every head teacher and principal meeting, Tharamu D used to say that "When I was a teacher, we didn't even get paid for 100 baht per month. But still, we tried to commit ourselves to the community and contribute to education for

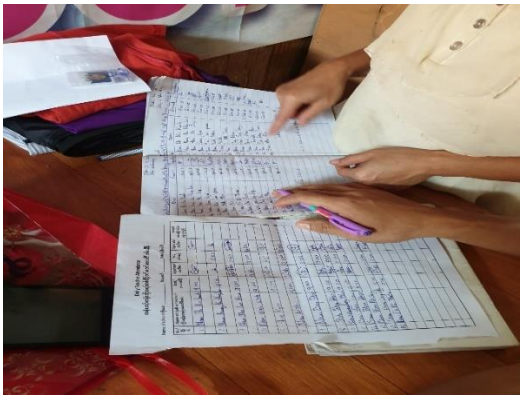
our children. We don't work for money. We have to look after our generation. So in this time, you guys have to think about that too. Sometimes you will face a lot of problems, but you have to try your best and stand on your own." When we go and train our in-service teachers in the camp, we say this too. We do not know other ways to encourage our teachers (May 19, 2019, Individual interview with Participant 10).

Numerous in-service teachers shared their concerns not only about the low teacher salary but the external view on them. A teacher who worked for more than 12 years at a middle school shared her concern that the teachers are highly valued by the refugee communities, while lack of proper government – replaced by the external stakeholders as pseudo-state – result in the lack of proper welfare. Indeed, Photo 10 shows that the ways they receive teacher salary can be regarded as very similar to the ways they receive food rations.

TBC should come to school, instead of students and teachers all have to go to the Food Store. The system must change. We are interrupted in many ways like this. But we don't really have much choice, do we? We struggle with extremely low salary. We usually call it a subsidy rather than a salary amongst ourselves. I understand this situation because we do not have our own governing body. But the bigger problem is I think the ways we are given this money. We have to put signature next to our names and the principal must report to the OCEE for their record to share with NGOs. Just like how we receive food rations for free (May 21, 2019, Individual interview with Participant 9).

[Photo 10] Food Ration Book (left) and Teacher Salary Payment Book (right)





Source: Author (photographed on May 21, 2019)

Photo 11 also shows the in-service teachers who are at the Food Ration Day to receive food supply from CCSDPT. All residents of the camp must be present on the day at the distribution office with their ration book. They can pick up their food only after officer in charge checks the family photos and names in the ration book. This practice is no exception for the in-service teachers. Hence, all schools in the camp dismiss early that day so the teachers can also be present at the Food Ration Day with the family members.

[Photo 11] Teachers and others on Food Ration Day

Source: Author (photographed on May 21, 2019)

While the Thai government has been approaching the refugee issue through "a relatively low-key, low-publicity affair, managed and negotiated by local refugee committees and their NGO counterparts" (Lang, 2002d, p. 91), the Karen refugees' community ownership in terms of contents and delivery of education system has been strengthened over time. On the other hand, the international NGOs act like a like 'Pseudo-State' (Waters & Leblanc, 2005) by providing the project-based funding and deeply influencing the ways in which the camp schools operate. Although the Karen refugee communities and organizations have staffed and managed their own education throughout the protracted period, the concept of education 'for' refugees often perceives the refugee teachers and students as objects of humanitarian and development interventions.

4.1.5 Purpose of Schooling conceptualized 'for' Refugees: *"Is Education to prepare Resettle, Return, or Remain?"*

On the humanitarian ground, to think of education as a right for refugee children – within the modern construction of citizenship –two important questions can be raised: who can secure this right and who is obliged to secure this right? In the view of education 'for' refugees in Mae La, refugee learners and teachers are found to be exposed to a significant gap between the state and non-state systems in the rapidly changing and unstable architecture of pseudo-state. This pseudo-state consists international NGOs, CBOs, and Thai government which influence the communities with different level of interventions. Ultimately, it is heavily influenced by the global governance, which indirectly supports for integration toward nation-state system as a durable solution.

On the other hand, according to my daily observations and countless informal conversations in the camp, the refugees in Mae La do not imagine their near future in Myanmar. Thus, they have no intention to comply with the current durable solution of 'voluntary repatriation'. It is because questions remain about whether the conditions in their home villages – a conflict zone for many decades – have improved indeed for their return. Aside from worries that the landmines planted throughout the constant fighting have still to be cleared, they are seriously concerned about limited access to basic services such as education, health and livelihood opportunities. Reclaiming the land that they previously owned seems almost impossible for them.

In this spirit, overlapping sources of authority in education sector operate with divergent visions and priorities for the Karen refugee community. The humanitarian relief focuses only on the immediate and outward crisis, not considering structural issues within its broader politics. Hence, education provided 'for' refugees – the citizens of a stateless nation – position the refugees' lives in neither permanent nor temporary view. It is noteworthy that the global governance in refugee education has attempted to change from its humanitarian relief approach to development approach (Mendenhall, 2014). However, the idea of education is still understood under the traditional development paradigm, as to produce what is relevant for the market or what is to be consumed. Accordingly, the lack of a wider society and market for the camp residents' results in the total lack of consensus for both external and internal actors regarding the end goal of education 'for' refugees. It means that the design and provision of education are surrounded by questions of purpose that are tremendously difficult to answer (McCarthy & Vickers, 2012). What should education prepare children and young people for?

Should it prepare for their resettlement to a third country, a return to Myanmar, or a remain in a protracted refugee situation? What should education prepare children for if they are prohibited from leaving the camp and taking up employment in Thailand (Oh, 2012a)? Attempting to answer these questions is extremely challenging in the current state of limbo. Coupled with a lack of accreditation, it leads to a crisis of meaning for schools, teachers, and learners in the refugee camp while it is sustained under the pseudo-state system.

To make refugee education more sustainable merely by attracting donor funds for continuation of the refugee assistance project-based programs, many external actors continue to adopt a Eurocentric perspective by seeing education in its economic sense. However, drawing on Freirean point of view, it is essential to regard the refugee learners as co-creator of knowledge that is grounded in life experiences, against the idea of putting knowledge to learners through objectification. This is supported by a prominent post-development theorist, Escobar, who also asserts it is the community itself that sustains and continues to grow despite various challenging circumstances (Escobar, 2012, 2015). To have the refugee voices heard and to encourage refugees' participation, various stakeholders involved in providing education 'for' refugees must expand the scope of refugee education. Building on insights of from a Karen refugee community leader, this consensus is needed regarding the ways to bring freedom through a problem-posing education instead of banking education (Freire, 1970).

> The objective of education is to safeguard fundamental human values… What is most important here is not safeguarding against boundaries, not inserting controls, but it is about freedom that leads to coordinated efforts towards,

> what Freire calls, a 'problem-posing' lifestyle that supports positive social change. The world is not a motionless, static, compartmentalized and predictable fact. Thus, education has to be problem-posing in both content and delivery and has to counter the 'colonizing forces' of authoritarian educators who do not encourage their students to challenge or confront social injustices, but to accept without questioning. Problem posing encourages students to perceive the world critically. Our world is not a 'static reality' but is constantly undergoing an ever-changing process of transformation (March 1, 2020, Individual interview with Participant 2).

To conclude, education 'for' the refugees in the camp appears "outwardly open and consensual but is in fact managed by unaccountable elites" (Kapoor, 2013, p. 1). It appears as awkwardly structured by the pseudo-State comprising global governance, national jurisdiction, and local management. The top-down development paradigm that perceives refugee education merely as an emergency endeavour on the humanitarian ground is easily rationalized. Within this context, it is difficult to understand the dynamics of power in the structure of refugee education in Mae La camp. Through depoliticization– "the removal of public scrutiny and debate" (Kapoor, 2013, p. 3) – the issues of social justice are transformed into technocratic matters to be resolved by coordinators, 'experts', or in this case, humanitarian and development NGOs. Consequently, when they speak for the Mae La refugee community on various educational challenges – such as the limited link between education and employment, lack of sustainability in funding and management, lack of consensus for the student future – they tend to

act as ‘witnesses’ on behalf of refugee ‘victims’. They reduce the refugee community members as ‘other’ and into ‘passive bystander’, unilaterally representing the needs and desires. Similarly, when the spectacle of humanitarian relief ends up valuing the crisis’s outwardly visible aspects, it tends to divert public attention away from the long-term and structural causes. All such instances are depoliticizing because it is easy to eliminate disagreement and conflict between various stakeholders, thereby upholding both a top-down politics and the status-quo. To develop more holistic understanding on the purpose of refugee education and how it is shaped, sustained and conceptualized in the refugee community of Mae La, it is essential to also explore the perspective of the refugee stakeholders. Focusing on the refugee-led institutions and leadership, next chapter conceptualize refugee education as education ‘of’ and ‘by’ refugees dealing with the internal stakeholders’ voices.

4.2 Education 'By' Refugees in Mae La: Towards Subjectification

To obtain a holistic understanding in how the purpose of schooling is shaped, sustained and conceptualized in the refugee community of Mae La, it is critical to further explore from the following two points of view. It is essential to explore initially what education means to the Karen refugees themselves, that is education 'of' refugees. With the historical understanding of why education is important to them, it is also worth exploring how they attempt to play subjective role in its implementing process, that is education 'by' refugees. To do so, this chapter describes and reflects on Karen history to look for answers to why education remains so critically important to many Karen refugees in exile. As previously mentioned, academics and practitioners in the field of refugee education tend to associate the refugee learners and teachers with deficient perspective having to depend on others. However, from this chapter onward, I focus on the different strategies and rhetorical arguments – and the ideological notions that underpinned them – adopted by the Karen in their formal and informal petitions for recognition and nationhood (Garbagni & Walton, 2020).

4.2.1 Historical Contextualization of the Karen Refugees: Yearning for "*a land without evil*"

The term 'Karen' refers primarily to people residing in southern and south-eastern Myanmar and can include several individual Sino-Tibetan language-speaking ethnic groups. There is certainly internal diversity in 'the Karen' but broadly speaking, the Karen are categorized as an ethnic group, comprising the second largest ethnic minority in Myanmar, with population estimates varying

from 5 to 10 million, accounting for approximately 7% of Myanmar's total population (Perkins, 2019; South, 2011).

To understand what education means to the Karen refugees in protracted displacement, it goes all the way back to the history of Karen nation – as a prominent ethnic group in British colonial period – explaining education 'of' Karen refugees. During the British period, elites from hill-tribe ethnic groups such as the Karen came under the patronage of Christian missionaries and state administrators. While the ethnic strife existed over hundreds of years, the British colonial practices further divided the numerous ethnic minorities and caused the unequal distinctions by favouring certain groups, such as the Karen, for positions in the military and in local rural administrations. In consequence, towards the end of and immediately after the Second World War, the ethnic majority Burman sentiment turned against the Karen, because the Karen were perceived to be tightly associated with the British colonial rulers (Lall 2016). As Charles Keyes (2003) stated, the Karen are "an invention of the modern world, a product of Christian missionization, colonial and postcolonial ethnographic research, and policies regarding ethnic minorities adopted by the governments of independent Burma and Thailand" (Keyes, 2003, p. 210). In the following paragraph, the Karen history is narrated in the Karen refugee leader's voice, which I found on the wall of a post-10 college level bible school in Mae La refugee camp:

> We, the Karen people, possess all the attributes of a nation. Our population is more than eight million. We have our own culture, history, tradition and literature. We have our own national anthem and national flag. Our national flag bears the rising sun and a bronze drum. The drum on our national flag …

signifies prosperity, unity and cooperation. The rising sun signifies the rise of the Karen people for progress and dignity. The red colour signifies 'courage', the white colour signifies 'integrity' and the blue colour signifies the 'honest' and royal character of the Karen people (March 1, 2020, Observation).

[Photo 12] Karen National Flag proudly held by a Karen Refugee Student (left) School Graduation decorated with Karen National Colours and Flags (right)

Source: Author (photographed on March 13, 2020)

During the colonial era of British rule – from 1824 to 1948 – while the colonial state removed all traditional power structures and established a rationalized system of government, British favoured the Karen for many military and administrative posts (Jolliffe, 2016). During World War II, the Karen even assisted and fought alongside the British armies against Japanese forces. This was because the "British had promised to help form an independent Karen state" in return (Individual interview with Participant 2). However, after the Japanese defeated the British in 1942, "the Japanese and the puppet regime they installed fostered reprisals against the Karen" (Delang, 2003, p. 213). Afterwards, the British abandoned Karen nationalist interests as the Burmese began to work

toward total independence from Britain.

In 1947, the Union of Burma was created and became the first post-colonial government, as the agreement was made by the Burmese government and representatives from minority groups of Burma, namely the Chin, Shan and Kachin (Perkins, 2019). At this very moment, the signatories from other ethnic groups, most prominently the Karen and Rohingya were excluded. In the same year, the Karen National Union (KNU) was established by a group of the educated Karen nationalist leaders including lawyers and politicians (Jolliffe, 2016).

In January 1949, the KNU declared war against the Burmese central government following military attacks on Karen communities (Israelsen, 2019). This is when "the conflict had officially begun between the Karen and Burma" (Individual interview with Participant 13). Up until today, the Karen communities celebrate this day as 'Karen Revolution Day' when the KNU officially declared the formation of the Karen State known as *Kawthoolei* (Perkins, 2019). Up to now, it has been forming "a significant aspect of the Karen independence narrative" (March 10, 2020, Individual interview with Participant 2).

[Photo 13] Karen Refugees at Karen Revolution Day Celebration in Karen State

Source: Author (accessed from interviewees on January 28, 2020)

The 1960s marked the beginning of an escalated and brutal phase of the Burmese military's tactics in suppressing dissenting ethnic minority groups with systematic removal of local governance in ethnic states. Most notably, in the mid-1960s, the regime has implemented the famously known 'four-cut strategy' for the armed ethnic groups including Karen communities. Through relentless military harassment, it aimed to cut off the four essential areas: food, finance, intelligence, and recruits (Ferguson, 2014; Smith, 1991).

In 1988, a new military regime took power for the Burmese government (Jolliffe, 2016; Lang, 2002a; Perkins, 2019). While the KNU continued to resist against the Burmese, the uprising of student democracy activists, protesters and politicians in central Myanmar later fled to KNU controlled areas seeking refuge. It has placed the KNU's position as the leading opposition group against the Burmese military regime. The KNU operated as a "*de facto* government and quasi state within South-eastern Burma" (Perkins, 2019, p. 13) comprising its own army, townships, hospitals and schools.

Up until today, the KNU operates in sections of Karen state, the Thai borderlands and various outposts in remote areas near the refugee camps. Recently in 2015, the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) was signed by the KNU and several other ethnic opposition groups for a ceasefire deal with Myanmar's military-backed civilian government. Nevertheless, the Karen in Myanmar have long suffered forced migration due to various forms of severe violence in their villages (Karen Human Rights Group, 2009). Despite of the NCA, the Karen refugees do not feel safe to go back to Burma and they are left with the only option residing in the camps along the border. Karen leadership members in the borderland stated that their protracted life in the camps are vulnerable with

uncertain future, however, emphasizing it is a false hope that the life is less vulnerable in Burma.

> For us to say that you will have better opportunity when you come back to Burma from the camps, that will be a false hope. We don't want to give false hope or guarantee to the camp residents. If we guarantee them something and encourage, it will be us lying to them (February 9, 2020, Individual interview with Participant 6).

> From the perspective of Karen refugee community, it's not only about going back to Burma right away. It is not ready. Before the children go back, they are here. We are more concerned about how to keep our own identity while we are here through our system. This is why education is critical (January 19, 2020, Individual interview with Participant 2).

At present, under the name of *Kawthoolei* – literally meaning 'a land without evil' in the language of Sqaw Karen – Karen people still consider themselves as a nation without modern-state (Yeo et al., 2020). By my research participants predominantly representing Christian Karen, *Kawthoolei* is imagined as a pleasant, plentiful and peaceful country. However, it has a double meaning and can also be rendered as the land burnt black; hence the land that must be fought for (Smith, 1991). The following lyrics of the Karen national anthem that Karen refugee students sing at a middle school's weekly assembly in the camp represent how *Kawthoolei* is described as a blessed land yearning for a freedom.

My Karen the blessed land I want to sing and praise to you.
The valley and the mountains are beautiful how can I say?
I love the Bamboos and clean streams all of your beauties,
I want to give my soul for you, My Kawthoolei the blessed land,
all of your beauty I love and I give my soul to you
The sand rivers, for my people who their live in Kawthoolei,
all of your beauties I love and I give my soul to you
Our ancestors they loved the freedom
They are now defeated by Burmese government.
They are now running away from Kawthoolei, with their children
now our land is for another people
long time ago, Kawthoolei was our land
(January 19, 2020, Observation)

Within this historical context, the Karen educational leadership under the pseudo-State system shaped and sustained their own educational institutes such as the KECD and KRCEE. Despite the lack of formal recognition, they did not give up their own attempt to run 'formal' type of education within their own community and they obtained a strong belief that education means everything to their existence (Observation in conversations and staff meeting). In response to the military regime's suppression and "Burmanisation" of national culture, Karen ethnic group sought to develop separate education systems to preserve and reproduce their identities and cultures (Lall, 2016). They came from civil society, and, from religious associations. With an influx of external support after the 1988

democracy uprising in Myanmar, non-state education provision expanded, leading to an extensive ethno-nationalist-oriented school system running parallel to the official state system (Lall & South, 2014).

When I asked them persistently why education particularly means so much to them, they often shared their common view that it is to build a modern Karen society and that this would be achieved when more people had attained high quality education. They desire "to have more educated people with university-level qualifications" so that they would "have the skills and knowledge to build a developed society on their own" (Focus Group Interview with Participant 1, 13, and 21). These same sentiments are spread out and echoed by overall educational stakeholders in the camp community including teachers and administrators, as well as parents and students.

4.2.2 Educational Endeavour shaped by Karen Refugee Community

Considering the present educational circumstances in the community of Mae La, the rationale behind education tends to be oriented towards the distant future. There are no jobs available to the refugees in the Thai society except those which are menial and illegal while the number of jobs in the camps is also very limited (Oh, 2012a). Within this unique context, it is significant that the Karen refugee leaders and members in Mae La have robust aspirations of an advanced society in the future. They undoubtedly believe that this future will come about through the educational endeavour towards attainment of high levels of formal education.

It is known that since 1980s, the Karen refugees set up their own livelihoods including schools and hospitals by adopting the village structures that they had

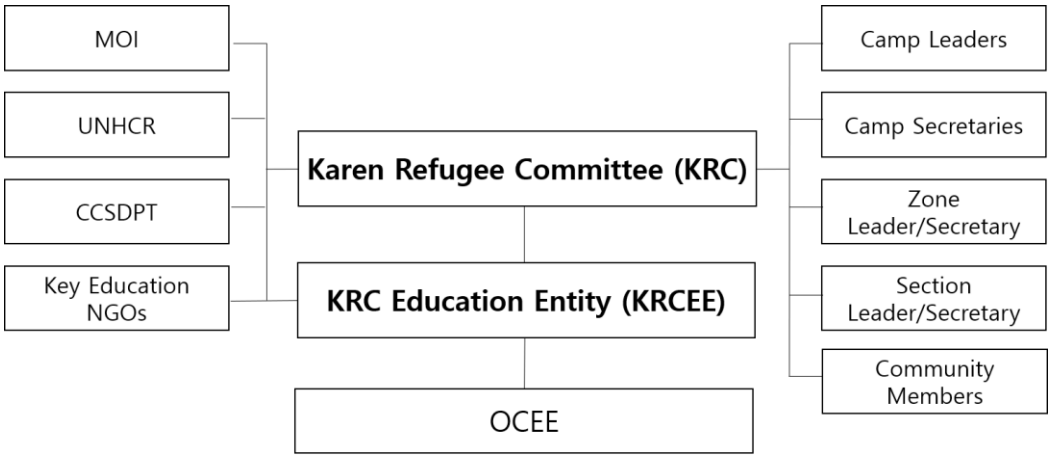
employed in the Karen State on the other side of the border. The community within the camp setting has also maintained and developed a system of indigenous administration with camp leaders, committees, zones and sections reflecting the traditional structure of village management within the Karen state (Lang, 2002d). With this root, alongside the Thai government that continues to take a stance providing minimal commitment while the international NGOs provide educational assistance with temporary views, the community's aspirations for quality education have grown consistently, "oriented towards Karen identity and nation building" (Individual interview with Participant 22). In this sense, the protracted nature of the refugee crisis did not lead the community to passively rely on the external assistance merely, but it gave a room to the community to take their own initiatives. Figure 8 below presents a structure of education coordination illustrated from the community's point of view. In contrast to Figure 7, which was illustrated from the perspective that education is provided 'for' refugees by external assistance in chapter 4.1.2, the KRCEE is placed in the centre of education coordination in Figure 8. An education coordinator from the KRC emphasizes:

> KRCEE as a main education authority managing schools in the camp belongs to the KRC that is voted by the camp committees and members, not only funded and sustained by the NGOs from outside (January 11, 2020, Individual interview with Participant 1).

The KRCEE is the education department of the KRC. The KRC was formed by the Karen in 1984 to administer the refugee population (Lang, 2002). Up until this moment, the KRC remains the main administrative body through which

assistance is provided. On the other hand, the KRCEE was only established in 2008. It took over from the Karen Education Department (now KECD), which is the department of education of the KNU, the government in exile (Oh, 2012a). Initially, the KECD had overall responsibility for the administration of schools in the refugee camps as well as education in the Karen State in Burma. At present, the KRCEE operates freely in camps and as they have taken over KECD policies on education. The KECD is now only responsible for education in Karen State. However, according to the education coordinator and secretary from the KRCEE and KECD respectively, they are "still intimately connected to each other" and "considering we have the same root, sharing the staff members, and using the same contents of Karen education curriculum" (January, 12, 2020, Individual interviews with Participant 1 and 6).

[Figure 8] Structure of Education Coordination from the Community's view



CCSDPT – Coordinating Committee for Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand
MOI – Ministry of Interior, Thailand
OCEE – Office of Camp Education Entity
UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Source: Author

Camp education committees are centring around the KRCEE and OCEE. As shown in Figure 7, they are nominated and elected by the community. They are "mostly Christian Sgaw Karen-speaking elites and they make important decisions about the management of camp education resources and coordination" (Individual interview with Participant 1). While the administrative structures in education is dominated by Christian Sgaw Karen-speaking elites, these stakeholders make important decisions about the management of camp education resources and coordination. Thus, from the Karen refugee community's point of view, the education in the camps is perceived as managed and controlled by the Karen leadership in accordance with their beliefs and values about what constitutes identity formation in schools. This is done in collaboration with the NGOs and CBOs working for educational assistance along the border. A school calendar hanging on the wall of primary and secondary schools in the camp displays the KRCEE's vision statement, mission and objectives as follows:

> [Vision Statement] To build up true lasting peace and justice by producing graduates who are critical and creative thinkers, competent learners, good citizens and proud of their identity.
>
> [Mission and Objectives] To serve and represent the Karen refugees, temporarily sheltering along the Thai-Burma border, through providing education services in areas of basic education and tertiary education to refugee students and children. Towards this end, KRCEE will strive to:

1. Serve as the policy and implementation mechanism for education for Karen refugees in the fields of basic education and tertiary education by providing education information, resource collection and centres dissemination.
2. Provide or enhance education service and support in Karen refugee camps.
3. Set up educational policies and codes of conduct for educational personnel.
4. Solicit and receive fund raising for educational services and policies for Karen refugees.

(January 30, 2020, Observation)

Education 'of' Karen refugees – revealing what education means to them – highlights that education from the community's point of view is not just limited to the development of young people for employment purposes. Instead, the content and form of education that they refer as 'Karen education' are intimately tied up "notions of identity" (Individual interview with Participant 2) and are thus mired in political sensitivities. In the effort to provide schooling to Karen children displaced by war and conflict, refugee communities, international NGOs, and host governments face challenging questions about what is to be taught and how it is to be taught (Sommers, 2002). The choices are to be made in terms of what language is to be used, what version of history is to be taught, what type of teaching and learning activities are to be considered as appropriate. Waters and Leblanc (2005) who wrote *Refugees and education: Mass public school without a nation-state* also state that "these are big questions, often going to the root of

seemingly intractable political problems. Whose history, language, music or literature is taught in primary school" (Waters & Leblanc, 2005, p. 1). Indeed, it has much to do with expressions of power, according to my research participant working as a teacher trainer from KRCEE:

> It is all about the ownership. 'This is our school, so this is our way of teaching our children'. It was the spirit that teachers had in the past. But after a long time living in the camp and working with NGOs, some teachers changed their perspectives because everything is to do with requirement of the donors. They might even say "Okay, I am working for the NGO instead of KRCEE or KRC". As the refugee crisis is being protracted, some people may change their thinking over time. But the fact is that we represent the community and we make choices on behalf of the community, not only to meet the guidelines given by the NGOs (March 20, 2020, Individual interview with Participant 10).

The community efforts to take the ownership in sustaining quality education in the camp are demonstrated in their establishment of the tertiary level education. Numerous post-12 schools in the camp are "funded and managed independently by the community charity and alumni contribution" (Individual interview with Participant 22). Although these college level institutes are not officially accredited by the state systems outside the camp, they certainly fill the gap for high school graduates in the camp. Without external accreditation, they are formed and sustained internally and independently "by the community effort" (Individual interview with Participant 23). They are often financially assisted by informal

religious donations from outside (Individual interview with Participant 24). The existence of these institutes within the camp community enable the community to hope for a better future beyond temporary view associated with clustered and singular image of refugee identity.

4.2.3 Refugee schooling sustained with "*a Point of Pride and Karen Identity*"

With the understanding of the Karen refugees' historical background prior to displacement as well as their educational endeavour and ownership during exile, the following question is raised: From the internal stakeholders' point of view, what are the key essential values and knowledge that learners need to develop through education in the protracted refugee situation?

[Table 13] Karen Education Curriculum Framework: Principles

Principles
1. Education is one of the principles means available to reduce poverty, exclusion, ignorance, oppression and war. "Leaning to be" and "learning to live together" are essential if students are to open their minds to a culture of peace.
2. Education shall aim towards unity among Karen people, with an emphasis on maintaining and preserving its own traditions.
3. Education shall aim to ensure that equal rights and opportunities are available to all learners.
4. Education shall encourage not only good examination results but also equip young people for active citizenship, commitment to lifelong learning and prepare them for progression into further education and work.
5. Education shall aim to build up learners' decision-making skills, cooperative spirit and respect for each other's ideas, with the hope of raising supportive and cooperative members of the community.
6. The curriculum shall aim to promote diversity and multicultural education, and the mental and physical development of learners.

Source: KRCEE (2008)

The curriculum used by Karen schools in the refugee camps on the Thai border is different from that used by the schools in Karen State run by the Myanmar government, and the ones used by the local schools run by Thai Ministry of Education. According to an education coordinator at KRCEE, "the camp's education system rooted from Karen education prior to independence but it has been standardized since 2008, with new curricula at KRCEE and KED (now KECD) being designed by Karen education stakeholders and supported by international NGO called ZOA at that time providing services to refugee education" (Individual interview with Participant 1). According to the 'Integrated Curriculum Framework 2008' that is the most recent official Karen education curriculum document utilized by KRCEE and KECD, the Karen schools in the camp are guided to work in collaboration with families, the local community, voluntary groups and local and international agencies, in seeking to achieve the following six broad principles (KRCEE, 2008), as shown in Table 13. It provides an essential context for the school curriculum.

The schooling system in the camp is unique in a way that primary schools cover Grade 1 to 6, middle schools cover Grade 1 to 9, and high schools cover all the way from Grade 1 to 12. Throughout the schooling, Sgaw Karen is used as a main language of instruction. Burmese language is taught as a separate subject, as is English. Only a few schools teach Thai language as an extra-curricular subject. Overall, there are eight subjects taught in the camp schools: Karen language, English language, Burmese language, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Health & Physical Education, and Thai language (optional). According to my research participants who are involved in teaching and administration of the Karen refugees, "the unique feature and characteristics of Karen education is actually

history”(Individual interview with Participant 6) and the “curriculum contents of the Social Studies” (Focus Group Interview with Participants 9, 25, 26, 27, and 28). Knowledge and skills for Karen refugee students to acquire and develop in the subject of Social Studies are described in the learning standards that are used as criteria in seven areas in Table 14.

[Table 14] Karen Education Curriculum: Strands and Standards for Social Studies for Grade 1 - 12

Subject: Social Studies		
Strand 1: History	Standard 1.1	Students understand that peoples’ actions and values are shaped by their understanding and interpretation of the past.
	Standard 1.2	Students understand the Karen historical record including important events in Karen history and the development of the Karen nation in order to foster a sense of pride in being Karen and living a Karen life.
	Standard 1.3	Students are able to apply their knowledge of the wider historical context while analysing and interpreting specific historical events.
	Standard 1.4	Students have a broad knowledge of world history and are able to analyse it in a meaningful way.
Strand 2: Geography	Standard 2.1	Students learn about the natural forms of the local, regional and global landscape, including natural resources.
	Standard 2.2	Students are able to understand and use the main tools in geography such as maps, sketches, photo, models, tables, graphs and survey.
	Standard 2.3	Students learn about the local, regional and global variations in culture and politics and the social relationships between them and are able to compare and contrast the situation among them; able to view our world closely from different points of view and aware of what is happening around the world.
	Standard 2.4	Students are able to master the skills of observation, inquiring, classifying, recording, interpretation and communication.
Strand 3: Social relation, culture and religion	Standard 3.1	Students demonstrate their knowledge of and about social structure at the family level, local level, and regional community level and at the universal level and are able to compare traditions and cultures from around the world to their own.

	Standard 3.2	Students understand the value of Karen traditions and preserve them in order to participate as a meaningful member of the Karen community.
	Standard 3.3	Students learn and demonstrate their understanding of the formation of major religions, their particular characteristics, benefits, and teachings, and the important role religions play in maintaining society.
	Standard 3.4	Students understand the diversity of and interactions between cultures, beliefs and practices in the past and present, including changing patterns of work and family structures.
	Standard 3.5	Students demonstrate the qualities of responsible citizens by participating in social life and politics and by understanding the role of a constitution.
	Standard 3.6	Students understand their rights and responsibilities in a democratic society.
Strand 4: Economics	Standard 4.1	Students understand and demonstrate their knowledge of the interdependence of the communities in striving to meet the four basic needs of: food, shelter, medicine and clothing. Students use this understanding to explain concepts of resources, scarcity and shortage.
	Standard 4.2	Students understand economic institutions, economic systems and cooperation between economies at the individual, community, national and international level.
	Standard 4.3	Students understand the nature and scope of politics and the influence of economic ideologies.
Strand 5: Environment	Standard 5.1	[Physical Environment] Students are able to identify the characteristics of the natural physical environment and able to pose questions, listening to the ideas of others, and contributing their own information or ideas in group discussion or interview.
	Standard 5.2	[Human Environment] Students are able to identify the characteristics of the human environment and able to pose questions, listening to the ideas of others, and contributing their own information or ideas in group discussion or interview.
	Standard 5.3	[Connections between Human and Physical] Students are able to identify and describe a variety of connections between the human and the natural physical environment and able to create diagram, charts and drawing.
	Standard 5.4	[Problems with the Environment] Students are able to identify and describe a variety of environmental problems, their causes and their impact on human society.
	Standard 5.5	[Solutions with the Environment] Students are able to participate in solutions which improve the quality of the environment.

Strand 6: Civil society and governance	Standard 6.1	Students understand their system of governance and the role they have to play.
	Standard 6.2	Students understand political institutions, political systems and cooperation between groups of people at the individual, community, national and international level.
Strand 7: Modern Studies	Standard 7.1	Students are able to apply their knowledge of history, geography, social relationships, culture and religion, civil society and governance, and the environment to issues and events in the modern world.

Source: KRCEE (2008)

For history, Standard 1.2 clearly states that students in the camp need to particularly understand "Karen historical record including important events in Karen history and the development of the Karen nation in order to foster a sense of pride in being Karen and living a Karen life" (KRCEE, 2008, p. 24). For social relation, culture and religion standard 3.2, they are expected to "understand the value of Karen traditions and preserve them in order to participate as a meaningful member of the Karen community" (KRCEE, 2008, p. 25). Many of my research participants who are students and teachers in the camp schools frequently expressed that they are lucky to access Karen education because it is "only possible in the camp schools" (Individual interviews with Participant 10, 12, 13, 19 and 20). A Karen education coordinator from KRC also states:

> (Contents of history subject taught in the camp schools) … This is not something that schools in Karen State run by the Myanmar government provide, as history there is perceived differently from the Karen and takes precedent in government schools of Myanmar (January 29, 2020, Individual interview with Participant 1).

This creates two different understandings of Myanmar and Karen history, much of which is contradictory (Metro 2006). The insistence on using Sgaw Karen as the language of instruction and the teaching of Karen history and social sciences prove their efforts to create and propagate a nationalist identity. This is important in understanding the purpose of Karen education and schooling in the camp. According to reoccurring narratives of strong Karen identity heard from research participants who are parents and teachers residing in the camp, it is also highlighted that Karen refugees view their education as a point of pride and a last resort for sustaining national identity. Despite the absence of a modern state system for Karen nation – and even of physical territory in the case of displaced persons – Karen refugees sustain their language, history, and culture through the practice of education during exile. Illustrative of this sentiment that was widely expressed by those I spoke with, the former head of the KECD states:

> The students, camp populations, are the national hope for Karen … Our focus in Karen education is to educate our young generation to become caring and competent citizens … to be part of their society and maintain their culture. I cannot express enough how important it is. For us, we strongly believe that without maintaining our culture, heritage, language, through education for young generation, three is a threat that Karen people will be demolished or vanished from the country. Because the aggression that we face, from other ethnic nationalities, especially from the Burmese, it is very real to us; that if we don't prevent that, we will easily be wiped out, all generations (May 28, 2019, Individual interview with Participant 15).

In consequence, not only the education leaders, teachers and parents, but the students in the camp also internalize this value system and regard education as a point of pride. A dialogue with a group of Karen refugee students about their previous educational experiences prior to arriving in Mae La camp demonstrates how the government schools in Myanmar focus heavily on rote-learning, and ethnic minorities are excluded.

Researcher: What do you mean that education in the camp is better than the education outside?

Participant 16: Before I came here, when I went to school in Brigade 1, Karen State (in Myanmar), I didn't learn much. Just read and memorize everything.

Participant 17: Similar in Brigade 4, I went to Myanmar government school there. We don't even know what the meaning is but we copy and write. But we just have to write and write and write. Just copying what is on the board.

Participant 18: We just had to memorize everything without understanding. We learn from Burmese education system there. We learn nothing about Karen history.

Participant 19: Yes, I could read only little English at that time. I could still pass the school exam by just memorizing. After exam, I forgot all and I know no more. It is very much rote learning there (in Myanmar schools).

Participant 20: Compare to that, here in the camp, we learn from Karen education. We have more chance to ask questions, chance to understand the contents of what we are learning. Teachers are more open minded I can say.

(March 15, 2020, Focus Group Interview with Participant 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20)

> I asked these students what the Myanmar government schools were like and many of them eagerly demonstrated the difference for me. Some students expressed with body gesture: snoring and acting like a zombie to show the rote learning system was boring. They described how their experiences of the Burmese government schools in Karen State (in different Brigade and villages) was rote learning, having to follow strict standards of behavior, while not really learning anything at all. Some mentioned how it was hard to go to school because their family was poor and siblings needed to be looked after, they had to walk a long way to get to the school. Often, the school fee and costs of uniforms or materials, as well as distance, make Myanmar government schools inaccessible to students (February 12, 2020, Fieldnote).

Along with the different quality and system of learning between Myanmar government schools and camp schools, older students also shared there is discrimination and exclusion back in Myanmar based on their identity as Karen. This discrimination and exclusion often manifested itself in 'mysteriously' not passing the final exam of high school which was required to graduate after years of study and expense. With this kind of discrimination, students wondered why anyone would put in the effort to attend school at all in Myanmar. On the other hand, they are proud to be attending Karen schools inside the refugee camp, as frequently expressed in both formal and informal conversations by teenage students in Mae La:

> We are privileged to access good education here in the camp. We will have to do our best at school here and grow as a proud Karen leader. We will have to teach the next generation to become a proud Karen, not a victim or refugee as others describe us. We need education to realize that we do not need to be ashamed to be a refugee. We are Karen (February 3, 2020, Individual interview with Participant 18).

Exploring the key essential values and knowledge in Karen education shaped and sustained by the Karen education leadership critically demonstrates that the education in Mae La is not provided in a form of education in emergency. With a long history of running their own education values and system as an ethnic minority in Myanmar, the education system in the camps is run in a systematic and organized manner, although it accommodates the participation of external actors in various ways (Lee, 2007). This provides some insight into how it is that a nation without an international recognized state and territory, and with hundreds of thousands of its members living in global diaspora, can persist and, in terms of identity, even thrive. The Karen educational leader reflects on the importance of education for Karen identity as follows.

> I feel that I have the obligation; I believe that I need to do something for my people before I die. Out of many things I pick up, I see that the best thing, so as not to lose our identity or our freedom or our human rights, that I need to do for our people is education (February 3, 2020, Individual interview with Participant 18).

This quote reflects that education is seen as especially crucial for a nation without a modern state or territory, because it provides a space where history and meaning making can be reconciled in a way that coheres into shared understanding. While there is certainly the danger of re-entrenched nationalism being the outcome of such an approach to education, a mixed curriculum and an approach to daily struggles of refugee life that ignore such pressing existential issues do nothing to resolve the fundamental conflict, but only delay or exacerbate it. Therefore, it was meaningful to explore education 'of' refugees – what education means to the Karen refugees themselves – by looking closely at their historical background as an ethnic minority that shaped and sustained their own teaching contents in this chapter.

4.2.4 Concept of Karen Students and Teachers from *"Insiders' Perspectives"*

To develop holistic understanding of refugee education in Mae La, it is also important to explore how refugee students and teachers are conceptualized 'by' their own community. Though refugee children worldwide are generally portrayed as victims having to depend on others, or potential criminals in extreme perception (Ryu & Tuvilla, 2018), the internal refugee stakeholders of Mae La including education committees, teacher-trainers, administrators, and community leaders perceive the refugee teachers and students as revolutionaries. From several observations in classroom teaching and informal conversations over a meal or tea with in-service teachers at schools within the camp, refugee students are perceived to play a part to build a Karen nation. Moreover, observations in annual teacher

training sessions conducted by KRCEE and NGOs as well as in school level teacher trainings by Residential Teacher Trainers (RTTs) revealed significant narratives in which refugee teachers are perceived to play critical role with strong commitment to support and sustain the community as a nation. In the challenging environment of the camp education that can be described as neither temporary nor permanent, a deficient perspective emphasizing merely the refugees' needs and predicaments can easily neglect the refugees' endeavour to perceive themselves as an "active participant in society" and to play "subjective role in and through education" (Individual interview with Participant 2).

Education makes "a cultural, symbolic and identity boundary that is constantly being defined and negotiated, in turn influencing the way in which national boundaries are constructed" (Oh et al., 2019, pp. 3–4). Within this view, the Karen refugee teachers and students are presumed to play significant roles to create and sustain the boundaries of Karen as a stateless nation, and to often expand the boundaries of their 'imagined community' (B. Anderson, 1983). Myanmar has been attempting to enclose nation and people within boundaries of territory that it defines through cultural (Berlie, 2008; Lewis, 1924), social (Callahan, 2003; Salem-Gervais & Metro, 2012), political and territorial (Ferguson, 2014; Lambrecht, 2008) practices for decades. What is noteworthy is that these practices are often causing tensions with the way in which the Karen refugees displaced along the border (Horstmann, 2014). From this "insiders' perspective" (Individual interview with Participant 8), likewise, Karen people residing in Mae La camp also perceive the border as a construct that is acknowledged, challenged and negotiated as a process, rather than an object that is fixed and ahistorical entity (Oh et al., 2019). For this reason, Karen students and

teachers are thought to play significant roles for nation-building in and through education. During an interview, an education secretary from KECD made a metaphor of education as a house:

> Our education is recognized within the Karen community, within the Karen system. When we talk about recognition issue, I always say, the recognition can come with different meanings. Even before Aung San Sukyi and her government came in power, they said, Myanmar education system is falling apart, and it needs to be reformed. So, by that means… Even though the house is falling apart. They called it a house. Everyone calls that is a house. Even though you may not be able to live in that house. We also built a house. We called that a house. What I am trying to say is even if they say, "this is not a house because it is built with bamboo trees", it is a house for us (March 20, 2020, Individual interview with Participant 6).

With this understanding, it makes sense there is a robust school system in the camp despite the most urgent issue from "outsiders' perspectives" is that school completion certificates do not give graduates access to further educational opportunities in Myanmar or Thailand, and "neither are their diplomas recognized for employment purposes" (Individual interview with Participant 8). When the community leaders were asked to share their opinion about what the teachers need the most in the camp school environment, they often responded that they need "more committed people like those teachers" (Focus Group Interview with Participant 2, 8, 13, 21).

The use of Karen education curriculum and Sgaw Karen as the language of instruction in the camp schools is a way of establishing a particular version of Karen identity, initially envisioned by the KNU. Nonetheless, it has been then notably sustained by the refugee teachers – and students – in their meaning-making process for education during protracted displacement. One of the community leaders who has been teaching at a post-12 school for over fifteen years shared in his interview that role of teachers in the community is immense in terms of raising students' critical awareness. He believed "Only refugee teachers who went through similar experiences in the camp with the refugee students can motivate them to learn and question the world" (Individual interview with Participant 2).

> If education serves to enhance the presence of pessimism, then, the best remedy against it, again, is education … Human beings have desire to be free in spite of the odds they are facing each passing day of their lives. When they discover in themselves that yearning to be free, there is hope, indeed, for them that yearning can be not just a utopian dream, but it can be a home reality (May 25, 2019, Individual interview with Participant 2).

As teachers are seen as the last resort for the community to preserve and reinforce the boundaries of Karen identity, they are encouraged to play important roles for the next generation to think critically against status-quo through education. In the view of parents and students in the community, teachers are not only 'passive deliverer' of the fixed education curriculum, but 'active participants' who enable Karen education to be continued. Referred as 'Tharamu' (female teacher) and 'Thara' (male teacher) in Sgaw Karen, they are well respected for

their hard work at the frontline without sufficient compensation. Certainly, they cannot be described as a homogeneous group in the community in terms of their background. They have different background in terms of arrival in the camp, teaching experiences and educational history prior to working as a teacher. For example, diverse background for a group of Karen refugee teachers at a secondary school is shown in Table 15.

[Table 15] Background Information for a group of Karen Refugee Teachers at a school in Mae La

Name omitted	Age (M/F)	Arrival in Mae La camp	Teaching Experience	Subjects (Grade)	Education Background
(1) Naw	41 (F)	2005	13 years	English (Grade 6 & 8)	Graduated High School and Post-12 School (5 years) in Karen State, majored in Theology
(2) Naw	43 (F)	2008	8 years	English (Grade 7 & 8) Burmese (Grade 8) Science (all)	Graduated Distant Learning University institute in Myanmar city, majored in Geography
(3) Naw	53 (F)	n/a	3 years	Burmese (Grade 7 & 9) English (Grade 4) Social Studies (Grade 7)	Graduated High School and partially attended Post-12 School in Karen State
(4) Naw	36 (F)	n/a	5 years	Burmese (Grade 4 & 5) Social Studies (Grade 4 & 5)	Graduated High School and Post-12 School (5 years) in another refugee camp
(5) Naw	64 (F)	n/a	20 years+	Mathematics (Grade 3 & 4) Karen (Grade 6)	Graduated High School and taught in Karen State and different refugee camps over 10 years before arriving in Mae La
(6) Saw	40 (M)	1980	17 years	Karen (Grade 7& 9) Health and Physical Education (all)	Graduated High School in Karen State and taught 2 years at Karen State before arriving in Mae La

(7) Saw	32 (M)	2012	8 years	Karen (Grade 4) Mathematics (Grade 5) Social Studies (Grade 8)	Graduated High School in Mae La camp and attended Teacher training from KRCEE
(8) Saw	27 (M)	2003	1 year	Social Studies (Grade 5, 6 & 9)	Graduated High school and Post 12 school in Mae La camp

Source: Author

It is noteworthy that once they teach at a school, they seem to be equally respected by the community members regardless of their background (January 2020, Fieldnote). The Karen communities often show their gratefulness towards teachers through donations and gifts in casual events (Observations before and after school time). While the Karen education leadership is confronted with lack of financial capacity to pay for their own teachers, they find ways to "encourage the in-service teachers by publicly distributing special rewards at annual event such as World Teachers Day and Karen Revolution Day" (Individual interview with Participant 15).

> Because we do not have recognition and external accreditation yet, everything is recognized within the community of our own. To that extent, we find ways to motivate our teachers and staff every day within our community. For example, on Karen Revolution Day celebration at the end of January, we give medals and certificates. It is important to acknowledge their commitment in teaching … we give a certificate to the teachers [who] worked for 5 years, a certificate with a bronze medal to the teachers [who] worked for 10 years, a certificate with silver medal for those [who] worked 20 years. Gold medal for 30 years. For those [who] worked 40 years and plus, we give real gold and a

certificate. It depends on the region and districts in Karen state but generally we do this kind of event when broader audience and participants attend. Especially on World Teachers Day (January 19, 2020, Focus Group Interview with Participant 6 and 15).

[Photo 14] Teachers and Trainers holding their Awards on World Teachers Day

Source: Author (accessed from Interviewees on July 30, 2020)

Likewise, teacher trainers at KRCEE encourage the teachers for their commitment when they visit their schools in the camp as well as when they have opportunities to gather through annual teacher training sessions outside the camp. Though they find it extremely challenging to motivate their teachers due to their inability to pay high salary and the teachers cannot afford to provide for their family, they find possible ways to demonstrate their respect for teachers as professionals, not to take for granted as committed charity workers.

Before I became a teacher trainer, I was a teacher at a secondary school in the camp. At that time, we didn't even get paid for 1000 bht [approx. 35 US dollars] per month. We commit ourselves to the community and contribute to provide

education in the camp… to look after the next generation of our Karen people because we don't have our own country or government. When I go and train [the teachers] in the camp, I say "You will face a lot of problems. Not enough food, funding and food ration is cut down, lack of information and not enough jobs. But you still have to try your best and stand on your feet." We cannot control the reality, the political problems and the economic situation. Every day, they are trying to squeeze our neck, you know? Also, the news brought in from outside the camp make them confused. Ceasefire agreement is signed but still there is war going on in Karen state. Is it safe to go back to Myanmar? Or is it better to stay in the camp? People get confused. But really, the teachers are the only resources and only hope we have left … to remain who we are (May 23, 2019, Individual interview with Participant 10).

[Photo 15] Karen Refugee Teachers in a Staffroom (left) and a classroom wearing a T-shirt showing 'Teach, Encourage, Instruct, Mentor, Praise, Influence, Guide and Inspire' (right)

Source: Author (photographed on January 21, 2020)

Karen refugee teachers within the camp also take various roles in sustaining their school as well as the community. Photo 11 shows a snapshot of Karen teachers voluntarily spend their time after school for administrate work at important annual events in the community such as camp committee meetings and church congregation meetings. As the events often take place in the school buildings, they are in charge of cleaning the area, cooking food and providing tea for the community participants, as well as general administrative chores such as collecting membership fees. During weekdays, making use of the time before and after school as well as during lunch time when they are not teaching in classroom, teachers also sell food items in front of a school in order to raise fund for their own school including teacher salary.

[Photo 16] Karen Refugee Teachers volunteering for administrative chores at a camp committee meeting and selling food items at lunch to raise school fund

Source: Author (photographed on May 18, 2020)

Since the camp was established and the schools were built by community, teachers who also have refugee identity, have been taking various roles in sustaining their schools. According to the key educational stakeholder in the camp community, the idea of ownership has gradually changed over time due to various interventions from external actors. He emphasized it is not right to blame the teacher individuals who currently tend to have not as much ownership as before, because it is the structural problem rather than individual behavioural problems (March 2020, Fieldnote).

> The idea of ownership in the refugee camp… it used to be stronger before. At first, NGOs were not much involved. Most schools were originally set up by the community. By those teachers and leaders. That is why they say "this is our school". It is not KED or KRCEE that set up. They were all established as the community schools at first. They started with zero budget, with no money. Everything was voluntary contribution. That is how it worked. You see, at that time, teachers were very dedicated, and the students were wanting to contribute to the community and the leaders were present also. But NGOs started to come in with liberal ideas and they designed your schools, you don't have funding so they say "you need to have student-teacher ratio" … this and that, you know. "We will pay you according to the survey, longer you work, more you get paid." Those neo-liberal ideas slowing coming in. "Oh, your teaching contents are missing this and that, we need to change here and there." Like this. This is how they slowly started to control those community ideas (March 10, 2020, Individual interview with Participant 1).

It is not uncommon for refugee communities to utilize education as a way of asserting, legitimizing, and/or creating nationalist, ethnic, and cultural identities (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000). This is true also from the Karen educational leaders' point of view that teachers and students in the camp community can altogether preserve and reinforce the Karen ethnic identity through schooling. In fact, education is not only to give sense of belonging with ethnic and cultural identity but refugee learners are to "express freely for their inquisitive minds" and "find their own ways to become a responsible and active participant" in whichever society given to them, through dialogue created at schools (Individual interview with Participant 2). The community's view on refugee learners is further demonstrated below from one of the faculty members at a post-12 school:

> Schools should rather be places where creative self-expression and productive interaction are on the loose. In some places (like in Myanmar), school is often the last place where students find freedom for their inquisitive minds. The most ironic thing of all is that those schools show no interest in what students think and feel, there is no place for students to take initiative, the curriculum is only seen as subject-matter that needs to be put into the minds and bodies of the students. We avoid that in the camp. Although we do not have recognition by others, we make our own. We encourage students to ask questions, act and be a democratic subject (January 20, 2020, Individual interview with Participant 2).

Conversations with numerous community leaders and faculty members further reveal that education does not need to be always future-oriented for the students to think about life outside the camp. Instead, they emphasized education can be present-oriented by providing a space where students are encouraged to regard themselves as a subject that can reflect and act, rather than the objects to be acted upon. In this view, education is significant not only for students' life after the camp but for their ability to question their identity beyond the refugeehood.

> Education is not to prepare children for something that will come later, but education is a vehicle through which human beings can begin their action as subjects and not as objects to be acted upon ... Education should not be seen as a space of preparation but should be conceived as a space where individuals can act, where they can bring their beginnings into the world, and hence can be subjects ... The key educational question is how individuals can be subjects, keeping in mind that we cannot continuously be a subject, since we can only be subject in action, that is, in our beings with others (March 10, 2020, Focus Group Interview with Participant 2, 8 and 13).

While the Karen educational leadership in the community perceive the students as subject of their own life rather than objectified beings, the students expressed their feelings about the life in the refugee camp in various terms. An extra-curricular activity was organized by a group of refugee teachers after school. Students from any school in Mae La could attend and learn watercolour painting skills for free of charge. Teachers who instructed the lesson labelled the name of

this session as ‘Give your feeling a voice’ because they were concerned about the high suicidal rate and lack of communication channels in the community. Although the session was initiated by an NGO’s donation of painting materials, the teachers creatively utilized the opportunity of the painting session to provide students with non-verbal ways of expressing their own feelings.

Though it is generally true that conditions in the camp make it impossible for one to decide one’s own fate, to have autonomy, Karen students expressed in their own language about how they view the present times they are in. Photo 17 shows students who described the camp life with relatively positive features including “help from God as well as people” (Observation of Participant 30 and Interview with 29) and “precious home where we can have hopeful heart, a gift from God” (Observation of Participant 31 and Interview with 29). Another student expressed “living in the refugee camp is like living in a beautiful pond. We are fed and cared for but cannot leave our pond easily” (Observation of Participant 32 and Interview with 29).

[Photo 17] Students living in Mae La refugee camp during a Painting Lesson called ‘Give your feeling a voice’: Explaining hope in the lives of refugees

Source: Author (accessed from Interviewees on March 13, 2020)

Like teachers who cannot be described as a homogeneous group in terms of their background, students also have different background in terms of arrival in the camp, learning experiences and educational history prior to life in Mae La. Students in Photo 13 tend to have strong religious belief as they expressed their gratefulness for God's gift and hope for the future while living in the camp. However, in Photo 14, students' paintings illustrate life in refugee camps with oppressive aspects described as "without a voice". Students used metaphors such as "dry forest after fire", "Prison without own country" and "Chicken cage" (Observation of Participant 33, 34, 35 and Interview with Participant 29).

[Photo 18] Students living in Mae La refugee camp during a Painting Lesson called 'Give your feeling a voice': Explaining life in refugee camps

Source: Author (accessed from Interviewees March 13, 2020)

She explained her life in Mae La refugee camp. She said "Life [in the camp] is dry like a forest after fire. If we think in a positive way, we see hope like greeny forest although most of the time we feel like we don't have a voice" … He

painted this handcuff and explained “Karen people are like prisoners who want to be freed and have our own country” … He arrived in Mae La after living sometime in Thamhin refugee camp. He said “living in Thamhin refugee camp is like chicken living in a chicken cage. However, we dream of standing on our own feet in a free world at some point” (Interview with Participant 29 during observation in Painting lesson).

Students are far from naïve about the politics and organization of the camp and often delivered their own insightful explanations and analysis of how the camp functions. Particularly interesting are the ways in which students described the life in the camp structure that it is not easy to raise their own voice. Later, during informal conversations, they pointed out that through Karen education obtained in the camp schools, they learned and realized that they are being oppressed in the power structure of the camp as a refugee. Initially they were grateful for the help from outside, but they also became aware of the structure with various actors in and around the camp—from international NGOs to the Thai Government and KNU—intertwined in a social hierarchy. As the various actors have sharply contrasting visions for refugees, and highly differential motivations for their own involvement, some students are eager to raise their voice by building on their pride in Karen identity.

[Photo 19] Students living in Mae La refugee camp during a Painting Lesson called ‘Give your feeling a voice’: Explaining loneliness and imagining a future at home

Source: Author (accessed from Interviewees on March 13, 2020)

On the other hand, when some of the younger students were asked to share their feelings about the experience of living in the camp, they simply responded with their personal feeling of loneliness and their hope to be back in their own country to live with family. In Photo 19, a middle school student said “I am painting my loneliness. Living in the refugee camp makes me feel lonely” (Observation of Participant 36 and Interview with Participant 29).

Overall, the concept of Karen students and teachers from the community perspective reject the view as object of educational interventions. The refugees’ lack of ability to “act and be a democratic subject” (Interview with Community Leader) was scaled up and down, from the individual, to the Karen refugee community at large by interviewees. An administrative staff at the teacher training department of KRCEE shared his concern that their view on the Karen teachers and students can easily be demolished as the entire community is exposed to the ongoing influences of the external views.

> The thing is that people in the refugee camp don't have to be left and spoon-fed in the camps, you know? Some people say that they don't want to rely on others and instead, they want to work and earn their own living ... Some people may have the wrong expectation to be spoon fed. We don't want them to have this kind of wrong expectation because of the continued interventions and influences from external stakeholders. They claim for certain rights and opportunities, often wanting to be spoon-fed and avoid freedom to some extent (March 20, 2020, Individual interview with Participant 10).

While refugee education discourses often notice the refugee teachers and students as objects of humanitarian, human rights, or development interventions, the refugee community of Mae La identifies the students and teachers who can actively shape and sustain their own education demonstrating strong Karen national identity beyond refugeehood.

4.2.5 Purpose of Schooling conceptualized 'by' the Refugee Leadership: *"Education is to empower students to become a change-maker against unjust status-quo"*

Education in the Karen refugee learners' context cannot be separated from the wider political environment. Therefore, the purpose of schooling expressed by various internal stakeholders within the Mae La community is commonly shaped and sustained with its historical roots. It means that the educational objectives during displacement are shaped not only by refugee identity but also by the Karen ethnic identity. Considering the intersectionality of identity markers as a Karen and a refugee, Karen community living in the border over a protracted period is

perceived to make their own educational endeavour. For *Kawthoolei*, the 'land without evil', often described as a blessed land that yearns for freedom, education is both a last resort and a pride to sustain Karen's identity. From the Karen educational stakeholders' point of view, Karen teachers and students in the camp play significant roles to preserve and reinforce the Karen ethnic identity. Education is not only to give sense of belonging to help surviving, but also to become a responsible and active participant toward building the Karen nation. In addition, the insiders' perspective emphasized that education does not need to be always future-oriented for the life outside the camp. Instead, it can be present-oriented by providing a space where students are encouraged to regard themselves as a subject that can reflect and act, rather than the objects to be acted upon.

An understanding of education 'by' refugees informs various attempts by members of the Karen community to not only survive along with the global support, but also to manage their own systems regardless of their status. As previously mentioned, academics and practitioners in the field of refugee education tend to associate the refugee learners and teachers with deficient perspective having to depend on others. However, the findings, focusing on the voices on what education means for refugees and how they play a subjective role, explain the important function of education as 'a boundary making device', in the Karen refugees' formal and informal efforts for nationhood and recognition.

Under the unique environment of the camp – set up as a temporary and liminal space outside the modern states – external stakeholders' rationale for schooling tend to be 'unsettled' leading to inconsistent and mixed curriculum content. Meanwhile, the support of international refugee regime in education sector promotes its own version of refugee identity. In consequence,

conceptualization of refugee children has been framed around their vulnerability and role as victims (Boyden, 2003; Hart & Tyrer, 2006). In contrast, the community leader from Mae La camp asserts a critical role of education "empowering students" to respond to unjust status-quo.

> Education is capable of dislodging students from intellectual stasis and rigid conformity to an unjust status quo. At the same time, education is capable of empowering students to respond thoughtfully to the social controls that undergird oppression … to become a change-maker against unjust status-quo… The aim of education is to make people realized that a better tomorrow is possible, and it has to foster a belief among the oppressed that oppression as a reality could be struggled against and that education could be an effective agent to conscientize people of their actual quality to unleash potential change (May 25, 2019, Individual interview with Participant 2).

CHAPTER 5. ROLES AND GOALS OF REFUGEE EDUCATION FROM FREIREAN PERSPECTIVE

As an attempt to develop more of a holistic understanding of how refugee education is shaped and sustained in the context of a segregated and protracted refugee camp, the research has so far analysed the viewpoints of the external and internal stakeholders involved in the Mae La community. Starting with the history, it explored how schooling is formed and managed in the camp and what the perceived roles of learners and educators are, to address fundamental questions about to what ends education is pursued from the perspective of education ‘for’ and ‘by’ refugees. Based on Freire’s theoretical standpoint – wherein all learners are human beings with their own inclinations, lived experiences, and legitimate ways of thinking, and the banking approach in education is a violent way to dehumanize learners – this chapter critically explores and interprets educational aspects described in both education 'for' and 'by' the refugees in Mae La.

Interpreting refugee education with the discourses of Freire’s critical pedagogy allows theoretical implications that promote transformative and empowering educational experiences in the context of the refugee learners. Using the Freirean underpinnings upon banking concept of knowledge, as well as on his notion of dialogue and conscientization, this chapter explores whether the pedagogical models represented or practiced within Mae La reflect banking or problem-posing approach. While the dominant discourses in the existing literature of refugee education mostly deal with challenges to cater the needs of education through various rationales behind education as discussed in chapter 2, this chapter leads to re-thinking whether refugee education is indeed educational – rather than

humanitarian, rights, or development-oriented – by critically reflecting upon the role of the refugee learners and goal of refugee education from the Freirean perspective.

5.1 Roles and Goals of the refugees in Refugee Education

5.1.1 Role of the Karen refugee teachers and students: Empty Vessels or Active Subjects

Educational practices and ideological viewpoints represented within the camp demonstrated that along with educational stakeholders from the international NGOs, the Karen refugee leadership have been putting tremendous effort into providing quality education in the camp setting. Within Mae La, refugee education has been found to play a central role in the Karen refugees' formal and informal efforts to raise awareness for nationhood and recognition. As a successful 'boundary making device', refugee education is perceived by the internal stakeholders as a point of pride and identity, while on the other hand, it is perceived by external stakeholders mostly as key challenges and difficulties to be solved.

Indeed, changing landscape in political relations between Myanmar's central government and the Karen armed groups have caused many external organizations – that have reliably supported over the past decades – to cut or stop funding education provision recently. Particularly after the ceasefire agreement, it became more intricate for the international NGOs to negotiate with the Thai authorities about ensuring refugees' right to education in the camp. In addition, lack of official identification document(s), confinements imposed by the Thai government, and subsequent uncertainty continue to have negative social and psychological

consequences for the children living in protracted refugee situations. Given these contrasting viewpoints between the external and internal stakeholders, it is important to note that there are significant tensions raised by educational approaches being mixed between the international refugee regime and the local leadership. It is because both have a profound impact on the shape and content of refugee education in the field. Table 16 summarizes and describes the key actors, membership, and perception on refugees, as well as the respective tensions arising from a mixed perspective at school.

[Table 16] Mixed education approaches and Tensions within the community of Mae La camp

	Education 'For' Refugees	Education 'By' Refugees	Tensions from a mixed perspective
Key Actors	International Refugee Regime represented by non-state actors (i.e. NGOs from CCSDPT)	Dominant Christian Karen Refugee Leadership (i.e. KRCEE and community leaders)	Refugee teachers and students
Membership	- UN agencies - International NGOs - Royal Thai government - Local NGOs *Leadership is context and time specific at the camp level. Currently in Mae La, Save the Children, ADRA, Right To Play lead with support from co-lead agencies and other partners such as KRCEE and KECD.	- Karen National Union - Karen Education and Cultural Department - Karen Refugee Committee Education Entity - Religious Organizations - Civil society organizations	Globally led by UN agencies and nationally sanctioned by Thai government, while local education groups lead at camp level in partnership of the key organizations: KRCEE, Save the Children, ADRA, an Right to Play
Perception on Refugees	- Temporary & Uninvited - Recipients in need, dependent on others - To cooperate and adapt into the status quo	- Temporary & Waiting for nation-building - Karen nationalist - To transform and revolutionize reality to build Karen nation	- Permanently Temporary & peace-seeking - Tensions and confusions between those who are satisfied with the status-quo and those who feel obliged to contribute toward nation-building

Source: Author

To perceive refugee education as being provided 'for' refugees, key actors are international refugee regime represented by the NGOs from CCSDPT coordinated by UNHCR and sanctioned by the Thai government. Since every refugee camp and the communities may have its own history and context, key organizations at each camp vary. Currently, in the case of Mae La, Save the Children, Adventist Development and Relief Agency, Right to Play lead in partnership with Karen refugee leadership such as the KRCEE and KECD. On the other hand, perceiving refugee education as being shaped 'by' refugees, the key actors become predominantly the Christian Karen refugee leadership. Rooted from the KNU and Karen Education Department, the KRCEE is acting as a main education managing authority for basic education system in the camp, while various independent university-level institutes are practically maintained by various religious and private sectors as well as the community-based donations. From the contrasting views and understandings of who are the key actors in providing and sustaining refugee education in the camp community, there are certain tensions arising for the refugee educators and learners on site. For example, the in-service teachers working by signing contract with the KRCEE – knowing that financial assistance is coming mainly from the NGOs – tend to struggle in balancing the requirements from different authorities.

Since the KRCEE is rooted from the KNU, often described as "a government-in-exile" (Jolliffe, 2016), the KRCEE is recognized neither by Thailand nor Myanmar's education departments. In consequence, the Karen refugee teachers' abundant teaching experiences are only recognized and applicable within the camps, leaving them with no opportunity for further career

selection in the state systems outside the camp communities. As the refugee camp is considered as temporary home, there are tensions between the teachers that are strongly committed to teaching in order to contribute to the community, and the others who cannot sustain their motivation due to lack of certainty and recognition outside the camp. The former, in support of the Karen refugee leadership, tend to highlight for children the significance of keeping the Karen identity and becoming a follower of Karen nationalists through education. However, the latter has more faith in the external assistance and emphasize the importance of following the requirements and educational agendas prescribed by the NGOs in order to sustain "the only source of funding" (Focus Group Interview with Participant 9, 25, 38, 39).

In Freire's (2016) *Education for Critical Consciousness*, he contended that words of the people should be discovered independently rather than prescribed to them. In this sense, he stressed that it is necessary for the marginalized to understand and name their world in their terms. Based on this view, both refugee teachers and learners should expand and develop their own language to imagine their future, as well as transform themselves as independent learners (Bodon & Votteler, 2017). However, the role of Karen refugee teachers and students are rather perceived as objectified beings that are to be conformed into the predetermined agendas of the people other than themselves. With the recent funding cut due to many NGOs that are withdrawing or moving their funding to the other side of the border for the IDPs instead of refugees after the ceasefire agreement, more teachers experience the impact in their daily environment. By recognizing the NGOs as the key actors in maintaining refugee education in their communities, they often describe and position themselves as "helpless victims

waiting for others' help" (Individual interview with Participant 9) and lose motivation with the NGO's withdrawal of support. This is also evident in the following statement of the secretary in Karen educational leadership when talking about their difficulties in sustaining the refugee teachers' motivation.

> I have to mention about recognition of qualifications and systems ... the fact that there is no official recognition. I think those teachers feel less motivated, as some of them would like to see some kind certainty with their future, with their careers, in their life. Maybe, sometimes we talk about life beyond the camps, after the camps. The future is wide open for the teachers who say, "we don't need any official recognition from either [Thailand or Burmese] government", and that they can work with the recognition of their own community and for the KNU… With that level of motivation, we can go ahead. However, there are many teachers, and students also, who are not motivated unless they get a recognition and accreditation from governments, either Thai or Burmese (March 3, 2020, Individual interview with Participant 6).

Using one of the key concepts of Paulo Freire's pedagogical approach applied in the refugee context, it is imperative for the diverse educational stakeholders to engage in dialogue. He emphasises, "to enter into dialogue presupposes equality amongst participants. Each must trust the others; there must be mutual respect, love, care and commitment" (Freire Institute, 2020). In Freire's philosophical stance, practices of education in Mae La should aims to undermine the power dynamics that hold some people above others. Thus, rather than

continuing with the established patterns of relating to refugees through a hierarchy of power more of a democratic relationship between the refugee educators managing and the NGO workers funding schooling is necessary in education 'for' refugees. In other words, each one must question what he or she knows and realize that through dialogue existing thoughts may change and new knowledge can be created. In this sense, the external stakeholders who are perceived to provide education 'for' refugees should not pretend to be the one who knows while the refugee communities are the ones who do not know. The rigidity of holding this type of power dynamic potentially negates education as a process of inquiry and of knowledge gained.

Like the teachers who lack in motivations due to different attitudes about educational recognition in and out of the camp, the Karen refugee students in the community also have mixed views. Surprisingly, some are motivated to engage in schooling activities and become "a proud Karen leader" to make changes (Individual interview with Participant 34), while the others who do not think it is worth going to schools without accreditation outside the camp. The former want to bring transformations into the reality – perceived as oppressed by the Myanmar government – by contributing to the Karen community while the latter want to rather be satisfied with the help from the external assistance and "learn to live daily without much thinking about the future as we are graciously being fed and cared here." (Individual interview with Participant 32). This is aligned with how the key actors' in education 'for' and 'by' the refugees perceive the role of refugees respectively. In other words, there is the inherent embeddedness of the key actors' perception in the ways the teachers and students think of their roles and regard education in the camp. While the global discourse generally portrays refugees as

temporary and uninvited beings, the Karen refugee leadership places ontological hope of nation-building by admitting the temporary character of the community.

In this sense, refugee teachers and students are both subjugated to cooperate and maintain the status quo, in both education 'for' refugees and education 'by' refugees. While the refugee students, in education 'by' refugees, are expected to "transform the structural reality in and through education" (Individual interview with Participant 2), the transformation means revolution, embedding the static meaning of nation-building. Most of the teachers I talked to in primary and secondary schools tend to have adapted themselves to become satisfied with the status quo by making comparison to the previous conditions of the camp where they had less subsidy and teaching materials. What is noteworthy is that they prefer not to raise any question even if they were confronted with sudden changes at school. For example, teachers were often informed in the morning that the school must close on the day due to the interventions and events organized by international organizations and NGOs, such as Food card launching event (May 2019, Observation). Those who learned that they cannot make any difference by questioning the activities held by external stakeholders, gradually built the ‘culture of silence’. On the other hand, some of the younger teachers who started to teach after graduating the post-12 institutes initially had different attitudes since they were encouraged to question and raise voices for their autonomy. However, to avoid tensions with other teachers at school, they soon became enveloped in a culture of silence, coming to accept that this is the way things are meant to be and they lose their transformative capacities over a protracted period in exile.

As their day-to-day experience is dominated by external influences, their consciousness develops primarily to obey the orders imposed on them. They

perceive themselves as if they are not capable of developing the ability to think, to question, or to analyse situations for themselves. From the Freirean perspective, this is quite similar to the process of colonization (Freire Institute, 2020). Given that the colonizing culture of the external stakeholders assisting the refugee community thinks of itself as the correct and valuable culture, the colonized culture is deemed as inferior and in need of the colonizing culture for its own betterment within the camp community. The banking approach embedded in this view is a violent way to treat refugees because they are equally human beings with their own inclinations and legitimate ways of thinking. The banking method treats the learners and educators within the community as though they were things, the objects of interventions – through humanitarian, rights, or development-based assistance programs – instead of human beings.

With an attempt to promote democratic interactions between the refugees and external stakeholders, the internal stakeholders centring around the refugee leadership and KRCEE often problematize the issue being discussed above, from their view of education 'by' refugees. They tend to highlight the need for dialogue, as they reject the assumption that the outside perspectives possess all the answers, and the refugee communities as recipients, are ignorant and in need of the external knowledge in terms of shaping and sustaining education in the camp. In a similar view, Freire suggests when both parties in dialogue can learn from each other with a humble and open attitude, the refugee stakeholders can then feel more confident in their own search for answers and more comfortable to critically raise questions of their own. However, it is noteworthy that even in education 'by' refugees, teachers and students cannot become open to the possibility of considering the different positions being discussed. As it promotes another certain and

predetermined direction imposed towards Karen nation-building, there is not much room for Karen leadership to promote a dynamic of tolerance and democratic awareness. While Freire's critical pedagogy highlights the importance of problematizing the relationships where some people have power or knowledge, and some do not, and where some people give orders and others obey without questioning, internal stakeholders involved in shaping and sustaining refugee education in Mae La, may represent another group of people that have power and give orders. In education 'by' refugees, the role of teachers and students are often perceived that they must become a transformant toward external influences, but at the same time they must obey without questioning at least toward Karen nation-building. The Karen refugee leadership outwardly emphasizes the role of education to 'achieve a deepening awareness both of their social cultural reality that shapes their lives and their capacity to transform that reality' (Freire, 1985, p. 93). Many of the Karen refugee leaders in the community express that they perceive refugee learners and teachers as active subjects, believing that the key path to obtain critical consciousness towards freedom is essentially an 'educational project of radical humanization' (Frymer, 2005, p. 5). For them, the Mae La camp communities are the "key sites for transformation through solidarity and praxis" – including reflection and action – and "education is the last resort to bring changes to their lives" (Individual interview with Participant 2). Focusing on building on the Karen nationalist identity, they persistently remind the teachers and learners in the camp that history is never fixed or predetermined. Overall, they promote the belief system that there always exists the possibility of the community acting collectively to change the current status and reality. However, what is noteworthy is that despite the community's efforts towards subjectification of the refugees

altogether, subjectivity can also be negated by alienation of the individual refugee learners and educators who are not encouraged to raise questions toward the community leadership in protracted refugee situations. Indeed, Freire highlights that the oppressed can also become oppressors in certain contexts, and the ineptitude and corruption at the larger society level may make incursion into the educational practices through “domesticating” and “banking” approach. When the individual refugee teachers and students are within dehumanizing structures and conditions leading them succumb to a sense of fatalism, no educational issue or practice either in education 'for' or 'by' refugees is free from the influences or the realities of its context.

Over a protracted period of displacement, since the refugee teachers and students are socialized to obey orders, to perform specific roles and functions, and to not question authority figures, they tend to be discouraged from following their own interests and from thinking for themselves. From the Freirean perspective, they will eventually think of themselves as objects instead of subjects and agents with the ability to choose their own destiny. Based on his perspective, all men and women are the creators of culture, all have a right to name the world (Freire, 1970) and all have a capacity to look critically at the world. Nevertheless, the ‘culture of silence’ can be established from oppressive structures within the classed nature of society and the material conditions of people’s lives. Freire’s critiques on banking model of education offers valuable insights that the greatest task of oppressed people is to liberate themselves from all conditions - whether it is external or internal - which subjugate them (McInerney, 2009). Yet, like the examples from the teachers and students in the camp community, many may still live in fear of freedom since they are usually so dominated either by external donors and/or

internal leadership with certain agendas, and they may have no conception of what it really means to become an active subject. Thus, the voices of the refugee learners and educators need to be perceived not only as individual voices but to be further interpreted within its connection to structural influences.

5.1.2 Goal of Refugee Education under the pseudo-State: Adaptation or Transformation

Refugee Education in the case of Mae La community – encompassing education 'for' and 'by' refugees – is surrounded by questions of purpose that are difficult to answer. Considering that the global refugee relief regime has been imposing voluntary repatriation, resettlement, and integration as the key durable solutions for refugees so far, various educational stakeholders face challenges to find a consensual answer to what kind of future education should imagine and prepare for. Zygmunt Bauman (2004) in his distinguished work *Wasted lives: Modernity and its outcasts*, emphasizes that forced migration – including that of refugees – has disrupted modern rights regimes, influencing the form of the traditional nation-state. A refugee community not welcomed by a third country, or a host society, is regarded as a stateless if it has no intention to voluntarily return to home country.

While the global actors have been carrying out various approaches including the humanitarian, rights and development-based approach in education 'for' refugees, the Karen refugees regarded as a stateless nation with the protracted nature of the conflict, confront with various tensions in defining the purpose of education. The tensions include those between the exclusionary policies of accreditation, based on the logic of state system, and the universal rights to

education. Refugee identity of being stateless influence other intersecting identities that are equally significant, while marginalizing them as 'others' as Bauman emphasizes below:

> Refugees, being the 'human waste' of globalisation, are stripped of all other identities but one—that of being state-less and status-less. While this position, as outcasts, makes them highly visible as the 'other in our midst', all other aspects of their being and individuality are erased (Pinson & Arnot, 2007, p. 399).

In response to this reality, the Karen refugee leadership and institutes utilize education to provide each learner a sense of belonging, in education 'by' refugees. From their perspective, the Karen refugees are regarded as participants for boundary-making of a Karen nation without state. Meanwhile, the individual refugees confront again with tensions on educational site. These tensions include those between the wider community imagined by the learners, based on the logic of the Karen nation and the logic of modern state system. As the political theorist Benedict Anderson (1983) describes the modern nation as an "imagined community," the core function of schooling in the community is to build citizenship and enable students to imagine themselves as part of a wider national community. If this is the case, it is then vital to raise a pragmatic question and discuss further for the refugee context: What kind of "wider community" is imagined – or left available – for the refugee learners in and through education in the camp setting? Practically speaking, is education in the camp oriented toward national integration, global citizenship, or statelessness? Table 17 summarizes the

purpose of education delineated from contrasting viewpoints, and the tensions arising from a mixed perspective at school amidst educational interventions that are based on the past and future.

[Table 17] Mixed education purposes and Tensions within the community of Mae La camp

	Education 'For' Refugees	Education 'By' Refugees	Tensions from a mixed perspective
Key Actors	International Refugee Regime represented by non-state actors (i.e. NGOs from CCSDPT)	Dominant Christian Karen Refugee Leadership (i.e. KRCEE and community leaders)	Refugee teachers and students
Purpose	To strengthen preparedness and coordination of technical capacity to provide and sustain schooling in accordance to the restrictions of Thai government and the durable solutions imposed by the Global refugee regime	To create and propagate a nationalist identity to contribute to the achievement of nation-building through increased awareness of the oppressive reality against the policies of Myanmar government and Global refugee regime centring around nation-states that exclude the Karen as an independent entity	Gaps between the mandates and purposes determined by multiple political stakeholders, while the stateless individuals seek for ways to make meaning outside modern economy and society Tensions include: (1) External forces ignoring connection between schooling and Karen identity (2) Embeddedness of politics of multiple stakeholders in schooling (3) Marginalization from the lack of accreditation, as formal education is a prerequisite for participation in the modern economy of nation-states
Orientation	Educational interventions based on 'lessons learned' in the past	Educational management based on 'what to imagine' for the present and future	Present-oriented thinking to make meaning of life, amidst the past and future oriented interventions

Source: Author

In the narrative snapshot of education 'for' refugees and education 'by' refugees, the role of external non-state actors and internal refugee leadership is

both highly valued. However, they face challenges in finding consensus and selecting curricula and pedagogical approaches. It is partially because the traditional purposes of schooling, such as the cultivation of citizenship and economic development, cannot exist in refugee camps (Monaghan, 2019). To be more specific, there are three underlying tensions that structure schooling for refugee children when both international refugee regime and the Karen refugee leadership shape and sustain education in the camp together. Freire's notion of the banking approach in education, political orientation of education, and the risk of marginalization through education provide insights to reflect upon the tensions and limitations arising from the mixed practices of education 'for' and 'by' refugees.

First, when the non-state external actors mainly engage in planning for an educational system 'for' and on behalf of the refugees based on 'lessons learned' in earlier relief efforts, the inherent connection between schooling and Karen identity is often ignored. Under the so-called 'partnership' that seemingly exists between the external and internal stakeholders, refugee stakeholders are typically invited to engage only in implementation process rather than in overall planning. This is based on a deficit view on not only the refugee learners but the entire community, aligning with Freire's critique on 'banking concept' of schooling. The didactic interventions position the community of learners as passive recipients and objects, rather than participants and active subjects capable of changing the world. In such a learning environment, "the teacher teaches, and the students are taught; the teacher knows everything, and the students know nothing; the teacher talks and the students listen – meekly" (Freire, 1970, p. 54). Such a model of educational interventions mirrors oppressive relations in and out of the refugee camp, insofar as it denies Karen refugees' subjectivity and is more intent on preserving the status

quo than in challenging unjust social relations (McInerney, 2009). Problematizing this, the internal stakeholders including the KRCEE and community leadership involved in education 'by' the refugees, also impose the goal of education being enhancing the Karen nationalist identity on individual teachers and students. If these gaps between the mandates and purposes determined by external short-term projects and internal long-term goals of nation and identity building continue to exist without being addressed to structurally narrow down, the community-based initiatives, arising from the Karen leadership authorities, will only place extra burden on refugee teachers and learners at school. From the Freirean perspective, as long as the purpose of education continue to be perceived as to those who consider themselves knowledgeable bestow knowledge upon those whom they consider to know less, it is no longer educational. Both education 'for' and 'by' the refugees have risks of imposing the purpose of education merely being the adaptation to predetermined reality to refugee teachers and students who seek for ways to make meaning of present life through quality education. For refugee education to be indeed educational, conscientization - the process of developing a critical awareness of one's social reality through reflection and action - is necessary. Within this view, purpose of teaching for refugee learners should be described as an attitude that is oriented toward "making the familiar strange". In this sense, learning is a critical process to uncover normative structures and social myths which have a dominant tendency in the refugee context.

Second, there is the inherent embeddedness of politics in schooling and curriculum. In the case of the Mae La refugee community, the potential political actors are multiple including the Thai government, Myanmar government, international community, KNU government-in-exile, and refugees themselves.

Like in every situation outside the camp, education in the camp may become a tool with which interested groups seek to exploit or extend power as well as to promote a particular form of economic and social development (Waters & Leblanc, 2005). Based on the Freirean perspective of the political inherence in education, the refugees can easily be marginalized and take on and internalize the social inequalities of the oppressive structures (Freire, 1970). Through education 'for' refugees, the external actors who are in a position to control information, provide a very limited and restricted cultural intelligence that speaks either directly or indirectly to options available for the refugees - to return, remain or resettle. With little opportunities in resettlement programs after 2005, the Karen refugees are exposed to information that encourage voluntary repatriation back to Myanmar. Subsequently, the refugee individuals live within the knowledge systems which the global refugee regime want them to have and live within. Against this view, through education 'by' refugees, the Karen refugee leadership proudly emphasizes the need for their education to enable refugee learners to question the reality subjugated to the external influences. However, based on the Freirean perspective, their initiatives for regarding the refugees as participants to question and bring transformation need to be further explored. Precisely, this transformation means specifically to contribute and build a Karen nation. It is noteworthy that there is limitation again for the refugee learners to become subjects of their own life, because they are not questioning the reality subjugated to internal influences. Both education 'for' refugees and 'by' refugees may impose limited information and serve as a tool to extend power as well as to promote a particular form of social development. According to Freire's notion of conscientization, oppressed populations become capable of questioning dictated capabilities when they realize

first, that oppressors control proximal information sources, and second, that they have ability to reach beyond initial boundaries in reading and interpreting their world (Glassman & Patton, 2014). Despite the open access to more information on the internet available in the camp, however, it is not easy for the refugees to gain this critical consciousness and for individuals to have ability to break the existing culture of silence. Due to the multiple boundaries set by the multiple political actors intertwined in the power dynamics over a protracted period of displacement, it is certainly not easy for the individuals to come to realize their own ability in reading and interpreting their world beyond the multiple boundaries within the current practices of refugee education.

Third, education in the form of formal schooling is implicit in the modern nation-state, while refugees are, by definition, stateless. Indeed, schooling is a prerequisite for effective participation in the modern economy of nation-states. Refugees are, therefore, outside both the modern economy and modern society (Waters & Leblanc, 2005). Shaping education systems in the refugee camp setting is always embedded in this paradox, which is the root cause of various tensions in finding consensus on the rationale behind education between education 'for' and 'by' the refugees. While the nation-states enable their citizens to imagine and plan for the future through schooling, humanitarian relief and development donors cannot play the same extent of that role. Thus, in education 'for' refugees, traditional approaches to refugee assistance programs in other sectors that focus on meeting 'physiological needs' are often adopted and implemented. However, it may not be appropriate to adopt similar approach because in a health project, for example, refugees' existence in the physical sense is important while an education project assumes a certain future for refugees in their cultural, economic, and

political existence. Despite the emerging movement of international community to call for moving from 'emergency relief' toward 'development' approach that imply future discourses, education 'for' and 'by' the refugees can each have the risks of further marginalizing the refugee learners through education. Alongside, the Karen refugee teachers and students are faced with major contradiction between a rhetoric of identity-building that permeates curriculum documents and the reality of mandated standardized testing regimes that dictate what students must learn at school. As a result, schooling can contribute to marginalization and objectification of the refugees as learning is unconnected to their lives and aspirations. In a pseudo-State system of the Mae La community, despite any genuine commitment of the various stakeholders in education 'for' and 'by' the refugees, many are tempted to succumb to the fatalism and pessimism, which reduce educational practices to a tool of training learners to adapt into predetermined doctrines (Freire, 2004).

Overall, while the various external actors are indirectly encouraging integration into modern state system in education ‘for’ the refugees, the Karen refugee leadership is seeking greater autonomy to be recognized as a national minority through separatist movement in education ‘by’ refugees. Highlighting the purpose of education for critical consciousness, Freire asserts that words of the people should be discovered independently rather than prescribed to them, as mentioned before. In this sense, education 'by' refugees – not only 'for' refugees – are to be valued of course. Yet, it is also important to understand “in order for this struggle to have meaning, the oppressed must not, in seeking to regain their humanity, become in turn oppressors, but rather restorers of humanity of both." (Freire, 1970, p. 44). It implies that despite the refugee are constantly excluded

from education for citizenship and economic development, or imposed toward nationalist movement, the fundamental role of refugee education is to transform the existing social orders deposited in them over a protracted period of displacement. Along with the understanding of refugee education by encompassing the education provided 'for' refugees and shaped ‘by’ refugees, Freirean analysis leads to exploring relationships established in the educational setting and advocating a relationship of collaboration and dialogue between equals (Freire, 1970, 1992, 2001; Spener, 1993; Wallerstein, 1984). It provides insights that refugee education can never be neutral, as stated by Richard Shaull in the ‘Forward’ in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*:

> There is no such thing as a neutral educational process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes “the practice of freedom”, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world (Freire, 1970, p. 15).

5.2 Towards Educational Approach: Freirean Perspective

5.2.1 Refugees beyond Beneficiaries: Towards Transformative Agents

According to Paulo Freire, as repeatedly emphasized in this research so far, education is to offer new possibilities for reading the world, empowering to question the nature of the historical and social situation (Freire 1970). In this sense, refugee education certainly has an important role to raise critical consciousness, which can empower the refugees to question their status-quo. In support of this view, education becomes a key site for questioning dictated capabilities and participating in decision-making processes that affect the enjoyment of their rights in the refugee learners' context. Freire's critique particularly on banking concept of education and insights to presume refugees as active subjects toward critical consciousness open significant possibilities of understanding refugee education more holistically. It enabled the phenomenon of refugee education practices to be described and analysed through encompassing not only education that is provided 'for' the refugees but also how it is shaped and sustained 'by' the refugees. Through understanding the aspects of refugee education from contrasting viewpoints, Table 18 summarizes the strengths and weaknesses of each, in terms of planning and management of it.

With the dominant approaches by the international refugee regime rationalizing the provision through humanitarian, rights, and development-based approach, education provided 'for' refugees in the case of Mae La have both strengths and weaknesses. On a positive note, first, it has high-level access to and relationship with governments, as well as the funding officials and decision makers across partner organizations. Second, it benefits from technical expertise

of the humanitarian and development aid. Third, education 'for' refugees by the international actors such as NGOs tend to provide more of standardized tools that present a common framework for coordinated planning and response from the global refugee regime. Nonetheless, it carries negative notes particularly in a protracted crisis setting of Mae La camp. First, it constantly struggles with the lack of partnership and consensus with diverse stakeholders in terms of educational contents and approaches. Second, it imposes mostly the top-down initiatives to plan and respond in resolving displacement and building peace in the ways that the community does not necessarily agree or willing to incorporate. Last, but most importantly, education 'for' refugees eventually face challenges due to a critical lack of sustainability of the project-based provisions.

[Table 18] Comparative Strengths and Weaknesses of Education 'for' and 'by' refugees in Mae La

	Education provided For the Refugees	**Education shaped By the Refugees**
Strengths	- High-level access to and relationship with governments, funding officials and decision makers across partner organizations - Linkages within and technical expertise of the humanitarian and development aid - Strong standardized tools that present a common framework for coordinated planning and response from global refugee regime	- High-level access to and relationship with refugee community-based organizations, managing officials and decision makers across Karen State and other camps along the border - Educational interventions spanning preparedness of the future through to meaning-making of the present - Strong community ownership with a sense of belonging
Weaknesses	- Lack of partnership and consensus with internal stakeholders - Top-down initiatives to plan and respond in protracted situations despite the community is weak or an unwilling - Lack of sustainability - Lack of transformative agendas with externally prescribed directions	- Lack of standards and accreditation - Lack of technical expertise specific to state systems - Community-based initiatives to plan and respond in protracted situations despite the community ownership cannot be sustained due to lack of funding and capacity - Transformative agendas may focus on nationalistic spirit, not catering the learning needs for all

Source: Author

On the other hand, the findings in this research illustrate the diverse and sometimes surprising ways that refugees engage within the planning and implementation of their own educational practices. Centring around their own leadership and institutes in the camp community, the snapshot of education 'by' the refugees have demonstrated a remarkable capacity to navigate or influence the institutional arrangements that are pre-designed and implemented with the stated intention of providing assistance and solutions. This is possible because education shaped and sustained by the institutes and leadership based in the community has certain strengths. First of all, they have strong solidarity with diverse refugee community-based organizations and decision makers across the Karen State as well as in other camps along the border. Second, the purpose of their educational planning and implementation span through not only the meaning-making of the present mundane life but creating hope for the future beyond the life in confined camps. Third, they enable the refugee individuals to feel strong ownership of their own community with Karen nationalist identity. Based on this sense of belonging, the community members are encouraged to critically question, reflect and act upon the status quo through education.

Within the context of refugee education, Freire's insights certainly brought a significant perspective transformation in understanding refugee education. It identifies and challenges the solid assumption that refugees - and their entire community - are merely the beneficiaries of educational interventions. The process of exploring the educational practices in the camp setting by acknowledging the agency of refugees both on individual and community level, revealed the complex structures in which top-down and bottom-up approaches both face challenges. As Freire argued for a shared and dialectical project of overturning old structures and

inventing new ones that are more egalitarian, refugees are to become conscious of and to work to affect the processes of enculturation. Freirean notion of critical education actively invites the refugees to challenge and transgress the boundaries that have long been neglecting the refugee voices on the ground and determining refugee's role as beneficiaries. In such critical terms, refugee education becomes a matter of ‘giving voice’ and ‘advocating’ (Davis, 2004). It also opens the door to explore and understand the important aspect that these efforts may be in tension – real or perceived – with the solutions being pursued by institutional actors, such as nation-states and international organizations. As shown in the snapshot of education 'by' refugees, the refugee leadership and institutes seek to influence and transform institutional responses of the external influence. In some instances, they may resist or contest programs or categories and seek to subvert these processes. Surprisingly, as shown in the responses of some refugee teachers in the findings, refugee individuals may also intentionally even bypass all institutional responses imposed from both external and internal stakeholders. In some cases, the refugees may seem to participate prominently in decision-making processes in education 'for' and 'by' refugees, however, they may participate in symbolic and performative ways.

What is noteworthy is that, from the Freirean educational perspective, both external and internal actors should not assume that refugees want to participate in their institutional processes, and it better not predetermine the means and forms of the participation. This is because these prescribed forms in refugee education cannot ensure that refugees’ perspectives can be substantively reflected in institutional processes (Bradley, Milner, & Peruniak, 2019). In and through refugee education, ideally engaging in the process of conscientization, refugee

learners and educators are expected to become aware of their socio-political realities. Imagining themselves as beyond beneficiaries, they become capable of creating the conditions through which they could realize their own agency. To do so, an important starting point is being able to identify the difference between what it means to be an object (a thing) and a subject (a human being). After the recognition of their agency, Freire emphasizes the fact that every single human being could change the world for the better despite they are constantly demeaned by a system of oppression. In this sense, the Freirean perspective calls for the refugees to be regarded as the makers of their own destinies in and through refugee education.

5.2.2 Refugee Education beyond Domestication: Towards Liberation

The Freirean analysis in refugee education offers insights that there are certainly ways that refugees may participate that are outside the scope of the prescribed frameworks or agendas. Refugees who perceive themselves beyond the beneficiaries, may even intentionally choose to avoid participation in processes as prescribed by institutional actors either from external or internal actors. Notwithstanding such emphases, the findings of this research demonstrate the risks the Freirean notion of transformative orientation being misinterpreted in the context of education 'by' refugees. The transformative orientation can be at stake for refugees with limited understanding and application of Freire's emphasis on critical consciousness. It helps imagining and reflecting upon their role beyond beneficiaries, but at the same time, it has a risk of positioning within the binary conceptions either as beneficiaries or revolutionist. In other words, it helps

imagining and reflecting upon their role beyond as beneficiaries, but at the same time, it has a risk of mispositioning the refugees to grow nationalist spirit in education - and "all other aspects of their being and individuality are erased" (Pinson & Arnot, 2007, p. 399) while there is a range of intersecting factors in the real-life case. The refugee identity of being stateless – or status-less – heavily influence other intersecting identities that are equally significant, while making them highly visible as 'the oppressed' (Freire, 1970). Hence, it can further marginalize them as 'the outcasts' as described in the following statement.

> Refugees are stateless … They are outcasts and outlaws of a novel kind, the products of globalization … Refugees are (regarded as) human waste, with no useful function to play in the land of their arrival … from their present place, the dumping site, there is no return and no road forward … The act of assigning to waste puts an end to differences, individualities, idiosyncrasies … All measures have been taken to assure the permanence of their exclusion (Bauman, 2004, pp. 76–78).

Table 18 in chapter 5.2.1 illustrates not only the strengths in education that is shaped 'by' the refugees in the context of Mae La, but also the weaknesses of it. First of all, in the camp setting that is structurally marginalized by both hosting and origin states, formal education is faced with significant struggles due to the lack of accreditation and standards. Second, despite it has its own purpose within the pseudo-State system, it lacks in technical expertise specific to the wider state systems. Hence, most bottom-up initiatives - formed by the refugee leadership and

institutes - to plan and respond in protracted situations cannot be sustained with critical lack of capacity as well as funding. Coupled with these weaknesses, education ‘by’ the refugees can play the role of isolating the community and individuals further away from the larger mainstream society. As a part of separatist movement, it may result into formation of ethnic micro-communities rather than coordinated, collective engagements with wider communities. While Freire highlights significantly that schools in the camp setting become key sites that invite active participation toward freedom, to respect and encourage grassroots voices and actions within the community, the over-emphasis on the transformation that is narrowly interpreted into the fixed purpose of Karen nation-building, has risks of neglecting diverse presents and futures discussed in mundane life. It may put an end to "differences, individualities, idiosyncrasies" (Bauman, 2004, p. 78) of the community members and replace them with one identity: a refugee being stateless and oppressed.

Utilizing Paulo Freire’s philosophical stance, this chapter calls for the stakeholders involved in both education 'for' and 'by' refugees to consider education as a vehicle for liberation instead of domestication (Freire, 1970). Based on his insights, concrete utopias for refugee education are always in motion; they are never pregiven; they never exist as blueprints, which would only ensure the ‘‘mechanical repetition of the present.’’ Rather, they exist within the movement of history itself, as opportunity and not as determinism. They point not to a distant future but to a deeper engagement of the present (McLaren, 2007). Freirean analysis in refugee education discovered that while the refugees may actively seek for freedom, there can be internal obstacles that prevent them from being free, besides the institutional obstacles like statelessness and colonization. While we

can have a profound belief in the ability of ordinary people to shape history and their own destinies, based on his insights, we may have to refuse romanticizing the culture and experiences that produce oppressive social conditions. This is because the subordinate or oppressed cultures cannot be free of the contaminating effects of oppressive and institutional relations of power. In this sense, in order for refugee education to be indeed educational, learners must be intimately involved in each stage of their liberation through education consisting conscientization and dialogue. The purpose of refugee education should never be pre-given or exist as blueprints, which would only ensure the domestication of the learners into existing power structures.

Chapter 6. CONCLUSION

What we don't know about refugees' educational environment and experiences in protracted refugee camps, particularly in the context of developing countries, is critical. While we can simply count heads in classrooms, what do we know about the surrounding structures outside of – deeply connected to – the classroom? What are they doing to shape and sustain their own concept of education during exile? What do they want to be doing and how can it be interpreted from an educational perspective? Finding answers to these questions can be extremely challenging in conflict and crisis-affected settings, even for those that have endured for years. Beyond the reality from resource concerns and traditional donor-driven models of assistance, this research has explored how – and to what end – the refugee learners that are remaining in the camps are educated.

Focusing on the case of Mae La refugee camp located on the border of Thailand and Myanmar, the key purpose of this research was to highlight the marginalized narratives, including the local perspectives, and voices on how education is formed, maintained and conceptualized in the context of a protracted refugee crisis. Being more specific, I raised the following questions: what are the purposes of sustaining schooling in the camp and how is the meaning of refugee education conceptualized differently – or similarly – between the stakeholders involved? For the conclusion, I provide here a summary of each chapter for my dissertation, followed by future research directions.

Chapter 2 categorized three conventional approaches rationalizing education for refugee learners found in the existing literature of refugee education worldwide, prior to exploring refugee education within the Karen refugee

community on the Thai-Myanmar borderland. Firstly, the *humanitarian approach* describes the UNHCR's general institutional approach to refugee education, broadly discussed in the discourse of emergency education (Burde et al., 2017; Kagawa, 2005; Nicolai et al., 2019; Novelli & Lopes Cardozo, 2008; Sinclair, 2007; Winthrop & Mendenhall, 2006). Centring around the immediate and outward crisis instead of the broader politics (Kapoor, 2013), education in the humanitarian approach is commonly viewed as a rapid response, providing immediate protection to children. As schooling for refugee children carries more of a long-term significance beyond survival purpose, the short-term perspective on education and emergency has been critiqued, given the protracted nature of today's refugee crisis worldwide. Secondly, *the human rights approach* emphasizes education as a human right to be realized and cultivated through education in refugee crisis. It defines education as an 'enabling right', providing skills that people need to reach their full potential and to exercise their other various rights (UNESCO, 2019). Evident in the discourse of Right to Education (RTE) for refugee children (A. Anderson et al., 2011; Crisp et al., 2001; McConnachie, 2012; Momin, 2017; Moriarty, 2017; Szente et al., 2006; Thomas, 2016; UNESCO, 2017), it provides a normative framework consistent with the fundamental mandate of the global refugee regime. However, in the current practices of refugee education worldwide struggling with the issues of its quality and accreditation, the rights-based approach can be critiqued for being too ideal or vague to implement and to ensure the rights of the refugees through education. This is largely due to the discrepancy found between the exclusionary policies of education that are mostly based on the logic of national citizenship, and the universal rights of children to education (Pinson & Arnot, 2007). Thirdly, the

developmental approach recognizes education as a long-term investment for society and the lack of quality education in crisis as holding back development potential. This approach – most commonly expressed by local stakeholders – calls for a transition from relief to development discourse (Al-Hroub, 2014; Demusz, 1998; Dryden-Peterson, 2006; Mendenhall, 2014; Moore, 1999; Storen, 2016). With a long-term view of education, various education guidelines and strategies by international communities promote refugee inclusion in and through education, embedding a sense of future relevance toward individual livelihoods and societal advancement (UNHCR, 2011b, 2019a, 2019b). Nevertheless, in the process of a top-down approach towards refugee education, it can also be critiqued for ultimately falling short of empowering the learners to claim their own development particularly when there is a lack of refugee participation. The final section of chapter 2 suggests a need for an educational approach as an alternative to the conventional discourses of refugee education. Acknowledging that vulnerable groups of children in the refugee camps can be seen not only as "restricted" objects of educational interventions but "resilient" subject beings (McConnachie, 2016, p. 407), Paulo Freire – one of the most prominent scholars for critical education theory – and his pedagogy (Freire, 1970, 1974, 1992) are introduced in order to reflect upon the current practices of refugee education. Adopting his philosophical stance, the study expanded on the refugee education discourses from its external actors including the international organizations, host country, and country of origin, to its internal actors including the community-based institutes and leadership, as well as the refugee teachers and students. In interpreting the ways that refugee education is practiced and perceived, through a lens of the Freirean educational perspective, this research views education as a

process of emancipating and empowering, hence the purpose of refugee education is not only to enhance the previously established social order. Instead of merely being a tool for something else, refugee education, like in any other context of education, is to bring transformations and to have the rationales in itself (Davis, 2004; Freire, 1970).

Chapter 3 outlined the methodology used throughout my dissertation. Adopting an ethnographically informed qualitative approach, I conducted a field research in the Mae La refugee camp, near the border town of Mae Sot, Thailand, in 2019 and 2020. Over a combined total period of five months of full-time stay in the camp, I identified myself to the community as a volunteer schoolteacher and researcher. I collected data from a broad sample size of research consultants and countless hours of formally recorded interviews as well as informal conversations and experiences in the form of participant observation. Using snowball and purposive sampling methods, my research participants included educational coordinators from the local CBOs including KRCEE and KECD, international NGOs and UNHCR, as well as in-service teachers, parents, students, and community leaders. The qualitative data in the form of audio recordings, transcripts of conversations, and field notes have been analysed and synthesized into general observations.

Chapter 4 described and analysed how education is shaped, sustained and conceptualized as education 'for' refugees and education 'by' refugees in the Mae La community. In chapter 4.1, education 'for' the refugees in the camp appears to be awkwardly structured by the pseudo-State comprising global governance, national jurisdiction, and local management. The top-down development paradigm that perceives refugee education merely as an emergency endeavour on the

humanitarian ground is easily rationalized. Through depoliticization, so called ‘experts’ – humanitarian and development NGOs in this case – speak for the Mae La refugee community’s various educational challenges, such as the limited link between education and employment, lack of sustainability in funding and management and lack of consensus for the student future. While they act as ‘witnesses’ on behalf of refugee ‘victims’, they tend to reduce the refugee community members as ‘other’ and into ‘passive bystander’, unilaterally representing the needs and desires. Under the unique environment of the camp – set up as a temporary and liminal space outside the modern states – external stakeholders’ rationale for schooling tend to be ‘unsettled’ leading to inconsistent and mixed curriculum content. Indeed, the support of international refugee regime in education sector promotes its own version of refugee identity. Overall, the conceptualization of refugee children has been framed around their vulnerability and their role as victims. Then, chapter 4.2 focuses more on the narratives derived from refugee-led institutions and leadership, conceptualizing refugee education as education ‘by’ refugees. Highlighting the refugee voices on what education means to them and how they play a subjective role in it, education is described as 'a boundary making device', in the Karen refugees' formal and informal efforts for nationhood and recognition. The purpose of schooling expressed by various internal stakeholders in the camp is deeply connected with the historical root of *Kawthoolei,* the Karen nation without a state. Acknowledging a critical role of education “empowering students” to respond to unjust status-quo, education is seen as both a last resort and a pride to sustain Karen's identity. The insiders’ perspective emphasized that education does not need to always be future-oriented for the life outside the camp. Instead, it can be present-oriented in providing a

space where students are encouraged to regard themselves as a subject that can reflect and act, rather than objects to be acted upon. Education 'by' refugees informs various attempts by members of the Karen community to not only survive by depending upon the global support, but also to manage their own systems admitting the intersectionality of refugee and Karen ethnic minorities. As an attempt to develop more of a holistic understanding of how refugee education is shaped and sustained in the context of a segregated and protracted refugee camp, the chapter has encompassed the viewpoints of the both the external and internal stakeholders involved in the camp community overall. Beginning with the historical context, it explored how schooling is formed and managed in the camp and what the perceived roles of learners and educators are, to address fundamental questions about to what ends education is pursued from the perspective of education 'for' and 'by' refugees respectively.

Chapter 5 discussed whether refugee education is indeed educational – rather than humanitarian, rights, or development-oriented – by critically reflecting upon the role of the refugee learners and goal of refugee education. Based on Freire's theoretical standpoint wherein all learners are human beings with their own inclinations, lived experiences, and legitimate ways of thinking, and the banking approach in education is a violent way to dehumanize learners, the chapter leads to re-thinking whether refugee education remains educational. Interpreting refugee education with the discourses of Freire's critical pedagogy allows theoretical contribution to promote transformative and empowering educational experiences in the context of the Karen refugee learners under the pseudo-State and government-in-exile. Utilizing his insights, concrete utopias for refugee education are always in motion; they are never pregiven; they never exist as

blueprints, which would only ensure the ‘‘mechanical repetition of the present.’’ Rather, they exist within the movement of history itself, as opportunity and not as determinism. They point not to a distant future but to a deeper engagement of the present (McLaren, 2007). Hence, the chapter calls for the stakeholders involved in both education 'for' and 'by' refugees to perceive refugee learners beyond aid beneficiaries or national revolutionists, and to consider education as a vehicle for liberation instead of domestication (Freire, 1970).

The journey of finding answers to the challenging questions I raised throughout this PhD dissertation has been a meaningful learning curve for me both as a schoolteacher and a qualitative researcher. It has partially answered the questions I had from the very beginning, who is obliged to secure the educational right of the refugee learners in various states of uncertainty and limbo. It is noteworthy that while the camp is intended to be temporary, changes in the global governance – from humanitarian approaches to developmental approaches making the camp more sustainable and to integrate refugees better into larger society – are clearly not aligned with the hosting state or the internal community leadership. It also explains why the students who may possibly have diverse motivations to pursue education – after a long time spent in the camps – tend to commonly utilize education to actively pursue adaptation into a larger society. It was clear that the refugee learners in the case of the Mae La camp, have long been excluded from education for citizenship and economic development and struggle between the diverse agendas imposed on them.

For future research to be conducted in the field of refugee education, particularly for the segregated and protracted context in developing countries, this research suggests the followings. The identification and cultivation of both

external and internal capacities that are supposed to result in horizontal partnership – as Freire highlights – require a sustained commitment, as well as a willingness to hear the voice of various stakeholders and learn from mistakes. For education to become transformative and empowering for the refugee learners and educators, both external and internal support groups must acknowledge and carefully consider the following three features of refugee education. First, refugee education is a process rather than a product and it is long-term rather than short-term. Second, it is inevitable to be heavily influenced by local, not only external, inputs and resources due to its segregated context. Third, it should seek to create opportunities rather than impose certain solutions. If these are accepted as the guiding premises of refugee education in the camp settings, then diverse voices, including those who are at the bottom of the power structures, must be encompassed for the process of shaping and sustaining the purpose of refugee education together at the front end. As the findings and discussion of this research consistently indicate, it means that certain approaches or solutions that are separately formulated and prescribed cannot be enforced to the community. Instead, for refugee education to become more educational, it requires a structural environment where individuals feel safe enough to utilize critical thrust of education in ways that both challenge orthodoxies and struggle for transformation. Such as like an individual should feel comfortable before they can share their thoughts, refugee learners and educators may require foundational security to participate in the process of addressing real-life issues in refugee education. It is vital to realize that refugee individuals may participate in their own ways outside the scope of institutional or community frameworks, intentionally avoid participation toward goals as prescribed by external actors or internal refugee leadership.

Refugees, civil society movements, and opposition forces may have a variety of opinions and agendas for international organizations, states and bilateral donors that dominate the current focus of the refugee education field (Novelli & Lopes Cardozo, 2008). Meanwhile, policy makers and practitioners adopting critical education approach in conflict settings tend to be somewhat abstract and often lacking in utility for those people working in the field affiliated with international organizations, international NGOs or local CBOs. Since many researches with critical education theories locate the focus within a broader landscape, considering sociocultural and political structures, they often fail to take into account the real-life case with practical needs and the more complex processes within which this practical activity ends up taking place (Paulson & Rappleye, 2007). It is partly due to a gap between the practice of refugee education heavily relying on problem-solving approach toward reconstruction and the theory of critical education that calls for re-creation of surroundings. A problem-solving approach to the field of refugee education would merely build on technical solutions that cannot address the root causes of protracted conflict. Hence, as opposed to suggesting the ways to solve problems, this research rather posed fundamental questions toward the ways of defining the purposes behind refugee education. In doing so, this research provides room for rethinking refugee education in a more comprehensive way embedding community-based perspectives, practices and their contextual background. To conclude, the recent trend in refugee education along with the changing durable solutions – away from the global governance model and towards global support for national integration – may ultimately fall short in leading education to be transformative in the necessary ways. Acknowledging that there are various viewpoints and practices

that exist in protracted refugee situations, I want to highlight that existing approaches to refugee education will ultimately fail to be liberating, in the Freirean sense, for those engaged. It is because without critically addressing fundamental questions about to what ends education is pursued for – and by – the refugee learners, the structural system may continue to place decision-making power in the hands of people other than those directly affected.

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APPENDIX

IRB (Institutional Review Board) Approval Letter

심의결과 통보서

수신

책임연구자	이름: 여수빈	소속: 서울대학 글로벌교육협력학과	직위: 박사과정
지원기관	해당없음		

과제정보

승인번호	IRB No. 1912/001-011		
연구과제명	난민교사의 역할과 지위: 태국의 카렌 난민촌 교육 사례를 중심으로		
연구종류	학위 논문 연구, 면담(FGI 포함), 공개된 정보를 이용하는 연구, 참여관찰		
심의종류	재심의		
심의일자	2019-12-06		
심의대상	연구계획서(재심의), 연구참여자용 동의서 또는 동의서 면제 사유서, 재심의 답변서		
심의결과	승인		
승인일자	2019-12-06	승인유효기간	2020-12-05
정기보고주기	12개월		
심의의견	1. 심의결과 제출하신 연구계획에 대해 승인합니다. 2. 연구자께서는 승인된 문서를 사용하여 연구를 진행하시기 바라며, 만일 연구진행 과정에서 계획상에 변경사항 (연구자 변경, 연구내용 변경 등)이 발생할 경우 본 위원회에 변경신청을 하여 승인 받은 후 연구를 진행하여 주십시오. 3. 유효기간 내 연구가 끝났을 경우 종료 보고서를 제출하여야 하며, 승인유효기간 이후에도 연구를 계속하고자 할 경우, 2020-11-05까지 지속심의를 받도록 하여 주십시오.		
검토의견	계획서 검토 의견 동의서 검토 의견 기타 검토 의견		

2019년 12월 06일

서울대학교 생명윤리위원회 위원장

ABSTRACT IN KOREAN

국문초록

난민교육의 재고찰:

태국 카렌 난민캠프내 난민을 위한, 난민에 의한 교육

서울대학교

사범대학원 협동과정 글로벌교육협력전공

여수빈

전 세계적으로 난민 문제가 장기화되면서 수많은 난민들은 오랜 시간 사회적으로 분리된 임시 난민캠프 시설에 수용되어 비인간적인 환경에 노출되어 있다. 1951 년 난민협약(Convention relating to the Status of Refugees)에 명시된 교육권과 교육에 대한 보편적 접근을 달성하기 위한 국제사회의 지속적인 노력은 1990 년 모두를 위한 교육 운동 이래 공식화되었다. 이는 분쟁 상황에서 양질의 교육받을 권리를 포함하는 계획과 조치를 요구했다. 그러나 난민교육 분야의 학술연구 대다수가 여전히 선진국의 재정착 난민 인구에 집중되어 있으며, 전체 난민의 85%가 현재 개발도상국에

거주하고 있다는 점을 감안할 때, 난민교육에 관한 연구가 더욱 필요한 실정이다.

이러한 맥락에서 본 연구의 두가지 목적은 다음과 같다. 첫째, 태국-미얀마 국경에 위치한 난민캠프에서 교육이 어떻게 형성되고 유지되는지에 대한 지역적 관점과 목소리를 중심으로 난민교육 담론에서 소외된 내러티브를 드러내는 것이다. 따라서, 이 연구는 국제기구, 수용국, 출신국으로부터의 외부 주체들의 담론 뿐만 아니라 캠프내 커뮤니티를 이루고 있는 리더십 구성원들을 중심으로 난민교사 및 학생 등을 포함한 내부 이해관계자들의 관점에 초점을 맞춘다. 둘째, 비판적 교육철학자 파울루 프레이리의 관점을 기반으로 난민교육이 실행되고 인식되는 양상을 비판적으로 해석함으로써 기존의 난민교육 담론을 이론적으로 확장하는 것이다. 이를 통해 이 연구는 교육을 해방의 과정으로 정의하고 미리 확립된 사회질서를 견고히 하기 위한 도구로 제한해서는 안된다는 입장을 취한다. 기존의 난민교육 문헌에서는 세 가지 전통적인 접근방식 - 인도주의적 접근, 인권기반 접근, 발전주의적 접근 - 을 채택하는 경향이 있으나, 본 연구는 교육적 접근방식을 대안적으로 채택하여 다양한 교육이해관계자들의 관점과 관행을 조사한다. 이는 궁극적으로 난민교육이 실제로 교육적인지 질문하고 재고할 수 있는 중요한 기반을 제공한다.

문화기술지적 질적방법론을 활용하여 연구자는 2019 년과 2020 년 사이 태국 메솟 국경도시와 인접한 위치에 약 35,000 명의 카렌족 난민을 수용하고 있는 멜라 난민캠프 내에서 현지조사를 수행하였다. 연구자는 초·중등학교

자원봉사 교사 및 질적연구자의 신분으로 총 5 개월간 난민캠프내에 거주하면서 눈덩이 표집 및 의도적 표집을 통해 캠프내 구성원들과 라포를 형성하였으며 면담, 참여관찰 및 현지문서를 활용하여 40 명 이상의 주요 연구참여자들로부터 자료를 수집하였다. 본 연구에 사용된 주요 면담 참가자는 (1) 카렌난민교육국(KRCEE) 및 카렌교육문화부(KECD) 등의 지역사회기반 교육단체 소속 교육 코디네이터 (2) 국제 NGO 및 유엔난민기구 소속 외부 관계자 (3) 교사, 학부모, 학생, 커뮤니티 지도자 구성원을 포함한 내부 관계자 등을 포함하였다.

연구결과는 멜라 캠프내에서 교육이 형성되고 유지되는 양상을 '난민을 위한 교육'과 '난민에 의한 교육'으로 개념화하여 설명한다. 먼저 '난민을 위한 교육'은 글로벌 거버넌스, 국가기반의 제재, 지역사회 기반의 운영 아래 서로 다른 주체들이 혼합된 양상으로 교육에 관여하고 있음을 보여준다. 난민교육은 인도주의적 차원에서 '비상 시의 교육 Education in emergencies (EiE)'으로 이루어지며 교육을 통해 하향식 발전주의 패러다임이 합리화되는 경향을 보였다. 난민아동은 학습자이기 이전에 피해자, 취약집단 등으로 정의되며 공급 주체에 따라 교육을 정당화하는 근거 및 접근이 다르므로 혼합된 커리큘럼이 형성되었다. 반면에 '난민에 의한 교육'은 캠프내 난민리더십을 중심으로 교육의 의미와 역할을 구성한다. 이는 교육을 개념화하고 이행하는 과정에서 난민의 주체적인 역할을 강조하며, 교육이 국가와 인정을 향한 '경계 설정 장치'로 묘사되고 있음을 보여주었다. 외부 관계자들과는 대조적으로, 캠프 내부 구성원들이 표현한 교육의 목적은 Kawthoolei 라는 이름의 카렌 국가

형성을 위한 역사적 뿌리와 투쟁과도 깊은 관련이 있었다. 교육은 국가 없는 민족인 카렌족 난민들이 카렌으로서의 정체성을 유지하기 위한 최후의 수단이자 자부심으로 간주되며, 이는 학생들이 스스로를 외부지원의 객체 또는 수혜자로 인식하지 않고 민족주의 혁명가로서의 주체로 인식하도록 장려한다.

프레이리의 비판적 교육관점에서 카렌 난민아동은 외부지원의 수혜자 또는 민족주의 혁명가를 넘어서 학습자로 인식되어야 한다. 이는 교육이 미리 주어진 목적을 달성하기 위한 도구가 아니며, 청사진으로서 존재하는 교육은 현재의 기계적인 반복만을 보장하기 때문이다(McLaren, 2007). 프레이리의 관점을 통해 본 난민교육은 '난민을 위한 교육'과 '난민에 의한 교육' 모두 가축화(또는 길들임 domestication)가 아닌 해방의 수단으로 간주되어야 함을 강조한다. 이는 난민교육의 최근 동향이 글로벌 거버넌스 모델에서 국가 통합을 위한 지원으로 그 양상을 달리하고 있으나, 궁극적으로 교육을 통해 추구하는 목적에 대한 근본적인 질문을 다루지 않고는 의미 있는 변화를 도출하기 어렵다는 점을 시사한다. 본 연구의 의의는 더 나은 난민교육을 위한 문제 해결 방안을 제시하는 대신, 난민교육의 목적이 진정 교육적인지 비판적으로 질문하고 지역사회 기반의 관점, 관행 및 맥락을 심층적으로 살펴봄으로써 난민교육을 보다 포괄적으로 재고하기 위한 단초를 제공했다는 데에 있다.

주제어: 난민교육, 태국-미얀마 국경, 난민캠프, 비판적 교육학, 문화기술지, 질적연구
학번: 2017-35369