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OVERALL NOTES:

An Interactive Qualifying Project/Social Science Project

Assessment of Raks Thai Learning Centers

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Abstract

3.7 million migrants live in Thailand, including thousands of children. Many of these children have very limited access to high quality education. Our project, sponsored by The Raks Thai Foundation, will evaluate learning centers operated by the foundation and provide recommendations for their improvement. This proposal provides the background necessary to understand the challenges facing migrants in Thailand and the barriers they encounter when trying to obtain education for their children. It also details research methods we will utilize to collect data to determine the needs and priorities of the students and their families. We will use this diverse set of data to analyze the programs and curriculums currently in use to develop final recommendations.

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1 Introduction

In 2013, Thailand was home to an estimated 3.7 million migrants (United Nations, 2013). Migration into Thailand has continued to increase as people seek a better future where they can escape ethnic oppression, political conflict, and war while seeking stable employment and better pay than is available in their home countries. In recent decades, Thailand has invested in growing its industries, which call for more low-wage workers. However, most educated Thai workers are typically unwilling to work in labor intensive industrial jobs, such as seafood processing, agriculture, and textile production (Petchot, 2011). Instead, industries frequently meet their work demand by employing migrants. Many of these industrial jobs entail intense work hours in subpar conditions, but these migrants are willing to do what is necessary to meet their financial needs. This is especially true for migrants who bring their children with them. The majority of these children look forward to futures similar to that of their parents. However, there is a chance for these children to escape the fate of working twelve hour days at jobs in dangerous, dirty, and demeaning conditions (Walsh & Makararavy, 2011). With quality education, migrant children improve their ability to compete for better jobs.

Unfortunately, the venues for education across Thailand for migrant children are limited. Since the vast majority of migrants in Thailand originate from Myanmar[1],the migrant child population lives predominantly along the Thai-Myanmar border[2] (Lee, 2013). To meet the educational needs of these children, learning centers are frequently created in border regions by NGOs. For example, the border town of Mae Sot is home to an exceptional number of NGO schools. More than 50 schools are currently in operation, several of which are beginning to gain recognition by the Thai education system (Kusakabe & Pearson, 2013). However, this level of opportunity is not representative of other areas in Thailand where fewer migrant children reside, and fewer learning centers are available (Kusakabe & Pearson, 2013). Farther inland, away from the border, there are still hundreds of thousands of disadvantaged children who have few options to receive an education (Raks Thai Foundation, 2014). For reasons that are still unclear at this time, the resources of these migrant learning centers do not reach the majority of inland migrant children (Raks Thai Foundation, 2014). Much like the schools along the border, learning centers throughout the country offer children education in Thai and Burmese, as well as more common subjects, such as basic math, life skills, and occasionally English. These lessons are intended to better prepare students to actively contribute to Myanmar society should they choose to return to their home country, or to Thai society, as learning Thai can increase an individual's odds at employment in a better paying job (Raks Thai Foundation, 2014). However, without education, many migrant children face major implications to their future, leaving their quality of life and well-being at serious risk.

Migrant children are deterred from obtaining education where they have resettled due to

[1] Thailand neighbors the "Republic of the Union of Myanmar", a country formerly known as the "Union of Myanmar", and prior to that, as "Myanmar". Each name change represents a change in leadership (BBC News, 2014). Around the world there are still disputes over the recognition of the most recent government. Given the generally positive changes that have occurred recently, we will refer to this country as "Myanmar", but to its population as "Burmese". The history of this country and its relationship with Thailand will be explained further in section 2.1 of the background.

[2] The border area is also home to thousands of Burmese refugees who fled the civil conflicts of their home country. Though migrant children and refugee children have similar needs, they are educated separately (Lee, 2013). The institutes collaborate on occasion, but refugee schools and migrant learning centers operate under different circumstances and standards, making them separate entities (Lee, 2013). Refugee learning centers will not be the focus of this report, though information about refugees will be reviewed when pertinent to understanding migrant issues.

numerous factors. The first of these factors is the language barrier. Thai schools often do not have the bilingual staff necessary to successfully integrate Burmese children into their classrooms (Nawarat, 2012). In addition, many migrants' ultimate goal is to return to Myanmar, making learning Thai a lower priority than being proficient in Burmese (Raks Thai Foundation, 2014). The second barrier faced by children results from their family's financial limitations. Due to their poor financial situations they frequently cannot afford the transportation, uniforms, lunches, and supplies needed to send their children to school (Petchot, 2011). As a result of their family's financial needs many children wish to assist their families financially by joining the workforce. Migrant children frequently enter industrial jobs legally at age 15 and illegally at younger ages, preventing them from pursuing further education and working in higher-level jobs (Petchot, 2011). The third barrier contributing to difficulty for migrant children seeking education is the influence of their parents. Parents frequently encourage their children to leave school and contribute additional income. Parents are also wary of any contact with official Thai organizations, including schools, for fear of deportation due to their irregular status. Instead of having their children attend school, undocumented migrants may have their children stay home to watch younger siblings or bring them to work to be kept out of trouble. Burmese parents also frequently have very different priorities for their children's' education. While Thai schools aim to prepare their students for higher education, many Burmese parents only want their children to obtain basic skills for everyday life. Those that plan to return to Myanmar think the Thai curriculum will not be relevant for their children (Petchot, 2011). Those that want to remain in Thailand frequently value working more highly than education and doubt that higher education will improve their children's lives (ILO-IPEC, 2011).

The issue of migrant education is particularly important in Mahachai. This town is home to major seafood processing facilities, which draw many migrant workers and their families to the area. There are an estimated 6,000 migrant children in Mahachai (Raks Thai Foundation, 2014). To accommodate these children, The Raks Thai Foundation currently operates four learning centers in the Mahachai area. These centers hope to educate these children and give them the chance to have better lives in Thailand or Myanmar. To best provide these services, the centers need to know what tactics have been successful and which procedures could be improved. However, due to the complex issues surrounding migrant education and lack of resources, the impacts and benefits of the learning centers are still uncertain.

To help these Raks Thai Learning Centers improve their positive impact on migrants and education, we will conduct an evaluation of their curriculum and operations. To gain an understanding of the operations and problems faced by the learning center and its students, we will conduct focus groups and interviews to assess the opinions of Raks Thai staff, government officials, migrant parents, and center staff and teachers. We will survey Raks Thai students as well with age appropriate methods. We will also evaluate the curriculum and teaching methods utilized in the Raks Thai Learning Centers in comparison with the standard Thai public school curriculum. The Raks Thai Foundation also requests that we consider alternative services that may be beneficial to migrants. To determine these service preferences, additional questions will focus around this objective throughout our data collection. After gathering and analyzing data from the wider Mahachai migrant population, we will assemble recommendations which will enable the Raks Thai Foundation to better provide education to the children utilizing their learning centers. Upon project completion, we will supply the Raks Thai Foundation with a formal summary of our recommendations and a materials package complete with the full sets of questions used in focus groups, interviews, and questionnaires. These materials will help the Raks Thai Foundation continue to improve their service to the migrant population in Mahachai.

2 Background

This chapter provides details about the problems faced by migrants, education in Thailand, practices for migrant education, and context for our project. Section 2.1 discusses migration to Thailand and the factors that cause it. Section 2.2 provides details about Mahachai, the learning centers the project will assess, and the lives of migrant workers in Mahachai. Section 2.3 thoroughly discusses the obstacles migrant children face when seeking education. Section 2.4 introduces our sponsor and their role in rectifying this issue. Section 2.5 reviews the curriculum established for informal educational centers as well as the Thai public school curriculum which will serve as the standard of education in Thailand. Section 2.6 provides examples of techniques suitable for migrant learning that could be utilized to improve the Raks Thai Learning Centers.

2.1 Migration to Thailand

The UN estimated that 3.7 million migrants were living in Thailand in 2013 (United Nations, 2013). Although many of these migrants come from Cambodia and Laos as well, the primary source is Myanmar, accounting for 80% of the migrants in Thailand. Thousands of Burmese have crossed the border into Thailand fleeing the poor living conditions in Myanmar. With high inflation, a weak economy, forced population relocation, and ongoing political oppression, the Burmese have many reasons to relocate (Kusakabe & Pearson, 2013). Many of these issues began when the military took over in 1962. The military ruled with strict socialist policies and renamed the country from “Myanmar” to the “Union of Myanmar” in 1989. From 1962-2010, the military rule suppressed Burmese dissent, forcibly relocated civilians, poorly managed economic collapse, and targeted ethnic minorities (BBC News, 2014). As a result, many people left the country in search of a better future during this period. However, in 2010, the military announced new election laws which would lead to the first election in decades. The Union of Myanmar was renamed the “Republic of the Union of Myanmar” that year, and in 2011, the Burmese elected President Thein Sein as a representative of civilian democracy. Since then, Thein Sein has made several positive reforms, including reopening international relations, signing ceasefires with ethnic groups, and passing labor laws (BBC News, 2014). Because these changes are very recent, the name Myanmar is frequently still associated with the military’s junta, however, we have chosen to recognize the new government and its improvements by referring to the country as Myanmar.

Despite the poor conditions in Myanmar during the military junta, the mass movement into Thailand only began in 1984, following the Thai government’s recognition of the Burmese as “persons fleeing fighting”, which permitted them entrance to “temporary shelters” (International Organization for Migration, 2013). Thousands of these refugees stayed in Thailand for over 15 years and raised families. During this period, thousands more illegally crossed the border as undocumented migrants. Thailand shares a 2,500 km long border with Myanmar which is poorly guarded, making illegal migration of full families and independent children feasible (Mon, 2010). Though the jobs in Thailand may be low-wage, they still offer more opportunity than the alternative of remaining in Myanmar.

Currently, with wages nine times higher than those in Myanmar (Kusakabe & Pearson, 2013), Thailand still attracts thousands of low-wage workers each year (International Organization for Migration, 2013). Article 17 of Thailand’s Immigration Act 1979 permits undocumented migrants from the neighboring countries of Cambodia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, and Myanmar to temporarily work “legally” in Thailand (International Organization for Migration, 2013). Once a Thai employer agrees to hire an individual from one of the three neighboring countries, that person receives a work permit which states their employment and their permission to temporarily reside within Thailand as an irregular migrant for the duration of their employment (International Organization for Migration, 2013). However, this is not the same as being a legal, registered migrant. Attaining a work permit requires less paperwork and provides permission to reside under much more temporal conditions. If their employer decides they no longer need the extra help, the validity of the worker card is terminated, leaving the individual prone to deportation (Latt, 2013). However, due to the permissions of this Act and the complexity of migration paperwork and policies, many migrants still opt to cross the border into Thailand with their children illegally as soon as they receive an employment offer. Thus, many migrants live in fear of the Thai government (International Organization for Migration, 2013).

2.2 Migrants in Mahachai

This migration is exemplified in Mahachai, the heart of Thailand's seafood industry. Mahachai, located in the Samut Sakhon province, is approximately 36 kilometers southwest of Bangkok on the gulf of Thailand. The location of Mahachai is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 - Map of Mahachai

[Untitled map of Thailand and Mahachai]. Retrieved December 16, 2014, from: www.scmp.com/sites/default/files/2012/10/17/scm_news_littlemyanmar17.art_3.jpg

In 2014, the Raks Thai Foundation estimated that approximately 400,000 migrants, including 6,000 children, lived in Mahachai (Raks Thai Foundation, 2014). Of these migrants over 99% were Burmese (Petchot, 2011).

Samut Sakhon is one of the wealthiest provinces in Thailand and continues to grow economically. Its economy is based heavily on fisheries and seafood processing factories, an example of which can be seen in Figure 2. This dependency on fishing related industries has created a high concentration of migrants in the province. The Thais do not want to work in the low wage, dangerous jobs, so the migrants fill these positions (Kusakabe & Pearson, 2013). There are also many factories and a large agricultural sector that employ migrants. The wealth of this province, however, is not shared by the migrants working in these factories. The average monthly income of a migrant worker in a seafood processing factory is 2,000 Baht (Petchot, 2011). This is approximately $30 a month. For these low wages, migrants work in unsanitary and hazardous conditions. They suffer from sleep deprivation, malnutrition, and depression, and sustain work-related injuries due to poorly maintained equipment (Mon, 2010). Unregistered migrants also live in fear of deportation. Many employers use deportation as a threat to coerce migrants into working in these poor conditions. Some employers may employ a migrant for a period of time, then have that employee arrested and deported by the police before ever paying them (International Organization for Migration, 2013). While legally according to Thai Labour Law, they are entitled to compensation for work-related injuries, the Social Security Office does not approve these payments for migrants (Mon, 2010). Obtaining health care to address these injuries is also challenging. Most employers keep the working cards of their employees which prevents them from utilizing the public health care (Mon, 2010). Migrants who have their work permits in their possession must pay a fee, and then they can access health-care for minimal or no cost. Unregistered migrants have to pay in full for health services, although some government facilities will treat migrants who are unable to pay. Their children, however, have no coverage (International Organization for Migration, 2013). Migrant children often accompany their parents to these dangerous factories, frequently helping their parents when there is a lot of work. Although these factories are dangerous, accompanying their parents if often safer than being left at home alone where they can be bullied and sexually harassed (ILO-IPEC, 2013).

Figure 2 - Migrant workers in a seafood processing facility in Mahachai

[Untitled photograph of workers preparing shrimp for sale at Mahachai market]. Retrieved December 15, 2014, from: http://ejfoundation.org/sites/default/files/public/shrimp_report_v44_lower_resolution.pdf

2.3 Barriers to Education

When considering their future, migrant children typically have one of these three goals (Raks Thai Foundation, 2014):

1. Obtain a job within Thailand
2. Return to their home country
3. Continue their education in the formal Thai system

Their ability to attain these goals is constrained by limited education. By attending school and learning Thai, a migrant child may be able to find better employment options than a child who can only speak Burmese. With more education, children returning home will have the foundation to obtain better jobs, and children moving on to pursue further education will be better able to acclimate to the pace and practices of formal Thai schools. Thus, schooling makes all three goals more attainable (Raks Thai Foundation, 2014). However, in 2008, only 75,000 of the 378,845 migrant children in Thailand were enrolled in Thai schools(International Organization for Migration, 2013). Thousands of migrant children receive very little education by the time they enter the workforce. Numerous barriers inhibit their access to education. These include problems arising from language barriers, government and school policies, financial restrictions, and the influence of migrant parents on children.

2.3.1 Language Barrier

One of the most apparent obstacles to migrant children seeking quality education is the language barrier separating migrant children and the educational system in Thailand. In the province of Samut Sakhon, the vast majority of migrant workers are from Myanmar, and consequently speak Burmese (Petchot, 2011). Thai is the primary language of instruction in Thai schools. This difference in known language and language of instruction creates a serious obstacle for migrant children's efforts to learn concepts in Thai schools as well as being able to assimilate and learn Thai culture. Some schools have hired bilingual teachers or translators to bridge this gap, but measures to assist students who are not fluent in Thai are often too difficult and expensive to implement (Nawarat, 2012). In addition to the difficulty of learning in Thai schools, many migrants intend to move back to their home countries. For this reason, it is important that migrant children learn Burmese as well as Thai, which they cannot generally do in Thai schools (Raks Thai Foundation, 2014).

2.3.2 School Policies

Education policy in Thailand also makes it difficult for migrant children to attend school. All migrant and stateless children are guaranteed by federal policy the right to 12 years of education in the Thai public school system. The realities of the lives of migrants and the operations of Thai schools, however, make actually obtaining that education difficult. Public schools only accept new students twice each year. For migrants who often move throughout the year, the limited acceptance period prevents children from entering the educational system each time their parents move. Schools receive funding on a per-head basis, however, for children to be counted for funding, they must be documented. To obtain this documentation, migrant children must either apply for documentation through the schooling system or have parents that are registered migrants. The 13-digit ID number that migrant students can obtain through schools does grant children 10 years of legal residence in Thailand, but it can take two years or more to obtain this number. While the students are waiting for their ID numbers from the government, schools are not allocated funding for these students, and consequently, must cover the expenses of migrant education by spreading thin the funds received for documented migrants and Thai students. This makes schools reluctant to accept migrant children. Even if a school accepted migrants initially, they frequently become unable to accept more due to budget constraints because they overextend their financial resources (Petchot, 2011).

2.3.3 Financial Restrictions

Financial issues play a large role in the difficulty migrant children and their families face when seeking education. There are many different supplies and resources that the children need to attend schools, even if the education itself is free. Uniforms, lunches, textbooks, and transportation are the most frequent of these expenses. One report noted that each month, to send a child to school, parents have to spend at least 800 Baht on transportation and lunches alone. Given the typical monthly salary of only 2,000 Baht, these costs are very burdensome for migrant families. Considering other daily expenses for a family, it is likely that even sending one child to school would be unaffordable. Debt incurred by many migrant families from migration costs and living expenses makes educating children even less affordable (Petchot, 2011).

As children get older, they often enter the workforce to try to combat their family's poor financial situation. Legally, the minimum age for employment in Thailand is 15 years old, but some children start working at ages as young as 9 or 10 years old (Petchot, 2011). Child labor rates among those ages 5-14 in Thailand are approximately 13% (US Department of Labor, 2013). In Samut Sakhon province, an estimated 10,000 migrant children between 13 and 15 years old work in seafood processing facilities (Environmental Justice Foundation, 2013). Employment at such young ages takes children away from a chance to receive education. Many migrant children would prefer to continue their schooling, but families frequently rely on their children as a source of income, which, for older children, eliminates the possibility of education that could make the difference in their futures (ILO-IPEC, 2011).

2.3.4 Parental Influence

Another significant barrier to education of migrant children comes from their parents. Parents of migrants have many reasons to not want to send their children to school, though not all of these reasons will apply to every family. Migrant parents without proper documentation often worry their illegal status in Thailand may become apparent to the Thai government if they send their children to public school. Parents of migrant children often move frequently, which makes any education their children could receive inconsistent and disrupted (International Labor Organization, 2010). This issue is exacerbated for children that would be attending public schools with infrequent and narrow registration windows, which, in addition to traditional problems related to moving, would leave them not attending school while waiting for a new registration period. Many parents also do not think that Thai schools are suitable for the educational goals they have for their children. Thai schools often work to give students more advanced skills and prepare them to move on to higher education in Thailand. Many migrant parents have the desire for their children to be educated in basic math and language literacy for the purposes of everyday life, which is not the focus of Thai schools. Some families also have plans to return to Myanmar after a few years in Thailand, where the Thai educational curriculum isn't as relevant. Other parents worry that with changing migration and labor laws, after their children receive a minimal education, additional years spent in schools will not result in their children getting any better jobs in Thailand than they have, thus causing time in school to be wasted (Petchot, 2011). A common belief among migrant workers is that working is more valuable and better for the future than getting an education. This attitude makes them less likely to send their children to schools and also can instill a similar attitude in the children (ILO-IPEC, 2013).

2.4 Raks Thai Foundation Learning Centers

The Raks Thai Foundation is working to overcome these barriers. The Raks Thai Foundation is a nonprofit organization in Thailand. Their mission is to provide practical, sustainable solutions for the problems faced by the underprivileged communities of Thailand. They currently focus on providing health and educational services to underprivileged citizens as well as promoting community development and environmental sustainability. In accordance with these goals, they have set up learning centers, such as the one shown in Figure 3, throughout Thailand in an effort to provide for the educational needs of the children there.

Figure 3 - Children learning at a Raks Thai learning center in Mahachai

[Untitled image captured from Raks Thai Learning Center Video]. Retrieved December 3, 2014, from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HLQw4CoRAug

They currently operate four learning centers in Mahachai which will serve as the focus of our project. For the past ten years, these learning centers have served 140-150 children ages 5-15. Two small centers, located near Saphan Pla, serve approximately 20 students. The larger centers are located in Tha Chalom and Krok Krak. Figure 3 shows the locations of the centers. Each center divides its students into two groups. The first group, the primary class, is for young students, and students who do not know Thai. The second group contains the older and more advanced students.

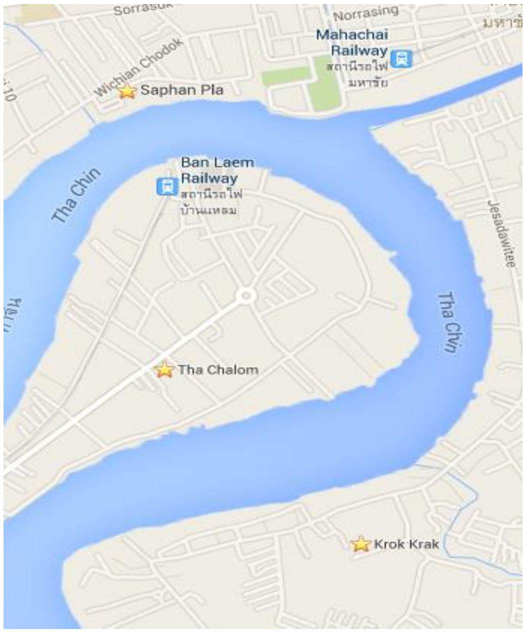

Figure 4 - Locations of Raks Thai learning centers

[Untitled screenshot taken from Google Maps]. Retrieved December 12, 2014, from: https://www.google.com/maps/place/Samut+Sakhon,+Thailand/

2.5 Curriculum

The Raks Thai Learning Centers currently use a standardized curriculum established by The Office of the Non-Formal and Informal Education, Ministry of Education with their older students. Unofficial educational centers throughout the country utilize this curriculum. In order to progress to higher education, migrant children must enroll in Thai public schools. However, this is challenging because their level of education is often well behind that of their Thai peers. One of the goals of the learning centers is to help their students catch up to their Thai counterparts, enabling them to enter the public school system. In order to do this, their curriculum needs to align with that of the public schools. We do not currently have access to the curriculum utilized by the learning centers. When we are able to review it, we will explore the differences between the curriculum used in learning centers and the curriculum of official Thai schools. We will also consider the differences between the standards and expectations for children at the learning centers and those enrolled at schools within the official Thai system.

2.6 Successful Practices for Migrant Education

Regardless of geographic location, many learning centers seek to accommodate migrant children in similar ways. Since migration worldwide is such an important issue, several studies have been conducted in determining education specific needs of migrant child populations. One such study was conducted by MGT of America, a national consulting firm, and their subcontractor, Resources for Learning, L.L.C, and culminated in a best practices literature review for the Texas Education Agency in 2011 (Clements et al., 2011). They identified five best practice principles for the education of migrants. The report determined these principles to be the necessary foundation for an effective program meeting the needs of migrant children (Clements et al., 2011). These principles are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1 - Migrant Education Best Practice Principles

Responsiveness	Addresses the need for flexibility in programming for migrant children. These students tend to have widely varying backgrounds and needs requiring programs that can be easily adapted to individual students.
Communication, Collaboration, and Relationships	Necessary between all parties involved. Cooperation between different organizations is vital to streamlining the system for migrants who are frequently overwhelmed by their new surroundings. As with all parents, developing personal relationships with the parents of migrant students is also critical to involving them in their children's education.
Adequate and Appropriate Staffing	As with all educational facilities, this is essential to meeting the needs of these students. Migrant student has unique needs that require bilingual teachers, social workers knowledgeable in available resources, and professionals able to assess the individual needs of the children.
Instructional Quality and High Expectations	Enable students to better their economic and social situations.
Focus on Language Issues	Language barriers are often the first and most challenging barrier migrant students face. Improving their overall education cannot be accomplished without properly addressing their language needs. This typically involves both providing instruction in their native language along with intensive courses in the local language

(Clements et al., 2011)

Other countries have adopted practices utilizing these principles that could be used to facilitate migrant learning. For example, the Indian government developed a system of schooling for multi-grade schools with limited space and teachers. In this system, the curriculum used by the government was broken down into a set of learning activities. These learning activities were adapted to the local context by using stories and images from the area as tools. Activities have five different components - introductory, reinforcement, evaluation, remedial, and enrichment. Students can go through these components at their own pace. Groups of these activities compose a ‘learning ladder’, which covers one year of content a traditional school would provide for one subject, such as math or language. There are multiple sets of ladders for each subject and each student works to move up on multiple ladders representing different subjects at one time. These learning ladders along with physical notations of each student’s progress along a learning ladder are placed throughout the classroom. Groups are formed in the classroom that correspond to teacher-led, group activity, and self-guided learning, and each activity corresponds to one of these groups. Children organize into the groups designated by their respective activities and work through the lessons there (Blum, 2009). Self-paced learning like this is suitable for educating migrant children where student attendance is often disrupted by the work location of their parents. This method would also be effective for migrant learning centers due to its functionality in schools with limited classrooms and teachers. The flexible style of learning exemplified by this program very well supports the responsiveness principle.

There are also many examples of migrant aid and education programs in Thailand that employ these principles. In Tak province, the Education Area Office (EAO) added several components to their operations to strengthen their delivery of migrant educational services. The EAO is responsible for delivering all public education as well as monitoring and overseeing all public and private schools in the province. Tak is directly along the Thai-Myanmar border and has a large Burmese population. Numerous learning centers under the EAO are operating in this province to serve this population. The EAO organized training in Burmese and Thai for the staff of learning centers and public schools in Tak to make communication and education of these languages easier. As part of this program, the office gave curriculum kits to trained teachers for spreading knowledge that included a training manual, instructional materials, and a self-learning CD. This is an important way to address the principles of focusing on language needs as well as adequate staffing. It provides the skills needed by teachers to effectively help their students address their linguistic challenges. This office also produced and distributed brochures that advertised the benefits of education which aligns with the communication and relationships principle. By implementing these practices, the EAO improved the responsiveness to migrant needs, focus on language issues, and staff appropriateness of the public schools and learning centers under its oversight as well as reaching out to parents (International Labor Organization, 2010).

A learning center in Samut Sakhon run by the Labour Rights Promotion Network Foundation (LPN) also implemented several practices aimed at improving migrant education. This learning center had its own classes for migrant children and also collaborated with the Thai schooling system to make public school education possible for migrant students. The LPN center offers children who are working already, and consequently cannot attend regular schools non-formal education programs and life-skills training outside their work hours. The organization also provides training packages for computer skills and literacy in English and Thai to older students as well as lessons on occupational safety, health, and their labor rights. These services work around the students schedules giving them the flexibility they need in accordance with the responsiveness principle. A Thai literacy class at the center is also offered to students aged 5-14 to address their language needs. To help children get into Thai schools, the center established collaboration with a Thai public school and the two organizations work together to get 13 digit ID numbers for migrant students regularly attending the center. The center also works to incorporate parents by holding meetings to inform them of their students’ progress and to encourage them to take an active role in their children's education. This collaboration between organizations and parents fosters the communication called for by the best practice principles. For students where availability of transportation is an obstacle in obtaining education, rented vehicles provided by LPN are available to safely transport children between schools and their homes. These practices allowed the learning center to improve education for migrants through efforts that focus on language issues, the collaboration between different involved parties, and the instructional quality and high expectations for the students (International Labor Organization, 2010).

Another learning center in Samut Sakhon Province aims to prepare migrant students to enter public schools. This center tries to simulate the environment in a public school and use the public school curriculum to adequately prepare their students, but they use both Thai and Burmese in the classroom to promote understanding of both and to avoid isolating the students lacking strong Thai skills. This promotes the learning center's focus on language. A Thai public school with unusually high migrant attendance rates has also adapted to the needs of migrants by adjusting the core Thai curriculum to utilize translators and include activities promoting understanding of Thai culture. This helps migrant students to better assimilate and reduces the potential for feelings of alienation that discourage children from pursuing education, making this school responsive to migrant needs and working to address the language barrier (Petchot, 2011).

All these examples have potential for application to migrant learning in Mahachai. A more flexible curriculum style as in the schools in India could address the needs of children frequently moving with their parents. Teachers may need special training to address the language needs of their students similar to that of the teachers in the Tak province. Offering programs that accommodate the schedules of working children could also be very useful, and could be very similar to those of the learning center run by LPN. All these programs align with the migrant education best practice principles. Once the specific needs of the children at the Raks Thai Learning Centers have been established, these practices will provide insight into potential solutions.

2.7 Summary

Migration in Thailand has a very profound effect on the lives of Thai people and migrants. Thousands of migrant children live in the country and could have bright futures. Educating these children would improve their prospects, but there are currently a number of obstacles, including language barriers, poor financial situations, parental opposition, and denial to public schools, that make the portion of migrant children receiving education extremely low. The Thai curriculum is well-established and uniform throughout the country, however, applying this curriculum to the education of migrant children can be challenging. Several organizations have worked to establish practices suitable for providing proper education for migrants. All of this knowledge will be useful for determining how well the Raks Thai Learning Centers deliver education to their students and how they could better serve the population of migrant children in Mahachai.

3 Methodology

The purpose of our project is to help Raks Thai provide effective assistance to the migrants of Mahachai by determining the educational needs of migrant children and evaluating the Raks Thai Learning Centers. We will evaluate the satisfaction and concerns of the students, their parents, and staff of the Mahachai Learning Centers (LCs) to develop recommendations for improvement of curriculum and services to better student success. If we conclude that the learning centers are not a financially viable or effective option to meet migrant needs, we will also identify other services that could be offered by Raks Thai to address problems of the migrant community in Mahachai.

Our investigation will deal specifically with children of Burmese migrants, as the Burmese compose the largest migrant group in Mahachai. We will consider both children that migrated to Thailand and children that were born in Thailand to migrants. The focus of our work will be the operations of a subset of the four Raks Thai Learning Centers (LCs) located in Mahachai. Our project will consider the successes and failures of similar learning centers around the globe in conjunction with evaluating the needs of the children and the services provided to them and their families by the Raks Thai Learning Centers.

Although we have some understanding of the project's goals and general educational metrics, we do not know exactly the issues that the migrant population in Mahachai deals with on a daily basis, or considers to be of greatest importance. This circumstance is common in education research and can be accommodated through the implementation of "Action Research" methods. Action research is typically best utilized when the actual problems are not known, and there is limited time to conduct research. In order to achieve the goals of action research, interaction with the population of study is emphasized. Since the population is disadvantaged, it becomes important to "embrace principles of participation, reflections, empowerment, and emancipation of people and groups interested in improving their social situation or condition" (Berg & Lune, 2012). By working closely with migrants in Mahachai to understand their history, culture, interactive activities, and emotional lives, we will be able to better understand their problems and see the world through their eyes. By using the "Action Research" format as a guide, we will conduct a series of focus group discussions, interviews, and surveys to gain a better sense of how migrant education is viewed in conjunction with other problems migrants may wish to have addressed.

In light of this research method, we have four central objectives:

1. To ascertain the opinions of Raks Thai staff and government officials
2. To assess the concerns of migrants and learning center staff and teachers
3. To evaluate the curriculum and teaching methods of the Raks Thai Learning Centers in Mahachai
4. To develop recommendations for learning centers and other potential services

The relationships between these objectives are shown in Figure 5.

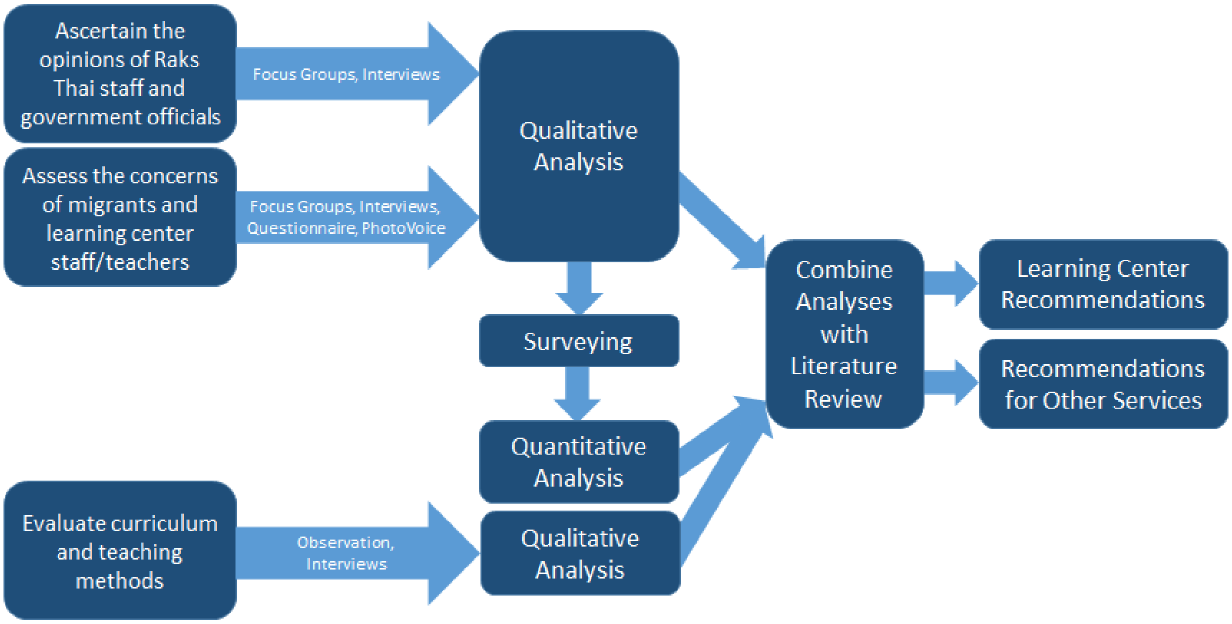

Figure 5 - Methodology flowchart

When trying to interpret a problem in its full complexity and capture the human experience, using only methods that count and measure will not provide the same meaning as qualitative research strategies. Thus, the action research method suggests collecting preliminary qualitative data to determine the issues of most concern and assess the situation (Berg & Lune, 2012). This is particularly essential for our project because it is social in nature. The only way to determine the success of a school is by interacting with people to investigate relationships and activities within the institution (Dilshad & Latif, 2013).

Another research technique we will employ throughout the completion of these objectives is triangulation. Triangulation is the method of using multiple lines of sight and data collection methods to verify results. Multiple data-collection technologies measure a single concept: three data-gathering techniques to investigate the same phenomenon (Berg & Lune, 2012). Throughout the triangulation stages depicted in the flowchart above, we will investigate perspectives about learning center activities (our first and second objectives) and the general needs of migrants (our fourth objective).

3.1 Social Data Gathering Theory

In order to employ action research and triangulation, we will use several different data collection methods. This section provides background information on the theory and established best practices of each of these methods, including general information on forming questions, as well as information on conducting focus groups, interviews, and surveys.

3.1.1 Question Design

Careful thought must be used when designing questions for interviews, paper surveys, and focus groups. Wording, order, format and relevance of questions are all very important considerations. Relevance is particularly important when designing questionnaires[3]. The entire

[3] In this context, questionnaire will refer to a series of questions, which could be used in focus groups, interviews and paper surveys.

goal of the study must seem relevant to the respondent. If the purpose of the study is not too complex to describe and can be revealed without biasing the responses, the goals should be thoroughly explained and justified to all participants. All questions in the questionnaire must also be relevant to the goals of the survey. A simple guide for this is if the researchers do not know how they will use data from a particular question in advance of a survey or interview, they should not ask the question. Each question should also be relevant to the respondent. This becomes problematic if the questionnaire is given to multiple populations. To remedy this, multiple questionnaires can be used or respondents can be directed to different subsets of questions based on prior responses. If a respondent thinks that any of these three relevancy requirements are not met, they may be less likely to answer the questions to the best of their ability, or even answer them at all, which would negatively impact the data that can be gathered from the study (Bailey, 1982).

Wording of questions is critical to maximizing the integrity of responses. Double-barreled questions which ask two or more questions in one should be avoided. Questions with “and” and “or” are particularly vulnerable to becoming double-barreled questions. “Or” questions may be acceptable if “either” is added or if the clauses covered by the question are mutually exclusive. Ambiguity in questions is also a common pitfall in question wording. Slang, technical terms, and words that have different meanings to populations being sampled should be avoided. To check for ambiguity, questions should be asked before the actual study to people of many different age groups, educational levels, and backgrounds to see if the meaning is clear to each set of potential respondents. It is very important that phrasing of a question not be above the educational level of respondents, as many will give an answer instead of asking for clarification, even if they do not understand the question. If the person does ask for clarification the interviewers response may be biased which is also harmful to the study. If possible, questions should be concrete and have specific answers. Questions about abstract concepts are much harder to answer and the standard between respondents may not be consistent. Opinion questions are often difficult to word well. Items not stated as questions, but as statements to agree or disagree with should generally not be labeled as true or false, but as agree or disagree, and phrasing should be chosen to minimize the amount the respondent can read into the question, as many people attempt to guess what the researcher means or expects from the question or answer in a “normative” way. Normative answers are those that are consistent with a norm, though they are not consistent with an individual respondent’s opinion. Sensitive or taboo topics often receive normative answers. To combat this, it is recommended that questions dealing with such topics should be worded so that it is assumed that a respondent agrees or engages in the sensitive or taboo topic (i.e. asking for the frequency of a taboo habit rather than asking if a person performs this habit) so that it isn't as easy for a person to deny such a behavior or opinion. Questions for which the respondent does not have an answer or opinion are also highly susceptible to normative answers. Respondents often feel that they may appear unintelligent if lacking an answer or that they should have an answer to each question and as such, will often develop a response that they may not actually agree with. For this reason, “I don’t know” or “I don’t have an opinion” should be presented as acceptable responses. For questions requesting criticism, respondents should also be given the chance to offer praise, so that he or she will not feel that they are being discourteous or unfair (Bailey, 1982).

Format of the questions is another critical aspect of questionnaire design. Questions can either be closed-ended, giving a fixed number of options for the respondents to choose from, or open-ended, allowing for more flexible answers. Closed-ended answers should be used where answer categories are well-known, distinct and relatively few in number. Questions requiring a rating or with fixed categories are often presented in closed-ended format. Data that is represented as a ratio or an interval (such as age) should generally not be identified through closed-ended questions, unless it is unlikely that a respondent will identify the exact number (i.e. age is often asked for groups of ranges). Categories for closed-ended questions should be exhaustive and mutually exclusive. If there are many known categories, but few response are actually expected, “other” may be listed as an option to make sure that the categories are exhaustive, but that the number is not excessive. Closed-ended questions can often be answered quickly, require fewer instructions than open-ended questions, and can be self-administered or used with a population with a lower education level. Open-ended questions are used when there are not a few simple categories, when the respondent’s unique views or goals are desired, or in preliminary investigations, at which point the researcher has not yet determined the characteristics of a given topic that are relevant to the study. Open-ended questions are generally preferred when detail and exhaustiveness are more important than time and simplicity of analysis (Bailey, 1982).

3.1.2 Focus Groups

One method of gaining qualitative data related to the opinions of a group is to hold a focus group discussion. A focus group typically lasts approximately an hour and a half and consists of six to nine individuals who represent different perspectives of interest, but all agree about the importance of a certain issue (Dilshad & Latif, 2013). The purpose of holding the group discussion is to explore and clarify individual and shared perspectives (Tong, Sainsbury, & Craig, 2007). Investigators will take notes throughout the discussion, but an audio or video recording is frequently recommended to more completely accompany the written notes. The recording will enable investigators to refer back to sections they may have misheard or misinterpreted at a later time. It is important to note that qualitative studies, such as focus groups, must be done in a very precise manner where any potential sources of bias are identified through clear definitions, procedures, and thorough writing. The more details that are provided, the more likely the research will be of future use. Thus, during the focus group discussion, we will need to be careful to note personal information about the discussion moderator. The moderator should have as little bias as possible, however, if the researcher leading and moderating the conversation does have any personal biases, these should be noted. If the moderator has prior moderator experience, or relationships with members of the group, this should also be noted so readers can evaluate for themselves how these factors may have altered the discussion. The last protocol to follow requires immediate analytical action following the discussion. While the conversation is still fresh in the minds of investigators, notes review and analysis must begin. This will ensure that data gathered in later stages does not cloud the investigation’s preliminary understanding. Once this is done, a discussion summary complete with investigator conclusions should be sent to all participants of the focus group to confirm and clarify understanding.

3.1.3 Interviews

A strong alternative to focus group surveying is in-depth interview. Interviews offer the privacy needed for an interviewee to open up about their opinions and experiences. An investigator can thereby make a deeper connection with subjects to better verify and develop theories. In order to plan a successful interview, investigators must establish the goals of the interview to carefully craft questions.

There are three types of interview frameworks that are frequently utilized: standardized interview, semi-standardized interview, and unstandardized interview. Each of these is used for different goal sets. If the problem to be investigated is well understood, it may be in the investigator’s best interest to develop a set of rigid interview questions as a standardized interview. This style of interview has the least flexibility in that questions cannot be clarified or altered in any way. This style will yield more comparable interview results, which can be useful in collecting data from a large population (Berg & Lune, 2012). The opposite of this method is the unstandardized interview. This is a freeform interview style that makes very few assumptions about the interviewer's understanding of issues at play. The interview is driven by a few pre-determined themes but will develop dynamically in response to the answers provided by the interviewee. This can lead to very rich interview data but relies greatly on the skill and practice of the interviewer at helping the interviewee explore topics of interest. The middle ground between these methods is the semi-standardized interview. A set of themes and questions will be prepared ahead of time, but can be reworded and altered as needed during the interview. New questions can be added, and prepared questions may be abandoned in favor of ones that may better probe for interesting information. All three of these methods are valid in different situations. In section 3.2, we will explore the usefulness of these methods in the context of our project goals.

Each of these three methods to conducting an interview must still take into account a few of the same basic considerations. In his book "Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences," Bruce Berg provides a list of ten important rules to be used when planning an interview:

1. Spend several minutes at the beginning of the interview on small talk as a warm up
2. Remember to keep the interview on track with printed copies of questions/themes
3. Try to make the conversation as natural as possible when choosing words to use in questions
4. Demonstrate aware hearing by actively showing interest and awareness in the discussion
5. Consider how you might appear to your interviewee before selecting a final outfit
6. Select an interview location where the subject will feel comfortable without fear of being overheard or seen
7. If yes/no answers start to become frequent, probe for more developed answers
8. Be respectful and encourage the subject to express their genuine opinion
9. Practice interviewing
10. Say thanks and be appreciative

By following these ten suggestions and utilizing recommended interview framework, we will obtain data in a deeper, more personal way.

3.1.4 Surveys

In addition to the general question design concepts needed for focus groups and interviews, self-administered and written surveys have some additional guidelines for their construction. When writing questions, the best version is one that conveys the information in the shortest form possible. Longer questions take up more of the respondent's time and increase the probability that the question will not be properly understood. Closed-ended questions are typically more suitable for written questionnaires, but care should be taken to make sure the correspondence between checkboxes and answers is clear (Bailey, 1982). This can be done by grouping categories and boxes with parentheses, different spacing sizes, dotted lines, or simply having each answer on a different line. Questions with similar instructions should be grouped together to save space and to reduce the amount of time a respondent spends understanding how to answer the questions. For example, groups of questions asking if a respondent agrees or disagrees should be grouped together and one series of category labels can be used for a number of questions. For open-ended questions, the researcher can regulate the length of responses by carefully selecting how much space is allowed and discouraging respondents from writing outside this space. Along with instructions, this can be used to guide the respondent to an answer appropriate to the question (Bailey, 1982).

3.2 Ascertain the Opinions of Raks Thai, Government Officials, and Public School Staff

To gather the preliminary data suggested by the action research method, we will consult with two different groups of people. The first group we want to consult is Raks Thai management, Thai public school teachers, and government representatives. Individuals from these three groups will be invited based on relevance of their work to our topic, but participation will likely be based primarily on availability, as individuals from these groups may be very busy and we have a relatively narrow window for research. We will work with Raks Thai and potentially Chulalongkorn professors to identify individuals who would be suitable for this group. We will conduct a focus group which will ideally be composed of Raks Thai leaders (two or three), Thai public school staff (two or three), and government representatives (one or two). All of these stakeholders have an interest to the advancement of Thai society and the role education plays in this advancement. However, each party may have a slightly different perspective on migrant education and will likely have different ideas about current problems and potential improvements for migrant education. For this set of participants, a focus group is preferred because it allows for more discussion which would be valuable with a knowledgeable group such as this one. Since all parties likely run busy schedules, we will prepare discussion questions for a one-hour session (this will allow for about a 30 minute buffer should the conversation last longer than anticipated). The moderator will ideally be the advisor of our Thai partners, Aacaan Panuwat, since he is fluent in Thai, familiar with our project, and higher in the status hierarchy than ourselves or our Thai partners. Should Aacaan Panuwat agree to this arrangement, we will discuss our goals for the discussion prior to the meeting. The first initial focus group discussion will be essential to how we choose to proceed with our research, so a majority of our team members will attend as observers and ensure that the audio/video recording is operating properly. Our Thai partners will translate the discussion, take notes, ask questions, and moderate the conversation. Depending on the schedules and preferences of the focus group participants, we will locate the discussion at their convenience. If we are unable to find a convenient time for at least six of these stakeholders to meet with us, we will conduct in-depth interviews instead. We will likely have one-on-one interviews, with an additional researcher who will observe and take notes. From this focus group or series of interviews, we hope to better understand the state of migrant education and the problems facing the migrant communities in Thailand and more specifically Mahachai. The questions we will likely ask during this focus group or set of interviews can be found in Appendix A.

3.3 Assess Concerns of Migrants and Learning Center Staff

The second group of people we will gather data from are the staff and teachers of the learning center and the migrants in Mahachai. These migrants will include students at the Raks Thai Learning Center, their parents, and potentially migrant parents not affiliated with the center. Since young children may not have a full appreciation for their education, it is important to speak to the adults in their lives who care about their futures. By speaking with parents of these children, we will be able to determine the outcomes they would like to see for their children, such as holding higher status jobs in Thailand, returning to their home country once enough money is saved, or tackling more ambitious aspirations by continuing their education. We can also determine what subject matter is most important to parents. By speaking to the teachers at the Learning Centers, we will be able to understand how they utilize and teach curriculum and determine teacher goals for making an impact. The desired impact may be anything from providing aid to an underserved population to altering the course of their students' futures.

3.3.1 Focus Groups and Interviews

We will utilize a combination of focus groups, interviews, and questionnaires to gain the preliminary data suggested by the action research method. Which of these techniques are used will depend on the availability of the migrants and staff we would like to gather data from, and the feasibility of these different methods given language barriers and other restrictions. Depending on the availability of migrant parents and the number of Raks Thai staff, we will either hold several in-depth interviews, or two additional focus group interviews. If there are enough staff members at the learning centers that are able to participate in a focus group, we will use this option to gather their opinions. A focus group would allow this population to consider problems that an individual may have forgotten, but still has an opinion about. A focus group could also foster discussion about the root causes of problems within the learning center that an interview would not capture in the same way. If staff members are too few or too busy for a focus group to be feasible, we will interview staff members individually. Using interviews rather than focus groups would allow potentially unpopular opinions or criticisms to be expressed to us. During this focus group or round of interviews, we would like to gain a better understanding of lives of migrants who interact with the learning center, details about learning center operations, methods, and curriculum, and potential problems with education delivery. Questions we intend to address with the staff and teachers to capture this information are located in Appendix B.

We will also ask questions to migrant parents through a series of interviews. By operating individual interviews, we hope to create an environment that is safer and more open to genuine opinion without any influence from the presence of authority figures (teachers, government representatives, etc.). Since the migrants may not speak Thai, we may need to acquire a Burmese translator who will conduct these interviews. This person will likely be a contact of our Thai partners, potentially from Chulalongkorn University, to avoid altering the interview dynamic with a translator provided by our sponsor. Using interviews instead of focus groups could potentially expose opinions that may be seen as unpopular or overly critical that migrants may not want not express in front of others. The group of migrants we intend to question will be a mix of parents who send their children to Raks Thai Learning Centers and those that do not, if they are available. These parties will allow us to learn more about the typical lives and problems of migrants and goals for their children. Migrants who send their children to the learning center could give us additional information on operations that the staff's perspective may not give us. Speaking with migrants that do not utilize the Raks Thai centers will allow us to understand broader issues related to migrant education. This population will also provide information on what is preventing people from using the Raks Thai centers, and if their children are receiving an education elsewhere, why this was a feasible option. To achieve these goals, we will likely use a semi-structured interview style. In Table 2 below, we list the positives and negatives of each interview style (previously explained in section 3.1.3) in the context of migrant interviews.

Table 2 - Migrant Interview Style Positives and Negatives

Interview Style	Positives	Negatives
Structured	• Data that is more comparable and simple to analyze • May be useful in model creation	• Inability to alter or improve question wording
Semi-Structured	• Provides foundation questions to get an interview started • Offers flexibility to alter discussion	• May require more involved analysis than structured interviews
Unstructured	• Informality may inspire a sense of safety • Allows for establishing a broader scope of the problem	• May require more involved analysis • Language barriers slow the necessary flow

As shown in the table, semi-structured interviews are likely our best option as they will give us a framework to work off of, but will also provide the flexibility needed to get the most out of the interview. However, structured interviews may be of interest to Raks Thai for simplified replication of our evaluation process. Structured interviews would yield more direct, comparable results, which could be more quickly applied to changes in learning center services. With this structure as a guide, we have developed a set of foundation questions, which can be found in Appendix C.

3.3.2 PhotoVoice

In conjunction with the focus groups and interviews, action research recommends the use of PhotoVoice. This is a strategy that offers unique insight into the lives of a study's subjects through photographs taken by the population of interest. It empowers subjects to reflect on their personal and community concerns while explaining themselves, their families, and their work. Once the photos are taken and developed, a meeting will take place where participants can identify photos that most accurately reflect their concerns, issues, and views of the world around them. After this selection, a dialogue where stories are exchanged about the photos should take place to offer the photos more context (Berg & Lune, 2012). We will explore the possibility of using this method to gain insight from the migrants and staff of the Raks Thai Learning Centers. If this is a viable option, the migrants and staff could use phones if they have them or receive disposal cameras. We would then instruct the migrant parents and children to take photographs of aspects of their lives where education is a concern or an asset, as well as other major problems in their lives. We could also ask the staff to take pictures of the successes and issues with their educational program, and if observed, problems faced by the migrant community. As is typical with use of PhotoVoice, a dialogue with the photographers would take place to gain additional knowledge and context. Through this activity, we could identify central issues and themes of importance to migrants and staff of the learning centers.

3.3.3 Content Analysis

After collecting data from parents, learning center employees, government officials and Raks Thai management, we will conduct content analysis. Qualitative research methods do not yield numbers that lend themselves to easy analysis the way quantitative research does. To analyze the quotations and stories pulled from interviews, focus groups, and open ended survey responses, we must review the material we gathered and identify patterns, themes, and recurring meanings. For instance, if we detect a recurrence of the migrant opinion that Thai public schooling should be avoided, we will review the materials again, sorting out the instances where this opinion was stated. If there are many cases of this theme, we can further classify the data and consider grouping results into the class themes of "fear of government", "desire to return home", "financially shorthanded", and others. These classes will help to identify the individuals that share beliefs about the education system (Berg & Lune, 2012). With further investigation into each class, we can take note of similarities in the characteristics or personal backgrounds of these individuals. Eventually, this will lead to the formation of theories, such as "Burmese migrants from province X typically want to return home" or "migrants do not want to terminate their children's education, but see no alternative financially". Once a theory is established, we will review the data within the subgroup to check if it holds true in each case gathered, and likewise, if the negative cases in the subgroup suggest the reverse (i.e. Burmese migrants from provinces that are not province X seem content to remain in Thailand). This process will be repeated by "coding" for various themes and patterns. If we are able to assemble a list of a few theories exemplified in our data collection, we can use them as guides in assembling a written survey to reach a broader population and further test our theories.

3.3.4 Survey Development

Given the conclusions drawn from our analysis, we will develop separate sets of survey questions to ask various stakeholders. This will help us evaluate the learning centers in a more quantitative manner. One set of questions will be developed to understand broader migrant perspectives, another for the goals and opinions of the children enrolled in learning centers, and an additional set to evaluate the views of learning staff quantitatively. The questions to ask migrants and learning center staff will mirror the results of the interviews. The main difference in survey development will be in consideration of the migrant population. There is potential that we will be surveying a population that is illiterate. To accommodate this group, surveys may include visuals to communicate ideas. We will also ensure that investigators will be nearby to answer questions about the survey and read the written questions if necessary. The other population who will receive unique surveys are the migrant children. Various surveys may need to be developed to accommodate the different age ranges.

The opinions and characteristics of the students are also important to this study. Due to their age, some of these children may require special survey methods to make the process more engaging. This can be done through interactive approaches. Surveys for children ages five through ten will incorporate the use of games and drawing as opposed to written forms or surveys. Ages ten through thirteen can participate in games and short paper surveys. Ages thirteen through fifteen will be asked to participate in more involved paper surveys, but can also participate in the game activities if they choose. An interactive game we may utilize would be a variation of “Four corners”. A phrase or question will be presented to the children in the form of a three or four option multiple choice question. Upon hearing the answer they agree with, they will run to the corner of the room that represents the number of their selection. The physical movement makes the game more interactive than a paper multiple choice exam. Drawing and arts can be utilized by asking children to depict the career or future they would like to have. This may yield pictures of anything from farmers, nurses, or teachers, to more material things like nice cars or large houses. Since the children aged thirteen to fifteen are frequently close to entering the workforce, their thought process about their future may be more involved and better suited to a paper questionnaire. Though the questions ultimately used will be based on the results of the preliminary focus groups and interviews, our current potential question set can be found in Appendix D.

3.3.5 Survey Analysis

We will use survey data to draw conclusions using quantitative and qualitative analysis, as our surveys will consist of both closed and open ended questions. The open-ended questions that do not ask for a simple numerical response will be analyzed using the qualitative analysis techniques described above.

Closed-ended questions and questions simply requesting a number will be included in the surveys to capture quantitative data. Quantitative data can be broken down into interval or ratio data, ordinal data, and categorical or nominal data. There are different techniques used to analyze each of these types of data. Interval or ratio data is data taking the form of a scale, with equal intervals between numbers. Interval data includes numbers such as age, height, or weight, and is often expanded to include ratings, if the rating system can be assumed to have equal intervals. Researchers analyze single variables corresponding to interval data using measures of central tendency, such as the mean, median, and mode. The mean and median will be similar when the data has an approximately normal or uniform distribution, but when this is not the case, additional consideration must be given to determine whether the mean or median is a better measure of central tendency. The mean is more susceptible to large changes when there are outliers or the data is skewed. To determine a correlation between two sets of interval data, each set can be plotted against each other. If a trend is visible in the resulting graph, a correlation exists (Greasley, Ebrary Academic, & ebrary, 2008).

Categorical data represents different categories with no implicit ordering between the groups. Categorical data can be summarized using frequencies of each category. Relationships between categorical variables can be examined using the technique of cross-tabulation. This technique utilizes a table which indicates the number or percentage of responses at the intersection of each pair of categories from the variables examined. Differences resulting from categories can be examined by calculating the mean, median, or mode of an interval measured characteristic within each category and comparing the results across all categories. Ordinal data is ordered, similar to interval data, but the numbers are not at equal intervals (Greasley et al., 2008). Depending on how different the intervals are expected to be and the purpose of the study, ordinal data is often treated either as interval data or categorical data during analysis (Göb, McCollin, & Ramalhoto, 2007).

We will use these techniques when analyzing the quantitative data gathered using surveys. A section of our questions for children ask the respondent for a rating of different aspects of education. For analyzing the responses to this section, we plot the distribution of responses to determine if there is a relatively even distribution of responses, or if the data is skewed. We will also determine the median response for each question to determine what aspects of education the learning center delivers well and what aspects are delivered poorly. Another analysis will involve segregating data responses by age group to see if the perceived delivery of education varies among different age groups. We will use a similar process to analyzing survey data from migrant parents and learning center teachers. These results will all yield potential for visual graphing and statistical analysis.

3.4 Evaluate the Curriculum and Teaching Methods

Members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development generally use five stages to assess the schools within their countries. We will use these five steps to guide our data collection for the evaluation of the curriculum and teaching methods used in the learning centers. The first stage is background research. This involves collecting most of the hard data such as previous test scores and attendance rates used for the quantitative measures. The second stage is a site visit which allows the evaluator to sit in on classroom teaching and observe the behavior of students, collecting information for the qualitative measures. The third stage is a discussion between the evaluator and the school administration. This allows any questions or issues to be addressed before the final report is written. A fourth stage is sometimes used to follow up after the discussion phase to reassess given new information that may have come to light. In the final stage a report is written summarizing the results of the evaluation (Faubert, 2009).

3.4.1 Observation Theory

An important aspect of these steps is the site visit. Site visits allow the evaluator to obtain a clear view of the daily activities of the school. Participant observation is a research technique in which the researcher spends time with the subjects while they perform their regular, daily activities. During this time the observer takes notes to record the activities without interfering with the subjects. This method provides a holistic view rather than focusing on certain aspects (Bogdan, 1973).

3.4.2 Evaluation Criteria and Metrics of Success

Analyzing data collected to produce evaluation results is a difficult task that countries have grappled with for decades. Many educational programs currently use the CIPP Evaluation Model to conduct evaluations. The model was developed in the 1960s by Daniel Stufflebeam for use in U.S. school programs, and is now commonly used both within and outside America. CIPP stands for context, input, process, and product (Kellaghan, Stufflebeam, & Wingate, 2003). The role of each in evaluations is outlined in Table 3 below.

Table 3 - Evaluation Criteria

	Objective	*Relation to Decision Making in the Improvement Process*
Context Evaluation	To identify the target population and assess their needs, diagnose *barriers* to meeting the *needs*, identify resources for addressing the needs, judge whether goals and priorities sufficiently reflect the assessed needs, and provide needs-based criteria for judging outcomes	For determining and documenting the *setting* to be served; the *target group* of beneficiaries; the *goals* for improvement; the *priorities* for budgeting time and resources; and the *criteria* for judging outcomes
Input Evaluation	To identify and assess *system capabilities,* alternative program *strategies,* the procedural *design* for implementing the chosen strategy, the staffing plan, the schedule, and the budget, and to document the case for pursuing a particular course of action	For determining and documenting *sources of support, a* solution *strategy,* a procedural *design,* a staffing plan, a schedule, and a budget, i.e., for *structuring* change activities and providing a basis for judging both the chosen course of action and its implementation
Process Evaluation	To identify or predict *defects* in the work plan or its implementation, to provide feedback for managing the process, and to record and judge the actual work effort	For *implementing and refining the work plan and activities,* i.e., for effecting *process control,* and for later use in judging implementation, interpreting outcomes, and informing replications
Product Evaluation	To collect *descriptions* and *judgements* of outcomes; to relate them to goals and to context, input, and process information; and to interpret their *merit* and *worth*	For deciding to *continue, terminate, modify,* or *refocus* a change activity; and for presenting a clear record of effects (intended and unintended, positive and negative), compared with assessed needs and goals and for interpreting outcomes

(Kellaghan et al., 2003)

We will utilize these four types of evaluation to guide our assessment and establish our metrics for success. Our interview and focus group questions outlined in the appendices are based on these. Product evaluation will be based on how well our established metrics of success are being met.

Metrics of success can be broken down into two categories, quantitative and qualitative (Faubert, 2009). Quantitative measures are more easily defined and typically include hard data such as exam grades, graduation rates, and percentages of students successfully moving from one grade to the next. Qualitative measures cannot be enumerated. These measures are generally more focused on the success of students, and try to identify the analytical and social skills of students as well as their success upon leaving the school. We have identified several metrics that are typically considered. This list will be refined based on the input of learning center staff, government officials, migrant parents, and Raks Thai management obtained from focus groups and interviews.

Quantitative Measures of Success:

1. Attendance rates
2. Graduation rates
3. Test scores
4. Percentages of students moving from one grade to the next
5. Percentage of students moving on to Thai schools
6. Thai proficiency of students
7. Proficiency of students in core subject matter

Qualitative Measures of Success:

1. Parental involvement
2. Success after graduation
3. Relevance of curriculum
4. Student participation in learning activities

3.5 Develop Recommendations for Learning Centers and Other Potential Services

Once we have gathered the information from all these sources, we will use it to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the center. As the analysis of data from each step will already be complete, this step only involves combining the conclusions from each source of data and identifying consistent conclusions and contradictions. If a component of the learning center is identified as problematic by multiple groups of stakeholders and our investigation, it will be included as an identified weakness of the center. If there are inconsistencies between conclusions drawn from various sources, additional data gathering may be required to determine which conclusion is most helpful. During this step, we will have drawn conclusions about what the strengths and weaknesses of the learning center are, as well as the issues facing migrant workers in Mahachai.

After identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the learning center’s curriculum and programs, we will begin to develop recommendations for improving the weak areas of the learning center. We will do this with the assistance of two additional resources. The first is the use of literature review. The reviewed literature utilized in this step will include previously conducted background research as well as more focused research on the specific problems and potential solutions of the center and the migrant community. In many cases, investigators will come to conclusions that prior researchers have either identified in the past or have identified in other locations, in slightly different circumstances. If we can identify situations where similar issues were discovered and resolved, we will have a starting point for developing recommendations for improvements. For example, if language barriers and language learning becomes a priority, it is likely migrant learning centers, refugee learning centers, and even

American ESL programs have had to experiment with ways to alter their teaching methods for children learning a second language. With some research into such centers and improvements, we can propose a solution that may prove useful to the Raks Thai Learning Centers. The second additional resource is utilizing expert opinion. Ideally, we will contact the professors instructing education and international studies within the Social Research Institute of Chulalongkorn University to aid in our assessment of data, theories, and suggestions for improvements. These professors will hopefully be able to offer new insight to the issues faced by Thailand's migrant population in addition to education standards and methods. Their perspectives will be valuable in analyzing our data to develop recommendations for learning centers and general migrant needs. With the help of these professors and the knowledge gained through our additional literature review, we will be able to finalize potential solutions.

Once our investigation is complete, we will assemble a package of the promised deliverables for Raks Thai. We will notate the question sets we used to gather all forms of data to highlight questions that yielded the most interesting and relevant results, in addition to noting ways to alter and improve our initial question sets. Photos taken through the PhotoVoice activity will be included to supplement a copy of our final report which will be submitted to WPI. All of this material will be enclosed with a letter to Raks Thai management that summarizes our processes, findings, and suggestions for improvement. The end deliverables of our investigation will enable Raks Thai to test our suggestions and replicate our data collection and conclusion process at other learning centers. This will improve the operation of learning centers and will result in better quality of education offered to migrant children in Thailand.

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Appendix A - Questions for Raks Thai, Government Officials, and Public School Staff Focus Group

1. How do you think Raks Thai Learning centers operate?
2. How would you like Raks Thai Learning centers to operate?
3. What do you think the future holds for migrant children?
4. What would you hope the future holds for migrant children?
5. What barriers might a migrant child face when trying to enter the Thai public school system?
6. If a migrant child were to enter the Thai public school system, what challenges would you expect them to face?
7. How much funding do you think is needed for Learning Centers?
8. What are the most common or significant issues that you think migrants have?

Appendix B - Questions for Learning Center Teachers and Staff

1. What hours do the centers operate?
    a. Are there hours that the center is open for day care, but not teaching?
2. How many students are typically at the center? Does this vary a lot? [In case we're at a busier or slower part of the year]
3. What resources would help you?
    a. Money, supplies, curriculum, information
4. Do you have any training? What is your background in education?
5. Do you speak Burmese?
6. What is your goal for the children?
7. What do you think works the best for teaching children?
8. Do you assign your students any homework assignments?
9. What topics do the students seem to learn the most about ([maybe what topics do students absorb the best])?
10. What do you think is most important to teach migrant children?
11. What do you think prevents the students from going to Thai schools?
12. Do people that start to attend the learning center continue to attend or leave? What are the reasons for leaving?
    a. How many students do you typically have attend? Most? Least?
    b. If some students leave to go to a Thai school
        i. What Thai schools do they typically go to?
        ii. Do they typically stay in the Thai school?
13. Which parents might you recommend we speak to about their children's education?
14. What issues are you aware of that these parents face? (ie: overworked, poor health, too little finances, etc.)
15. Are parents supportive of their children's education? (Approximate percentage/fraction)
16. How many children attend the LCs?
    a. Does it vary by season?
17. What supplies are available?
18. How many teachers/staff are there?
    a. part-time/full-time?
    b. volunteer
19. Are families typically whole or broken?
20. Are parents typically literate?
21. What subjects are taught and what percentage of time is spent on each of these?
22. How do people typically hear about the learning center?
23. What do you teach students about social issues relevant to migrants? (labor rights/migration rules/social problems)
24. Do you collaborate with any other organizations?
25. What do you know about how Thai schools run (what is day-to-day like for students)?
26. How are students grouped (age/education level/etc)

Appendix C- Questions for Migrant Parents

1. Demographic information:
    1. Gender?
    2. Age?
    3. Country of origin?
    4. Occupation?
    5. Number of children?
    6. (Ask questions 2-4 again in regards to their spouse)
2. How long do you plan to stay in Thailand?
3. How long have you been in Thailand? (Can be left blank if considered too intrusive)
4. Why did you come to Thailand?
5. Do you have any friends or family in Thailand?
6. How much time to do you have at home? How much time do you spend working? (As again for spouses)
7. Why do/don't you send your children to learning centers? (If learning centers, what hesitations do you have about sending your children to learning centers?)
8. What do you want your children to learn?
9. What do you want for your children's futures?
10. What changes in the learning centers might be beneficial?
11. Do you hope to send your children to Thai schools? Why/why not?
12. What prevents you from sending your children to Thai schools?
13. How did you hear about the learning center?
14. Other concerns?

Appendix D - Questions for Students

All Students:

1. Age?
2. How long have you been attending the learning center? How many times per week?
3. What do your parents do? If you have older siblings, what do they do?
4. Do you like school?
    a. Why/why not?
5. What is your favorite part of school?
6. What do you want to be when you grow up?
7. Where do you want to live?
8. How do you get to school?
9. When did you move here?
10. Where else have you lived?

Older students:

1. What do you want to learn?
2. Do you want to go to a Thai school?
3. Do you want to stay in Thailand? If not, where would you go?
4. What are your education goals?
5. What are your occupational goals?
6. What have you learned the most about?
7. Are you assigned homework? If so, how much time do you spend on it each night?
8. How would you describe your teacher?
    a. Do you like the way your teacher treats you?
    b. Do you like the way your teacher teaches?
    c. What do the teachers do that helps you learn?
    d. Is there anything your teacher does that you don't learn from?
9. What would you do if you did not come to the learning center? [work, stay at home, take care of younger siblings]
    a. (Follow up) Between a) being at school, b) working c) staying at home, what would you prefer to do with your time?
10. How do you get to school?
11. Quantitative Questions (Set up with rankings 1-5 for satisfaction levels):
    a. Overall rating of the quality of the LC
    b. Overall rating of the teachers' teaching
    c. The educational value of the assigned work
    d. The teachers' skill in providing understandable explanations
    e. The teachers' skill in speaking clearly?
    f. The teachers' personal interest in helping students
    g. The teachers use class time effectively
    h. The teachers treat students with respect