

# The Value of Thai Children with an International Education

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#### Abstract

This study aims to explain the value of Thai children with an international education. A qualitative approach was employed as a research strategy, using purposive sampling of eight Thai Parents, who has children's graduate from international school, and in-depth interviews. The data was analyzed using content analysis. The results show that the value of giving Thai children an international education can come from the fact that the behavior and skills learned at an international education can give a higher chance to work in a multinational or high-profile company which pay in general higher salaries than Thai companies. The young graduates earn 1.2 to 2.5 million Baht per year which is significantly higher than the average market salary for starters. Although Thai parents will do anything to make sure that their children have the best possible future and can take care of themselves, they also expect that their children can earn a better income through a better education, and will be able to give them a more comfortable retirement. If the parents are private business owners their children will be better prepared to become private business owners as well after graduation. Children with an international education will have achieved the following:1) Improved language skills, It will make them have better income and better job.2) Increased confidence and independence, it will make them confident enough to take a higher position in the big company.3) Long lasting international friendships and connections and worldly experiences that, studying abroad provides many great opportunities to meet new people that help the student gain new personal and professional connections for the further work.4) Owning a strong resume guaranteeing great job opportunities. Even though the cost of tuition fees are very high (from kindergarten to high school, the fees average from 350,000 to 700,000 THB per year and the expenses to study at a university outside Thailand, averages from 1 to 2 million THB per year), the parents still think that it is valuable to make their children follow an international education. This study may be beneficial to parents' financial planning when looking at the benefits of sending their child to an international school. Furthermore, it may help international schools or universities improve the quality of their education to meet parents' expectations after making such a large investment in their children.

Keywords: International Education, Thai Students, Education in Thailand, International schools

### 1. Introduction

An international school offers an education to students using a global curriculum or courses that are not offered by the Thai Ministry of Education. It also uses foreign languages as a teaching and learning tool for students, without regard to their race or religion, and without going against the regulations. The international school systems teach from kindergarten to high school, and they all make an effort to provide high-quality education or offer curriculums that are centered on the growth and development of learning. They also focus on local culture and values, as well as authentic experiences related to the developing world. In many instances, schools in Bangkok's secondary and high school years provide a mix of curriculums. Due to these advantageous conditions, there are more options for postsecondary education and many educational trajectories. Although international schools grew in number relatively steadily throughout the twentieth century (Oh & Stouwe, 2008; Hedges, Mulder, James, & Lawson, 2016). The proportion of local students at international schools has been growing due to demand from local wealthy non-English speaking parents who want their children to have the advantages associated with access to an international education (Brummitt & Keeling, 2013). Most parents in Thailand select a school for their children based on two choices: the first choice is international schools and the second is a growing trend to choose bilingual Thai schools that offer English programs. The main reason for enrolling in Thai English program schools is cultural integration and the local networks that the children obtain in Thai society (Wei & Mhunpiew, 2020). In Bangkok, most Thai parents from the middle to high socio-economic status will practice school choice options for their children due to the lack of confidence in the public-school sector and the education quality that it delivers



(Kaewbuadee & Kraiwanit, 2022). Therefore, many of them opt for alternatives. If Thai parents have such a mindset about Thailand's education system, then it is even more so for international parents. With Bangkok's rising number of international schools, one would automatically think that it would be an optimal choice for international parents to enroll their children in an international school. However, parents have other factors to consider when choosing the best suitable school choice for their children. The average cost of sending a child to an international school in Thailand is approximately THB 550,000 per year, which is significantly less than the cost of sending a child to an international school in a neighboring country. For example, international school fees are 21.7% lower in Thailand than in Singapore (Rugbyschool, 2023). Investment in education has become more productive, and takes advantage of better job opportunities and higher earnings from this perspective.

Studying abroad while on a degree program is viewed as an extra investment in education to enhance human capital (Sisavath, 2021). The results of studying abroad are intersocietal and international relations (Flack, 1976), intercultural development, career impact and personal growth, continued language use, and academic attainment measures. Most importantly, this impact can be sustained over a period that is as long as 50 years (Dwyer 2004). The benefits for parents in sending their children to study abroad are that their child will discover a completely new culture with amazing new outlooks, customs, activities, and they will see new landscapes, natural marvels, museums, and landmarks. Most parents want the best education for their child, including the parental responsibility to safeguard their child's health and development. Parents have the right to express their preferences for a particular education that they want their children to study. Therefore, the academic performance of the school and the quality of teachers are to be considered (Yaacob, Osman, & Bachok, 2014).

According to the International Schools Association of Thailand, there were 175 international schools in Thailand in 2022, and 128 of them were members of this organization. Based on the Thai Ministry of Education (MoE) 2022 Academic Year 2021, 55,834 Thai students were studying in International Schools. The tuition fees at Thailand's international schools vary greatly, with annual tuition fees at Bangkok's top tier schools ranging from THB 150,000 to THB 900,000. Meanwhile, 15,738 Thai students chose to study at a university abroad in the academic year 2017-18 (The Nation, 2023).

While the cost of an international education is very expensive for many Thai citizens, there are various determinants that influence parents when making school choice decisions. The top factors that most parents consider are academic performance, school safety, quality of teachers, and school reputation. (Wei & Mhunpie, 2020). Parents expect that their children will be creative and assertive after graduating from international schools, and will have the opportunity to work in a large company or have a job with a high salary after graduation (Namraksa & Kraiwanit 2023). Because the tuition fees of international programs are very expensive, parents must also carefully plan their finances so that their children can study continuously and other necessary expenses in the family are not affected. In this study, the researchers aim to evaluate whether the parents' investment in an international education is worthwhile and rewarded with a good financial future for their children.

### 2. Objective

This study explores the value of an international education to Thai children. This study may be beneficial to parents' financial planning and benefits in sending their children to an international education. Furthermore, it may aid international schools or universities to improve the quality of their education to meet the parents' expectations after experiencing such a large investment for their children.

### 3. Materials and Methods

## 3.1. Research Strategy

According to Limna and Kraiwanit (2022), Siripipattanakul, Siripipatthanakul, Limna, and Auttawechasakoon (2022), and Viphanphong, Kraiwanit, and Limna, P. (2023), qualitative research



endeavors to comprehend the circumstances in which individuals or groups make decisions and exhibit specific behaviors, while also seeking to explicate the underlying reasons for the observed phenomenon. The qualitative research has been designed to use an interview protocol with four primary research steps: question design, data collection, data analysis, and writing the report. The study's goal was to maintain a certain level of informality. The intention behind this was to create a safe space for the parents to talk about their experiences because the questions are about their private lives (e.g., income and expenses). Moreover, semistructured interviews were conducted with eight Thai Parents. The rationale for selecting a semi-structured interview as the preferred method for data collection stemmed from the need for flexibility and adaptability in the research process. Specifically, the semi-structured interview format allowed for the interviewer to modify questions as needed and remain open to the nuances of the respondent's experiences. This was deemed especially important given the sensitive and personal nature of the topic under investigation, i.e., the private expenses of parents with regards to their child's education. In order to ensure the successful execution of the semi-structured interviews, a number of preparatory steps were taken. These included gathering relevant information about the study population and the context in which they operate, developing a script and list of topics to be covered during the interview, scheduling interviews at mutually agreeable times, and creating a comfortable environment that would foster openness and facilitate honest communication. During the interviews, careful attention was paid to nonverbal cues such as body language and gestures, which were documented alongside verbal responses. Following the interviews, recordings were transcribed and verified to ensure accuracy and completeness of the data. Overall, the utilization of a semi-structured interview format provided a flexible and effective means of gathering rich and detailed information on the personal experiences of parents with respect to their financial investments in their children's education.

## 3.2. Population and Sample

Qualitative data was collected using an in depth interview. The study population was eight Thai parents, who live in Thailand. The sample of this study consisted of eight key informants whose children have graduated from an international school in Thailand and an overseas university in terms of cost and benefits after graduation. The data in this study was collected through purposive sampling. The criteria of participants include: 1) the participants were Thais living in Thailand, 2) the participants were parents who has children's graduate from international school, 3) the participants had a stable career, and earned enough money to send their child to an international school, and 4) the participants' age was over 18 years old.

### 3.3. Data Collection

The researchers reviewed the secondary data for appropriate questions. The primary data collection method used in-depth interviews. The steps are: question design, data collection, data analysis, and report writing. These focused on addressing the research questions and were conducted at eight parents who have children who have graduated from an international school in Thailand and an overseas university in terms of cost and benefits after graduation. The interviews were semi-structured and were designed to invite participants to elaborate their particular perspectives on their experience of international education (Scarino, Crichton, & Liddicoat, 2012). The data were collected in January and February, 2023. The researchers used purposive sampling to select the most useful sample. In addition, to achieve the primary data results, the researchers reviewed secondary data using the documentary method for appropriate key survey questions via in-depth interviews. Content analysis is a qualitative method for systematically and objectively describing and quantifying specific phenomena by making valid inferences from written data (Limna, Siripipattanakul, & Auttawechasakoon, 2022; Woodeson, Limna, & Nga-Fa, 2023)



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# 4. Results

| Table 1 Respondents' demographic profiles |    |        |                        |                               |  |
|-------------------------------------------|----|--------|------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| No.                                       | Ag | Gender | Occupation             | Date and time of interview    |  |
|                                           | e  |        |                        |                               |  |
| Respondent 1                              | 52 | Female | Private business owner | January 28, 2023 at 09:00 am  |  |
| Respondent 2                              | 55 | Female | Private business owner | January 29, 2023 at 12:00 pm  |  |
| Respondent 3                              | 56 | Female | Private business owner | February 04, 2023 at 03:00 pm |  |
| Respondent 4                              | 56 | Female | Private business owner | February 18, 2023 at 09:00 am |  |
| Respondent 5                              | 58 | Female | Private business owner | February 18, 2023 at 11:00 am |  |
| Respondent 6                              | 59 | Male   | Architect              | February 19, 2023 at 09:00 am |  |
| Respondent 7                              | 60 | Male   | Private business owner | February 20, 2023 at 09:00 am |  |
| Respondent 8                              | 60 | Male   | Private business owner | February 22, 2023 at 09:00 am |  |

Respondents' Demographics

As shown in Table 1, the five females were as follows: a 52-year-old business owner, a 55-year-old business owner, a 56-year-old business owner, a 56-year-old business owner, and a 58-year-old business owner. The three males were a 59-year-old architect, a 60-year-old business owner, and a 60-year-old business owner. The participants were over 18 years old, and all were Thai and living in Thailand. All of the parents had a stable career and earned enough money to send their child to an international education.

| Table 2 Respondents' Thai children on the expenses of study (expenses for tuition fees only           |                                                        |                                                                                                             |                                     |                                                                              |  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| No.                                                                                                   | No. of years study<br>(kindergarten to high<br>school) | Average<br>cost per<br>year<br>(THB                                                                         | No. of years study in<br>university | Cost (THB)                                                                   |  |
| Respondent1                                                                                           | 13                                                     | 700,000                                                                                                     | 4                                   | 2 Million                                                                    |  |
| Respondent2<br>Respondent3<br>Respondent4<br>Respondent5<br>Respondent6<br>Respondent7<br>Respondent8 | 13<br>13<br>13<br>12<br>12<br>12<br>12<br>12           | $\begin{array}{c} 450,000\\ 450,000\\ 350,000\\ 500,000\\ 500,000\\ 500,000\\ 500,000\\ 500,000\end{array}$ | 4<br>3.5<br>5<br>4<br>4<br>3.5      | 1.5 Million<br>1 Million<br>2 Million<br>2 Million<br>1 Million<br>1 Million |  |

Thai children and the expenses of study (expenses for tuition fees only)

As shown in Table 2, the expenses of studying from kindergarten to high school, which is 12 to 13 years, averages from 350,000 to 700,000 THB per year. The expenses to study in a university outside Thailand, which is 3.5 to 5 years, averages from 1 to 2 million THB per year. All of these expenses are very high, much higher than the regular government school in Thailand.

Table 3 Respondents' Thai children income after graduation.

| No.             | Occupation                | Average income per year (THB) |
|-----------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Respondent<br>1 | Teacher                   | 2 Million                     |
| Respondent 2    | Teacher                   | 1.6 Million                   |
| Respondent 3    | Private business<br>owner | 2 Million                     |
| Respondent<br>4 | Private business<br>owner | 1.2 Million                   |
| Respondent 5    | Private business<br>owner | 2 Million                     |
| Respondent<br>6 | Teacher                   | 2 Million                     |
| Respondent<br>7 | Private business<br>owner | 2.5 Million                   |
| Respondent 8    | Private business<br>owner | 2.5 Million                   |



### Thai children income after graduation

As shown in Table 3, After graduation, their child will be rewarded with a good job and a high income, averaging from 1.2 to 2.5 million THB per year. Most of the children of business owners have become successful private business owners as well.

| No.         | Ag | Occupation                | Languag | Confidence   | Connection | Opportunitie | Is it    |
|-------------|----|---------------------------|---------|--------------|------------|--------------|----------|
|             | e  |                           | e       | and          | S          | s for work   | valuable |
|             |    |                           |         | independence |            |              | ?        |
| Respondent1 | 52 | Private business<br>owner | ۵       | 0            | 0          |              | Yes      |
| Respondent2 | 55 | Private business<br>owner |         |              |            |              | Yes      |
| Respondent3 | 56 | Private business<br>owner |         |              |            | 0            | Yes      |
| Respondent4 | 56 | Private business<br>owner |         |              |            | 0            | Yes      |
| Respondent5 | 58 | Private business<br>owner |         |              |            | 0            | Yes      |
| Respondent6 | 59 | Architect                 | D       | 0            |            | 0            | Yes      |
| Respondent7 | 60 | Private business<br>owner |         |              | 0          | 0            | Yes      |
| Respondent8 | 60 | Private business<br>owner |         |              |            | 0            | Yes      |

#### **Table 4** The worth of Thai children studying an international education

The worth of Thai children studying in an international education.

As shown in Table 4, Thai parents have a very strong belief that it was worthwhile sending their children to study an international education, even though they had such large expenses. In particular, parents who are private business owners believe that their children can help them with the business after graduation. Most of the parents agreed that their children had improved their language skills. The good results of their children studying in international education are described in the following subsections.

1) Improved language skills.

After graduating with an international education, Thai students have improved their language skills considerately. They can read, write and speak fluently. Studying abroad has been one of the best ways to improve language skills because they are immersed in a new language and get to practice it daily with their classmates, but also in the shops, on the train and in the street.

2) Increased confidence and independence

While studying abroad, children gain more independence. Without their parents, they must look after themselves and so they learn to adapt better to different circumstances. This helps build confidence. There is nothing that could build more confidence than a child being able to feel that they can really achieve their goals.

Independence is being able to do things on your own without any help from parents. As children live alone in another country with different cultures and languages, they have to try to navigate a world that they do not know, which helps them to become independent and resilient.

3) Make new connections and experience a new world

Studying abroad gives opportunities to meet new people, which can help the children gain new personal and professional connections. Many students who have been studying abroad have returned to their home countries with many new friends and strong relationships. This is very useful when wanting to start a new business after graduation and helps to develop social skills.

All Thai students should experience new cultures because Thai culture is so different from the Western world and other countries. After graduating from an international university, the child can integrate cultures from other countries into their own culture to develop or improve Thailand for the next generations.

4) Makes their resume look more interesting for good job opportunities.

Many Thai students decide to learn outside of Thailand to expand their learning and skills. The life experiences that these students receive abroad gives them many new life skills, which are useful when applying for jobs. Once Thai students return home after studying abroad at a famous university, their resume



will stand out a lot more and would look very impressive to an employer. Studying abroad shows that you can easily adapt to other cultures and languages, while also showing how independent you are when living or working on your own. Therefore, this would look good on your resume. Graduating from abroad is also expensive, which makes the Thai student ask for higher salaries when they apply for a job.

"My child went to an international school. The cost was very high, about 700,000 baht per year. She learned from many different experiences while studying abroad, from trying to adjust to a different culture with new languages to meeting new friends from other countries. Not only is this a valuable experience in itself, but it also helps when needing to adjust to adulthood and the pressures that come with it, which makes her become more confident and independent, so I think that it is valuable to send my child to study in an international program. Now she is a teacher and her income for the first year is about 2 million baht per year." Respondent 1: Female, a 52-year-old business owner. Interviewed at 09:00 a.m. on January 28th

"I believe that it is valuable to have sent my child to study abroad even though the fee is 450,000 baht per year because in today's society, there is more focus on being from a reputable school and having a higher education. My child now has a very good job and is a teacher in an international school because her English is very good. She has a good income. She is earning about 1.6 million baht per year and is very happy with her work so I think it is valuable to send my child to international education."

Respondent 2: Female, a 55-year-old business owner. Interviewed at 12:00 p.m. on January 29th

"It costs me about 450,000 to 1 million baht per year to send my child to international school. I want my children to receive the best education, which is why I would send her to a reputable international school. It gives the opportunity to meet a variety of people to make connections, which is very useful in work, and gives her a huge advantage with our business. Her income now is 2 million baht per year, which is good income for a fresh graduate. I am very happy now to have her taking care of our business so I can go on retirement."

Respondent 3: Female, a 56-year-old business owner. Interviewed at 03:00 p.m. on February 4th

"The cost of my son's studies is very high, it is about 350,000 per year in high school and 5 million baht per year in university. The reasons that I sent my child to an international school is because it allows him to meet new friends from different nationalities and cultures, learn about history from around the world, makes his resume look more interesting, and increases self-confidence. I expected him to help with our business after graduation, but once he graduated he started his own business and also help take care of our business .His income is about 1.2 million baht per year so I think it is valuable to send him to intentional school."

Respondent 4: Female, a 56-year-old business owner. Interviewed at 09:00 a.m. on February 18th

"My daughter used to study in an international school in Nonthaburi, cost me about 500,000 baht per year and later went to university abroad. By sending her to an international school, she has learnt the ability to speak English and has been able to live around other cultures. She now dares to think for herself, make her own decisions, and be confident with those around her. She started her own business when she was 22-year-old and earned 2 million baht per year. Now and then she helps with our business as well."

Respondent 5: Female, a 58-year-old business owner. Interviewed at 11:00 a.m. on February 18th

"I think many Thai children are afraid of speaking in English to foreigners because it makes them nervous, afraid to say the wrong thing, and are embarrassed to speak. This usually scares them so much that they end up not being able to speak English at all. However, studying an international program will allow them to make friends with foreigners and speak to them without embarrassment until they become confident enough to no longer be scared of it. The tuition fees in international schools cost about 500,000 baht per year. After graduation, my child is working as a teacher in an international school and makes about 2 million baht per year. Now I don't worry about her any more, she can take care of herself. So, I think it is valuable to send my child to study in an international school"

Respondent 6: Male, a 59-year-old architect. Interviewed at 09:00 a.m. on February 19th



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"Studying in another country exposes my child to experiences that they will not be able to get in their home country and helps them stand out from other people when they try to apply for jobs as studying abroad is something they should put on their resume. One of the major factors of studying abroad is that it creates the opportunity to study a foreign language that they might have never tried without the incentive to understand the people around them. My child used to study in an international school in Bangkok and cost me about 500,000 baht per year. After graduation, she is working in our company to help with the family business and make about 2.5 million baht per year. She can help a lot with our business so I think it is very valuable to have her studied in an international school"

Respondent 7: Male, a 60-year-old member of the army. Interviewed at 09:00 a.m. on February 20th

"When studying on an international program, my child receives language practice every day and the university provides language courses to help them learn it. The reason to consider studying abroad is the opportunity to experience what it is like in other countries with new people. To send my child to an international school is very expensive. It cost me about 500,000 baht per year but it is valuable because now my child has her own business and an income of 2.5 million baht per year."

Respondent 8: Male, a 60-year-old business owner. Interviewed at 09:00 a.m. on February 22th

### 5. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings revealed the value of giving Thai children an international education can come from the fact that the behavior and skills learned at an international education can give a higher chance to work in a multinational or high-profile company which pay in general higher salaries than Thai companies. The young graduates earn 1.2 to 2.5 million Baht per year which is significantly higher than the average market salary for starters. These findings coincided with A Guide to Teaching Jobs in Thailand International Schools that the private international schools tend to pay the highest in monthly salaries. This ranges about 2 million Baht depending on the English teacher's qualifications and experience.

Thai parents will do anything to make sure that their children have the best possible future and can take care of themselves. They also expect that their children can earn a better income through a better education, and will be able to give them a more comfortable retirement. These findings coincided with Namraksa & Kraiwanit (2022) study that parents expect that their children will have the opportunity to work in a large company or have a job with a high salary after graduation. The parents are private business owners and their children will be better prepared to become private business owners as well after graduation. Children with an international education will have achieved the following:1) Improved language skills, It will make them have better income and better job.2) Increased confidence and independence, it will make them confident enough to take a higher position in a big company. These findings coincided with Kaewbuadee & Kraiwanit (2022) study which found that their children had become more confident because of the education quality that they had. 3) Long lasting international friendships and connections and worldly experiences, studying abroad provides many great opportunities to meet new people that help the student gain new personal and professional connections for the further work.4) Owning a strong resume guaranteeing great job opportunities. Even though the cost of tuition fees is very high (from kindergarten to high school, the fees average from 350,000 to 700,000 THB per year and the expenses to study at a university outside Thailand, averages from 1 to 2 million THB per year), the parents still think that it is valuable to make their children follow an international education. These findings coincided with the nation (2023) that the tuition fees at Thailand's international schools vary greatly, with annual tuition fees at Bangkok's top tier schools ranging from THB 150,000 to THB 900,000. Meanwhile, 15,738 Thai students chose to study at a university abroad in the academic year 2017-18 (The nation, 2023).

This study examined the worth of giving Thai children an international education in Thailand. However, this research had a small report sample, it only looked at eight Thai parents in Thailand and may not include other predictors. Therefore, it is recommended to expand more areas and sample further. In addition, a quantitative study should be considered in a future study to explain the relationship in a large group.



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