

The Relationship of Socio-Economic Environment and Ethnicity to Student Career Development in Contemporary Cambodia: A Case Study of High Schools in Phnom Penh

SAKANASHI Yukiko*

Abstract

As a means of analyzing present and future socio-economic trends in Cambodian society, I will present my findings concerning the orientation patterns of a selected population with regard to education and occupation.

I will analyze the social process which affects the development and differentiation of such orientations in light of socio-economic and ethnic variables. I chose Chinese Cambodians as the secondary ethnic group in this study for two reasons. First, amidst the pluralistic milieu of Cambodian society, the Chinese have developed a particularly distinct ethnic community, and second, they were historically the first to form a merchant class in Cambodia. The data deployed in this paper are derived from a consciousness survey which I conducted in Phnom Penh.

I developed three types of questionnaires for this survey: one for senior high school students, one for their parents, and one for their teachers. From the results of these surveys, I aimed to derive propositions regarding the orientation of senior high school students, their parents, and their teachers toward the students' career development.

It has become apparent that there is a gap between the occupations of the parents' generation and the desired occupations of senior high school students. Some occupations appear to be gaining in popularity while others are losing ground. A typical occupation which is losing popularity is farming, while an example of an increasingly popular occupation is that of office work. Professional work is an occupational category which seems to be stable from one generation to the next.

Differences in orientation due to gender and locale are also evident. The better off the parents, the better the learning environment for female students. The orientation patterns of male students are more independent of economic factors. Students in suburban districts are deprived of social and economic resources. These handicaps are countered somewhat in cases where parents have a high level of schooling (a cultural resource) and/or strongly support their children's education.

Keywords: education, occupation, orientation, socio-economic environment, ethnic environment, inter-generational mobility, social stratification

* 坂梨由紀子, Department of Sociology, Royal University of Phnom Penh, Blvd. Confederation of Russia, Sangkat Kakab, Khan Dongkor, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

I Introduction

The present administration (1993–) adopted a democratic political system and introduced a market economy. Differentiation of occupations and changes in labour markets are precipitating social mobility. Under these circumstances, Cambodian society is undergoing profound structural changes in the socio-economic sphere.

In this paper, I will analyze the aforementioned process of change in terms of two main variables—education and occupation. Education is a significant variable which can enable an individual to acquire a higher socio-economic status. Occupation is a variable which effectively reveals the socio-economic status of an individual. In the following pages, I offer an interpretation of the orientation patterns on education and occupations held by the selected research subjects.

“Orientation” refers to the means of achieving the goal of a social act. An individual is motivated to achieve a desired goal, and chooses the most appropriate alternative under the given social circumstances. Orientation, then, is an indicator for explaining the social act, which encompasses both personally desired goals and the surrounding social circumstances. In this paper, I will analyze the aspirations for career development through the use of two sets of variables—desired level of institutionalized education and desired future occupation. In the process, I hope to determine which variables affect the orientation of the social acts of Cambodian youth.

I conducted a consciousness survey in order to ascertain the orientation outlined above. The orientation of a young person will be derived from interactions between personal desires and the influence of the individual's external environment. In this field of interaction, two possible changes may be observed: first, an individual's desired goals and the means for achieving them may be revised, and second, through the actions of the individual, the degree of impact of the surrounding social circumstances may be modified. For these reasons, one may expect that an analysis of factors affecting the orientation of these youths will reveal the structure of the social system of Cambodian youth.

As occupation is a major variable relating to orientation, it was necessary to establish a means of categorizing occupation in a manner suitable for this study. In designing the survey, I set up two separate occupational classifications: one for high school students and the other for their parents. I did not employ the classification scheme commonly used in Cambodia. Each occupational carries with it an associated social status, and as changes occur in the society at large, this social status also changes. The conventional classification did not allow for such inferences, which are a key focus of this study.

There are two sets of factors which generally bring about changes in the social status of an occupation. One is the institutionalization of educational prerequisites. Occupations often develop particular requirements with respect to educational level and/or professional certification: prerequisites which become closely associated with the occupation. As these prerequisites are formalized, the recruitment process also becomes institutionalized. When

such a development occurs, the occupational title is directly reflective of a certain level of education. Generally speaking, occupations requiring higher levels of education will tend to have a higher social status. In the conventional classification, this point is obscured. I anticipated that in an analysis of students' consciousness of occupational status, education was bound to play an important role. For this reason, I decided to modify the criteria for occupational classification.

Another factor is the emergence of wage employment. In 1999, only 15% of the labour force was engaged in wage employment. While this figure may seem low, the rate of wage employment increased 71% during the period between 1996 and 1999 [Godfrey *et al.* 2001 : 36]. Such a drastic change in occupational diversification must be reflected in career choices made by high school students.

A major factor relating to an individual's choice of occupation is work environment. It seems that employment in corporations and/or organizations is generally more attractive to students, as compared with manual labour or employment with a small business, and students are motivated to acquire the skills and qualifications necessary for this type of work. For this reason, I set up an independent category of "civil service" as an option for occupational choice. (The civil service is a good example of a reasonably attainable occupation for Khmer students within the larger area of corporations/organizations.)

I thus established seven categories of occupations taking three factors into consideration: level of education, social prestige of the occupation and work environment. The categories are: "professional work," "semi-professional work," "skilled work," "office work," "civil service," "business" and "other." These occupations are defined as follows.

Professional work, semi-professional work and skilled work are classified in terms of the holder's level of formal education. Professional work requires a post-secondary education and/or equivalent training. Qualifications for semi-professional work are not necessarily as clearly defined, but a high level of education and/or training is preferred. Skilled work requires a secondary education and/or an equivalent level of training.

The term "office work" is used here to refer to such white collar positions as are typically found in corporations and/or organizations; it is a type of wage employment.

In reality, the work done by civil servants may include professional work, semi-professional work, skilled work, and office work. But since the purpose of this survey was to explore students' consciousness of social status, I deliberately avoided naming the type of occupations included. Instead, I wanted to know what image students had of the occupation "civil service." This choice is due to the fact that despite a modest salary level, the civil service offers advantages not necessarily offered by other occupations in Cambodia: fringe benefits and a pension.

The category "business," which covers commercial activities, includes two different Khmer concepts. One is "Chumnuonh," which refers to private, independent sales activities. The other is "Luakdo," which refers to sales activities in general, with no specification as to their nature. Generally the former enjoys a higher level of social prestige than the latter, but there is

no clear boundary between the two.

In the classification scheme for occupations of students' parents, I added "farming" and "factory work" to the above seven categories.

II The Social Environment of Cambodian Education

A. An Outline of the Education System

In Cambodia, the educational system and educational goals have undergone changes over the years as a result of changes in the political sphere. Consequently, educational opportunities and educational qualifications have varied depending on the time during which an individual was of school age.

Those born in the first half of the 1960s, for example, were of school age during the period when domestic conflicts were at their peak in the 1970s. They suffer from the highest illiteracy rates. At every level of schooling, whether elementary, secondary, or post-secondary education, only a small percentage of this cohort was able to participate in the educational system.

Those educated in the 1980s were of school age at a time when Vietnamese was the dominant language in the industrial and administrative sectors. This group later found it necessary to learn English in order to compete in these fields. This change was due to the fact that the People's Republic of Kampuchea (the Heng Samrin Regime) came to an end in 1989 and Cambodia subsequently opened itself up to the wider world. In this way, changes of administration resulted in different educational and job opportunities for Cambodians.

The senior high school students I studied were born during the period of the 1980s baby boom. The boom occurred after the collapse of Democratic Kampuchea (the Pol Pot Regime) in 1979. Their school years correspond to a period of transition from an agricultural economy to a market economy. This generation has grown up during a time of significant social reconstruction.

The contemporary Cambodian education system is based on Chapter VI, Article 68 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia (1993), which says "The State shall provide free primary and secondary education to all citizens in public schools. Citizens shall receive education for at least 9 years."

The education system is comprised of pre-school (kindergarten), primary school, junior high school, senior high school, vocational school, secondary technical school, university (undergraduate-level), as well university graduate programs. Education is compulsory up to the junior high school level. Occupational differentiation is not introduced during the years of compulsory schooling as the system is linear in nature.

At the end of junior and senior high schools, students must take the national examinations. Those who pass earn their diplomas for the corresponding levels. No entrance examination is required for students entering senior high school. Students are expected to

attend the high school¹⁾ in their residential district. In theory, therefore, there should be no significant differences between schools in terms of academic level. In reality, however, there are socio-economic and cultural differences between residential districts which affect students' level of academic achievement.

Cambodian high schools have two identical programs: one in the morning and another in the afternoon. Students can attend the program of their choice. According to regulations, schools are required to offer 13 mandatory courses as the core of the curriculum.²⁾ In reality, not all of these courses are offered if the school does not have the means to do so. There is a particular shortage of professionally trained teachers for the teaching of specialized courses, and their absence affects the learning opportunities of students.

There are four categories of post secondary institutions: university (i.e. undergraduate level programs), including polytechnic institutions; post-graduate programs (master's-level programs); advanced teacher training school; and the Faculty of Pedagogy, an independent governmental organization which offers a one-year program for university graduates. The Faculty trains teachers for the senior high school level or above.

According to official statistics [EMIS Center 2002b], 87.0% of school age children in Cambodia are registered in primary schools, 18.9% in junior high schools and 7.4% in senior high schools. There is virtually no difference between urban and rural districts at the primary school level. At the secondary school levels, the gap between the two types of districts becomes evident. At the junior high school level, the proportion of registered students in urban districts is twice that of rural districts. At the senior high school level, the figure is five times higher in urban districts. During the past decade (1993–2002) the number of registered students increased 66.8% at the primary school level, 56.8% at the junior high school level and 84.4% at the senior high school level. These statistics are a reflection of the popular demand for institutionalized education. The effect is most conspicuous at the senior high school level.

B. *Education in the Chinese Community*

Most Chinese in Cambodia hold Cambodian citizenship and have integrated into their host society. Chinese Cambodians are the largest ethnic minority in the country. Amongst the various ethnic groups present in Cambodia, they are known for their distinct ethnic community and have traditionally constituted the merchant class in Cambodia [Willmott 1967: 94]. Until recently, the great majority of the Khmer were farmers (about 80%). Prior to the arrival of the Chinese, Cambodia had no merchant class. It was the Chinese who became mediators between the upper class and the peasant class. They secured a near-monopoly on commercial activities, hence there was little conflict of interest between the Chinese and the Khmer.

Cambodia is currently experiencing a time of change. The Chinese, also, are experiencing changes within and outside of their ethnic community. In this study, I have tried to analyze the

1) From this point forward, if not specified, the term “high school” will be used to refer to the senior high school level.

2) Technical and home economics classes can be offered separately for each gender.

career aspirations of Chinese students as a means of exploring the nature of these changes.

The national organization for Chinese people is the Association of Khmer Chinese in Cambodia. There are five separate branches of this organization based on language groups. Each of the branches has established Chinese schools for the education of their children. Accordingly, the administration of each school varies according to its governing branch.

In Cambodia, 18 provinces and cities out of 24 provinces and cities have Chinese schools, with a nationwide total of 78 schools. The schools provide education at the pre-school, primary school, middle school and college level. Only 20% of the Chinese schools have programs beyond middle school. Following the model of Cambodian public schools, the Chinese schools offer identical programs in the morning and in the afternoon. Some schools offer night programs as well.

Chinese schools are not officially acknowledged by the government, thus graduates cannot obtain diplomas from the Department of Education. To circumvent this problem, some students attend Cambodian school in the morning and Chinese school in the afternoon or vice versa. Some families do not value institutionalized education and limit their children's participation in the Cambodian public school system to the primary school level. This choice made by a student's parents can greatly affect his or her career development.

III Survey Outline

A. *Procedures*

The consciousness survey mentioned earlier was comprised of two parts: I conducted the preliminary survey³⁾ in September and December of 2002, and the main survey in May, 2003. The former consisted of in-depth, unscheduled (open-ended) interviews with a selected subset of the study population, while the latter consisted of a questionnaire-type survey aimed at systematic data collection. This paper will provide an analysis of the quantitative data from the questionnaire survey, supplemented by information collected through the in-depth interviews.

B. *Survey Target Groups*

The goal of this survey was to conduct an analysis of orientation patterns regarding education and occupation in contemporary Cambodia. For this purpose, a relatively large sample size was required. For the subject of education, it was necessary to survey a large number of students, while for the subject of occupation, a high degree of differentiation was needed. In order to satisfy these two conditions, I selected the national capital of Phnom Penh as the survey site.

As target groups, I chose third-year high school students, their parents, and teachers at these high schools. High school is perceived as a transitional educational institution which acts as a bridge between compulsory education and labour markets or post-secondary educational

3) The results of the preliminary survey are found in Sakanashi [2003].

institutions. Third-year high school students need to make realistic decisions as to whether they should enter the labour market or attend a post-secondary educational institution.

I added the students' parents and their teachers to the study population for the following reasons: in an industrialized and/or industrializing society, education can include two aspects — informal and formal education. Informal education is carried out in the family and community while the school system is responsible for formal education. As representatives of the family I chose the students' parents and as representatives of the school system, high school teachers.

I selected four high schools as target groups. In Cambodia, the school district system is prevalent and there is no entrance examination for high school. In theory, there should be no difference in the overall level of student achievement among high schools. In reality, however, the students are from the given socio-economic background of their parents, hence, the socio-economic structure of the given school district should be reflected in the students' learning environment. There will therefore be differences among high schools based on the socio-economic level of the given school district.

I selected three Khmer high schools with mutually different socio-economic backgrounds and a Chinese school⁴⁾ to emphasize the ethnic factor. The three Khmer schools were Chumpou Voan High School (which I will call "School C"), located in a suburban farming district; Samaki High School ("School S"), located in a peripheral urban district; and Preah Sisovath High School ("School P"), located in a central urban district. Tuon Hua High School, the Chinese school, is located in a central urban district ("School T").

C. *Research Method*

I used the questionnaire method for each of the target groups: high school students, their parents, and their teachers. I also organized a research team comprised of some of my colleagues at the Royal University of Phnom Penh. I asked them to translate the English version of the students' and parents' questionnaires into Khmer and to give instructions to the high school students in their native tongue. Due to time limitations, it was necessary to use a slightly different method of data collection for the individual target groups.

While I used the original Khmer-language versions of the questionnaires at the Khmer schools, this was not possible at the Chinese school. Only one third of the teachers had a significant degree of facility in Khmer, and over half could neither speak, read, nor write the language. Discussing the matter with the principal, we agreed at first that a member of the survey team would explain the questions individually and ask the teachers to mark their

4) The Chinese school, which is one of the target groups of this study, is Tuon Hua School (Sometimes this is written as "Duon Hua"). The sponsoring group is the Association of Chinese Teochew in Cambodia, which founded the school in 1926. The school was closed during the period of domestic conflict but was re-opened in 1992. It is the largest Chinese school in Cambodia with respect to the number of students. The language of instruction is Mandarin. The school offers a two-year high school program. For the purposes of this study, I focused on second year students. At this level, the students learn Chinese language, Chinese composition, accounting, computer skills and other business skills.

responses on the answer sheets. The principal later changed his mind and volunteered to translate the questionnaire into Chinese with the help of the dean. We deeply appreciated his offer and accepted.

To represent the target group of high school students, we selected two classes from Schools C and S, and four classes from Schools P and T. All the students who were present on the day of the survey were asked to come to a room. Members of the research team explained how to fill in the questionnaires and asked the students to complete them within one hour. Because the instructions were given in Khmer, the students' mistakes were minimal.

Members of the research team instructed students to bring home the questionnaire for parents and to place the completed form into the envelope provided. Students were expected to submit them to the school within three days. In cases where parents were illiterate, students were asked to help them by reading the questions aloud and marking the responses on the answer sheets. At the end of the questionnaire, we included a question asking the respondent to indicate who had actually filled in the form.

All teachers at the selected schools who were teaching senior high school courses were surveyed. The team asked the principal of each senior high school to distribute and collect the questionnaire for teachers. As teachers came to school on different days of the week, the team asked the principals to collect the questionnaires over a period of five days.

D. *Completed Forms*

The completed questionnaires were tabulated according to the following definitions: the population of students was defined as the number of officially registered students;⁵⁾ the population of parents was defined as those parents whose children had filled in the student questionnaire; and the population of teachers was defined as the total number of teachers teaching senior high school subjects.⁶⁾

Table 1 Students

School	Officially Registered Students	Total	Male	Female	Proportion of Female Students (%)	Proportion of Completed Forms (%)
Chumpou Voan (School C)	118	83	56	27	32.5	70.3
Samaki (School S)	103	72	36	36	50.0	69.9
Preah Sisovath (School P)	176	100	43	57	57.0	56.8
Tuon Hua (School T)	132	125	53	72	57.6	94.7
Total	529	380	188	192	50.5	71.8

5) According to teachers in the Khmer schools (with the exception of School P), the level of students' attendance on the survey day was average. At School P, many students were absent in order to prepare for their graduation exam, which was to take place two months later. At School T, the number of students in one class was so small that we surveyed all of the students.

6) The number of teachers teaching senior high school courses at the Chinese school totaled only 12, and we included 38 junior high school teachers. As a result, we collected 100% of completed questionnaires from senior high school teachers and 90.5% from junior high school teachers.

Table 2 Parents

School	Population	Total	Father	Mother	Proportion of Mothers (%)	Proportion of Completed Forms (%)
Chumpou Voan (School C)	83	65	42	23	35.4	78.3
Samaki (School S)	72	57	35	22	38.6	79.2
Preah Sisovath (School P)	100	73	40	33	45.2	73.0
Tuon Hua (School T)	125	90	50	40	44.4	72.0
Total	380	285	167	118	41.4	75.0

Table 3 Teachers

School	Population	Total	Male	Female	Proportion of Female Teachers (%)	Proportion of Completed Forms (%)
Chumpou Voan (School C)	51	40	28	12	30.0	78.4
Samaki (School S)	45	40	30	10	25.0	88.9
Preah Sisovath (School P)	164	136	70	66	48.5	82.9
Tuon Hua (School T)	54	50	34	16	32.0	92.6
Total	314	266	162	104	39.1	84.7

IV Views Held by the High School Students

A. Profile of Students

In the three Khmer schools, the students' ages ranged from 16 to 22. This was due to the fact that some students found it necessary to repeat grades while others were able to skip grades. This class (in their third year of high school) was the last cohort to pass through the old five-year system⁷⁾ of compulsory education. If they followed the normal pattern, they would be 17 years old. In the Chinese school, the students' age range was between 15 and 23. This large range was due to the fact that some students attended the school only for the purpose of learning the Chinese language.

Among the three Khmer schools, there were certain differences among schools C, S, and P in terms of certain variables. A gender difference between School C and School S was observed. The highest frequency (mode) for the age distribution of students at Schools C and S was 20 years old, while at School P, it was 17 years. At Schools C and S, the mode for the age distribution of male students was 20 years, while the mode for female students was 18 years. In the suburban district and peripheral urban district, students were less likely to complete their high school education without interruption. This may have been due to the poorer socio-economic conditions of households in these districts.

At School P, the mode was 17 years. The proportion of female students was higher than

7) In 1996, the primary school system was extended from five years to six years.

that of male students. In the central urban district, it appeared that students had less disruptions in their schooling and were financially better off. In particular, when female students did well academically, parents actively encouraged their daughters and were willing to invest further in their education.

At School T, the mode was 18 years old on average. The mode of male students was 18, but that of female students had two peaks: 17 and 19. Generally, the range of students' ages showed a fairly equal distribution between 17 and 20, and there were no remarkable differences between genders.

There was a certain degree of correlation between the students' age distribution and their levels of academic achievement ($r=.207$, $p=.01\%$). The older the student in relation to his or her peers, the lower his/her level of academic achievement tended to be. There may be social and economic reasons why students postpone their high school education. For example, the student may have to stop attending school in order to contribute to the household economy if the household's overall income is insufficient. In addition, when parents are involved in their children's school education, there may be an effect on children's school attendance.⁸⁾ The range of the students' age distribution (an intervening variable) is extended due to these types of independent variables. Students who fall behind their peers generally tend to have lower levels of academic achievement and cannot proceed to post-secondary institutions or occupations which require high levels of training. In brief, the students' age composition (an intervening variable) in a particular school is a predictor for their future career development (a dependent variable) of students at that school.

B. *Learning Environment: Attendance at Cramming Classes*

Cramming classes can be considered as a good indicator of the students' learning environment. There are two patterns in the scheduling of cramming classes. Some of the schools offer one-hour classes every day, while others organize sessions during long holidays. The main subject offered is English, which is considered beneficial for students' career development. Some other subjects such as mathematics and physics are also offered; these are helpful in preparing for university and college entrance examinations. The amount of tuition charged varies according to the teacher: highly reputed teachers charge more. The most highly reputed cramming classes are concentrated in the city center.

Among the three Khmer schools, the figures for students who attended cramming classes were as follows: School C, 24.1%; School S, 27.8%; and School P, 65.0%. Virtually all students at the Chinese school attended cramming classes — an astonishing figure of 96.0%.

There were gender differences in the proportion of cramming class participants. At School C and School S, 12.8% and 11.1% more male than female students attended cramming classes respectively. At Schools P, 16.1% more female students attended cramming classes than male students.

8) It should be noted, however, that details about the students' family situations were not covered by this survey.

As mentioned earlier, school districts reflect local socio-economic conditions. The differences in conditions appeared to affect female students more strongly than males. In the suburban farming district, only 14.8% of female students attended cramming classes. In the urban peripheral district, the proportion rose to 22.2% and in the urban central district, the figure was 71.9%.

If we count learning at a cramming class as part of a student's total learning time, female students at School P had the most favorable learning environment. Female students in the suburban farming district could not find cramming classes in the vicinity, and attendance costs both time and money.

At the Chinese school, there was no gender difference in this respect. According to information collected by in-depth interviews, Chinese parents encouraged their children to learn foreign languages. The cramming classes the students attended were mostly language classes.

C. *Students' Goals for Post-Secondary Education*

Except for School P students, the most popular goal among high school students was to attend university.⁹⁾ The proportion of students wanting to attend university was 55.4% at School C, 58.3% at School S, and 49.6% at School T (the Chinese school). At School P, 58.0% of students chose "graduate programs" as their first choice. If "university" and "graduate programs" are combined, School P students had the highest total (93.0%), with School S (75.0%), School T (71.2%), and School C (62.6%) following in descending order.

For choices ranked second and lower, differences among both schools and genders were observed. Similar proportions of male students at Schools C (28.6%) and S (33.4%) wanted to attend vocational schools and/or secondary technical schools. At School P, students chose "university" as their second preference and at School T, "graduate programs" was the most popular second choice.

It should be noted that at School T, 13.2% of male students wanted to finish their formal education at the high school level. In the three Khmer schools, the proportion was between 0 and 2.8%: an almost negligible percentage. Even at School T, only 5.6% of female students wished to finish their education at the high school level. According to the survey results, the proportion of female students hoping to attend post-secondary institutions was generally greater than that of males.

There were statistically significant correlations at some of the Khmer schools between students' future goals and their levels of academic achievement,¹⁰⁾ but there was none at the Chinese school. Among male students at School C, the correlation coefficient was .334 ($p=5\%$). Among female students at School P, the coefficient was .265 ($p=5\%$). In the other

9) In this study, the term university will be used to refer to the undergraduate level only.

10) I established three categories for the levels of students' academic achievements: high group, intermediate group, and low group. The high group included the top 25% of the student body and the low group consisted of students who had failed one or more subjects. The intermediate group consisted of students with results between the two.

groups, non-academic factors must play a more important role than the academic achievement of individual students.

In order to delve into this question, the relationship between students' academic achievement and their preferred future occupation needs to be considered. To summarize the findings, there is a startling contrast between the cases of School C female students and School P male students. Among School C females, 30.0% of high achievers, 12.5% of middle achievers and 0% of low achievers expressed a desire to enter the workforce immediately after graduating from high school. Among School P males, all students expressed a hope of going to university, regardless of the level of academic achievement.

High-achieving female students at School C gave various reasons for their desire to begin paid employment immediately. They were: "to earn income for my family," "my family's budget cannot pay for my post-secondary education," and "my family wants me to work immediately after graduation." In the suburban farming district, the survey indicated that family obligations and limited economic resources strongly affected the career development choices of female students. Among male students at School P, academic achievement was less significant than future economic incentives. The socio-economic factors of the different districts affected males and females in a different manner.

Students at School C were facing general difficulties in proceeding to higher educational institutions because of their parents' limited economic resources. In the same student group, males were trying to use their high levels of academic achievement to leverage their career development, but females were under the pressure of non-academic factors. If the difficulty were purely economic, the female students would be able to receive scholarships and/or earn some income through part-time work. When the ethos of a family exerts a strong pressure, female students whose levels of academic achievement are high as those of their male counterparts, are subject to forces from outside (i.e. familial or social) groups. When the economic resources of a household are limited, investment in education varies according to the child's gender. This proposition is supported by information collected in the preliminary survey.

Generally, in contemporary Cambodia, two variables affect investment in education for female children: the parents' economic resources and the students' level of academic achievement. When the values of these two variables are high, families will tend to invest in higher education for females. In the case of female students at School P where values for these variables were high, there was a greater chance that female students would proceed to a post-secondary institution.

D. Desired Occupations of High School Students

Students' desired occupations will be analyzed according to the classification of occupations I have developed. In the questionnaire, students were freely able to write their desired future occupation in an open-ended question. The responses were sorted into appropriate categories.

In the three Khmer schools, "professional" was the most popular occupational category chosen by students of both sexes. At School C, 34.9% of students wanted to be professionals

while at School S the figure was 37.5%, and at School P, 51.0%. Lower-ranking but still popular choices of occupation varied according to school. At School C, male students wanted to pursue “technical work” while females chose “semi-professional.” At School S, male students chose “technical work” and “office work” while female students were interested in office work. At School P, the secondary choice for male students was “civil service” and the choice for females was “office work.” Office work has become an important alternative in urban areas where there has been development and differentiation of industries.

It is interesting to note that at School P, 13.0% of students had not decided their possible future occupations. At School C, 7.2% of students belonged to this category, while at School S, the total was only 4.2%. This indicates that, for the most part, students at School P did not intend to enter the workforce immediately after graduating from high school. Their highest priority was to obtain a diploma from a post-secondary institution. Only after that would they choose an occupation appropriate to their field of study. Apparently, students at School P acknowledge the value-added aspect of higher-level education.

At School T, 41.6% of students wanted to engage in business regardless of gender, with office work (28.8%) ranking second. Males tended to be more interested in professional work and females in office work. Another finding was that at this school, the “undecided” group comprised 12.8% of students. At School T, the gender difference in notions held by students was negligible.

At the three Khmer schools, there was a statistically significant co-relation ($\chi^2=152.3$, $df=42$, $p=.000$) between the students’ choices for their future desired occupation and the level of schooling which they wished to complete.¹¹⁾ This co-relation did not exist at School T. Khmer school students tended to regard post-secondary education as a means of gaining a higher-level entry point into the labour market, but Chinese school students were less concerned about the economic merits of higher education.

There is little difference between Khmer and Chinese school students regarding desired educational levels, but there is a significant difference in the desired occupations of these two groups. Khmer students aspire to become professionals while the Chinese school students are to become businessmen or businesswomen. The aspirations of these high school students echo the actual distributions of these occupations in society at large.

Public school students plan to attain their desired occupation through optimal use of the Cambodian educational system. Chinese school students, on the other hand, regard business (the traditional occupation of this ethnic group) as the best means by which to establish themselves. This difference in orientation is derived from their view of the social foundation on which they should base their lives. Khmer school students regard Cambodian society as the foundation, while Chinese school students put their faith in the Chinese socio-economic network.

About 90% of the students of School T attend public schools, which in theory places them in a position equal to Khmer school students for acceptance into universities. In addition,

11) In other words, students chose preferred levels of schooling appropriate to the occupation they had in mind.

Chinese school students have access to the Chinese socio-economic network through Chinese education and the acquisition of practical skills learned at Chinese school. In Cambodia, citizens generally have equal rights and opportunities. With this in mind, I would conclude that Chinese school students have a rather limited level of commitment to Cambodian society.

In sum, many Chinese school students enjoy the privilege of having access to their own ethnic socio-economic network in addition to the universal rights and opportunities available to all Cambodians. They appreciate the merits of participating in a network employing the Chinese language and practical skills.

V Views Held by Students' Parents

A. Profile of Parents

1. Parents' Academic Careers

According to census statistics for Phnom Penh, the breakdown for levels of schooling for males was as follows: university graduates totaled 6.9% and graduates of vocational and technical schools totaled 2.5%, followed by senior high school at 26.9%, junior high school at 28.8% and primary school at 26.9%. The average level of schooling for females was lower than that of males: university graduates totaled 1.5%, followed by those of vocational and technical schools at 1.1%, senior high school at 10.3%, junior high school at 25.3%, primary school at 36.6%, and "no schooling" at 24.6%.

The fathers of School S students had academic careers which most closely paralleled the city average. Fathers of School C students also presented similar patterns. The only noticeable difference was that more fathers at this school had a senior secondary education and all indicated that they had at least some level of schooling. In the suburban farming district, 12.6% of the total adult male population had finished senior high school while the percentage of senior high school graduates among the fathers of school C students was 38.5%. Fathers of School P were different from those of the other two Khmer schools. The percentage of those who had completed a university education was much higher, at 42.5%. The proportion of those who had graduated only from junior high school (5.5%) and primary school (6.8%) were much lower than the city average.

School T follows a different school system and it cannot be compared directly to the Khmer schools. Only 2.2% of students' fathers had completed a university education. Those who were graduates of senior high school, junior high school, and primary school, showed patterns similar to the city average. Apparently the socio-economic well being of the Chinese families surveyed depended on variables other than education.

The academic careers of the high school students' mothers varied according to school. The mothers of School S had patterns of schooling which closely matched the city average. Mothers of School C had higher than average levels of schooling, that is, 21.5% of them had finished senior high school (a total twice as high as the city average) and those who indicated "no school education" totaled 4.6% (one fifth of the city average). Mothers of School P

students had received the highest levels of schooling. Those who had completed a university education totaled 16.4%, and those who had completed senior high school totaled 31.5%. The modes for mothers' level of schooling in each of the three schools were: School C—junior high school; School S—primary school; and School P—senior high school. Mothers in the suburban farming district had higher levels of education than the district average. In the economically deprived area (i.e. outside of the central urban area), the parents' academic careers tended to affect the levels of their children's schooling. When one or both parents had a high level of schooling, there was a greater tendency for them to encourage their children academically. The parents' educational background can be considered as one of the family's cultural resources.

Schooling patterns for the mothers of Chinese school students were different from those of Khmer school mothers. None of them had completed a university education, while 42.2% had finished only primary school. Those mothers who indicated "no school education" totaled 6.7%: one fifth of the city average.

Generally speaking, however, the mothers of students at the high schools surveyed in this study had higher levels of schooling than the city average. On the other hand, the academic careers of students' fathers closely paralleled the city average. From the above, it seems that high school students are generally from households in which the mothers have received higher than average levels of schooling. The mothers' views on the value of school education positively affect their children's schooling.

2. *Parents' Occupations*

My classification of occupations is different from that of the national census, so the results of this survey do not correspond to the census data. I have purposely taken a different approach in order to be able to discern differences among school districts. In the census data, the Phnom Penh region is divided into urban and suburban areas. In the urban area, the two most common categories of employment are the civil service and office work, while among females, business was ranked first, followed by manufacturing.

The suburban area is divided into three districts, but in this paper I will discuss only one district: the district in which School C is located. According to census statistics for this district, almost half of male residents were engaged in farming (43.1%). The second largest group consisted of civil service (17.3%). More than half of female residents were engaged in farming (55.2%), followed by manufacturing (26.8%) and business (11.1%).

Fathers of School C students were mostly engaged in farming (27.7%) and the civil service (26.2%) while the top categories for mothers were farming (30.8%) and business (23.1%). In this district the census showed that within the general population, only 1.2% of female residents were professionals while 9.2% of students' mothers were in this category.

Among fathers of School S students, the three major occupational categories were business, farming, and the civil service. This particular peripheral urban district is large and sparsely populated, and there are differences in occupational composition among the three

suburban districts. This explains why some fathers of School S students were farmers. The students' mothers were engaged in occupations similar to those of fathers.

Among fathers of School P students, the three most common occupational categories were the civil service, the professional sector, and business. The proportion of professionals was much higher than the city average. Many students' mothers were working in the fields of business (21.9%) and the civil service (19.2%). A high proportion of students' mothers chose the option "no occupation" (35.6%). Due to their economic prosperity, these women do not have to work outside of the home and are full-time homemakers.

In School T, the occupational patterns of students' fathers and mothers were very similar. As mentioned earlier, the most common occupational field among students' parents was "business": 71.1% of fathers and 64.4% of mothers were engaged in this category. The "no occupation" category among students' mothers was 24.4%, reflecting their prosperous economic situation.

Generally, a higher proportion of students' parents were engaged as civil servants and professionals compared to the city average. The high proportion of professionals indicates the socio-economic status of students' households within their school district. This was definitely the case for School P. Differences in the parents' occupational patterns were reflected to some extent among all the Khmer schools.

B. *Expectations Regarding Children's Academic Careers*

Expectations concerning the academic careers of boys and girls were examined separately. In some households, the parents did not have both boy(s) and girl(s). In the following section, the population was defined as the total responses received, minus the above cases where there were children of only one gender.

The most popular choice for "expected school career for boys" among the parents of Schools C, S and T was "university," while in School P it was "graduate programs." In School C 62.9% of parents wanted to send their boys to university; in School S the proportion was 50.9%; and in School T, 46.9%. In School P, a smaller number of parents wanted to send their children to university (24.2%) while more parents chose "graduate programs" (69.4%). In other schools, however, the proportion of parents who expected their children to enter graduate programs was much smaller: in School C, the total was 10.0%; in School S, 25.5%; and in School T, 22.2%. In brief, the urban population considered graduate programs to be an accessible new option for boys.

Expectations regarding academic careers for girls roughly corresponded to that of boys. Parents wanted to send their daughters to university and graduate programs but the proportion was several per cent less than for boys. Except for parents of School P students (4.4%), the proportion of parents at the other three schools who wanted their daughters to end their academic careers at the high school level was about 10% higher than the percentage given for boys.

Among the three Khmer schools, there were differences between the parents' own

academic careers and expectations regarding academic careers for their sons and/or daughters. There was no correlation between the parents' academic careers and their expectations for their sons, but there was a correlation with their expectations for their daughters. The correlation coefficient between fathers' academic careers and expected academic careers for daughters was ($r=.166$, $p=.05$) and that of mothers' academic careers and expectations for daughters was ($r=.182$, $p=.05$).

Parents' expectations for their daughters were high. The higher the parents' level of schooling, the higher the expectations for their daughters. This relationship was particularly true for mothers. Highly educated mothers tended to choose spouses with high levels of schooling ($r=.406$, $p=.01$). These highly educated mothers wanted their daughters to be highly educated as well.

There was no correlation between expected academic careers for sons and parents' academic careers. This was because parents with any level of education expected their sons to complete at least an undergraduate degree, or an even higher level of training.

There are two reasons for this gender difference. First, the parents' views reflect social norms of differential treatment for males and females in Cambodian society, and second, their views reflect attitudes about school education in general.

C. *Expectations Regarding Children's Occupations*

As noted earlier, respondents' expectations regarding occupations for their children were distinguished by gender. The most frequently chosen option regarding expectation for boys was "it depends" (i.e. upon the child's own will). The percentage of parents who selected this option was 53.2% for School C, 49.1% for School S, 69.4% for School P, and 75.3% for School T. Khmer school parents preferred that their children become professionals followed by civil servants. Overwhelmingly, Chinese school parents preferred their children to engage in business while a much smaller number selected other occupations.

I examined the relationship between responses regarding expected occupations for children and occupations of students' fathers. Those fathers who wanted their sons to pursue the same career as themselves chose "professional" and "office work" most frequently. The majority of fathers who were civil servants wanted their sons to become professionals and about half that number wanted their sons to become office workers. In sum, the category "professional" was considered highly desirable by both parents and students.

In the case of daughters, parents' wishes showed a similar pattern, i.e., "it depends" was the top choice. In the case of School C parents, 55.0% chose this response; in School S, 53.6%; in School P, 66.2%; and in School T, 82.1%. The most frequently chosen occupational category in the Khmer schools was "professional." In School C, the second most frequently chosen occupation was "civil service," while in Schools S and P the most popular second choice was "office work." Chinese school parents wanted their daughters to engage in business first, followed by office work. In short, office work was considered an appropriate occupation for city girls.

As pointed out earlier, the response most frequently chosen by parents for the expected occupation of their children was “it depends.” There are two reasons for the popularity of this response. First, compared to their own generation, their children’s generation has access to a greater variety of occupations. Second, parents tend to assume that the pursuit of higher education will have socio-economic merit and may well open doors to a larger number of career options. For this reason, most parents want their children to attend post-secondary institutions.

In my preliminary survey, many parents expressed their wishes for their children by explaining that they did not know what kind of occupations were available in the workplace, and therefore, they were unable to give their children adequate advice concerning their futures. They reasoned that if their children received a “good education” now, they would be able to develop better judgment and make an informed career choice. From the parents’ viewpoint, it was most important to give their children a “good education.” This seemed to be the most typical opinion of parents. Their expectations for their children were most strongly projected in the area of education.

VI Views Held by High School Teachers

A. *Profile of Teachers*

1. *Varieties of Teaching Certificates*

Cambodian school regulations generally do not permit an individual to teach at a senior high school without a certificate for teaching senior high school subjects. There is one exception to this regulation. For several years, beginning in 1979, many schools were unable to find qualified teachers. These schools employed less qualified teachers during this period of reconstruction caused by the Pol Pot regime, thus, some junior high school teachers were engaged to teach senior high school subjects. Many of these teachers still remain at the senior high school level.

The proportion of qualified teachers varied by school. In School C, qualified teachers totaled 62.5%; in School S, 95.0%; and in School P, 87.9%. The qualified teachers were mostly in their 30s. In suburban areas, the schools had difficulty in attracting young, qualified teachers. In urban areas, however, the relative abundance of socio-economic resources enabled schools to employ both young and old qualified teachers.

Chinese school teachers differed from Khmer school teachers in many ways. For example, the percentage of Chinese school teachers trained in Cambodia totaled 44.0%, those who were sent from China totaled 10.0%, and those who had applied for teaching positions from China and were subsequently employed totaled 40.0% (“no answer” 4%, “other” 2%).

In terms of the types of teaching certificates represented, the body of teachers at School T can be broken down into several groups. Only 40.0% of the teachers had a teaching certificate for either junior high school or senior high school. The majority (60.0%) of the teachers had not received any teacher training courses, but about half of them had bachelor’s degrees. Besides teaching the Chinese language, they also taught subjects corresponding to what they had

studied at university.

I asked the Chinese school teachers to evaluate their own competency in speaking, reading, and writing the Khmer language. Those who did not have any significant knowledge of the Khmer language totaled 52.0%. Those who could speak Khmer totaled 48.0%, and of this group, 36.0% could also read Khmer. Of the latter group, 32.0% could write Khmer as well. Most of the students had knowledge of both Chinese and Khmer but the language of instruction at School T was Chinese. It is abundantly clear that School T is culturally and ethnically a Chinese school.

2. *School Subjects and Teaching Hours*

At School C, 60.0% of teachers taught only one subject, while the figure was 77.5% at School S, and 97.8% at School P. The wealthier the school district, the more easily schools could assign teachers to teach only one subject. At School T, 42.0% of the teachers taught three subjects, and 32.0% taught two subjects. Only 16.0% of teachers taught one subject.

According to Cambodian educational regulations, teachers are expected to teach 16 hours per week at the senior high school level and 18 hours at the junior high school level.¹²⁾ The actual situation is far different from the prescribed timetable. At School C, 57.5% of teachers were teaching 16–20 hours per week; at School S, 60.0% of teachers were teaching 6–10 hours; and at School P, 45.6% of teachers were teaching 11–15 hours. School regulations in contemporary Cambodia are not in congruence with local realities. At School T, 54.0% of teachers were teaching 16–20 hours per week and 32.0% were teaching for 21 hours. As most of the Chinese school teachers were expected to teach more than one subject, their teaching hours tended to be longer.

B. *School Environment*

In this survey, I presented six issues and asked the respondents to rank the four options provided for each question as “most important,” “important,” “unimportant,” and “most unimportant.” The issues were: “improving school facilities,” “improving teaching materials and equipment for classes,” “assigning the most appropriate (or qualified) teachers for each subject,” “increasing teaching hours,” “revising the school curriculum,” and “professional development of teachers.”

Teachers at Schools C and S placed a high priority on improving school facilities and teaching materials, a medium priority on revising the curriculum and adequate allocation of teachers, and lowest priority on increasing the number of teaching hours and professional development.

Teachers at School P gave priority to the professional development of teachers. At School P, both the number of subjects taught and the number of teaching hours were the lowest among the Khmer schools. Generally, School P teachers enjoyed a better school environment,

12) Teachers with home room responsibilities teach three hours less than the normal regulated teaching hours.

and their answers focused on improving their own teaching skills.

Two conditions may have caused attitudinal differences among Khmer school teachers. First, in the suburban farming area and the peripheral urban area, the school facilities are inferior to those of central urban schools. Teachers in these schools tend to emphasize the improvement of physical facilities for this reason. Second, in the suburban farming area, the student-teacher ratio is fairly stable and non-competitive. In School C, therefore, both teachers and students tend to accept the status quo.

These results indicate that the teachers' evaluation of the school environment focused mainly on physical factors as opposed to pedagogical factors. This tendency was reflected the socio-economic conditions of each school district.

At School T (the Chinese school) 18.0% of teachers tended to regard the improvement of teaching materials as being unimportant. Among the Khmer schools, only 1.4% of School P teachers responded in a similar manner. School T had superior school facilities and equipment compared to the Khmer schools.

C. *Problems Regarding Classroom Instruction*

I presented six questions regarding classroom instruction: "number of students per class"; "accessibility of textbooks"; "contents of textbooks"; "differences among individual students' learning abilities"; "the regulation requiring students to take all courses"; and "students' attitudes and behavior in class." The following discussion is a summary of how teachers in each school felt about these issues.

In the three Khmer schools, teachers were most concerned about the number of students per class and the students' ability to obtain textbooks; they showed a medium level of concern about the regulation requiring students to take all courses, and the students' behavior in class; and finally, they assessed the contents of the textbooks and the students' learning abilities as being of low priority.

Many teachers (64.3%) at School P indicated that the regulation requiring students to take all courses and the students' behavior in class were very serious problems. School P is one of the four largest schools in the City of Phnom Penh and the backgrounds of the students are as a result highly diversified. According to the information collected through the in-depth interviews, teachers felt that the students' behavior in class was relatively poor. They regarded this issue as being one of the major problems in teaching contemporary urban youth.

As the students' backgrounds are diverse, it is impossible to assume that they all have the same needs. The teachers believed that the school should provide courses corresponding to students' needs: a view which necessarily runs counter to the regulation requiring all students to take the same courses. As increasing numbers of young people enroll in high schools, this problem will become ever more acute.

At the Chinese school, the problems faced by teachers were different from those in the Khmer schools. They had concerns regarding the number of students per class and students' learning abilities. In the other four areas, they did not see any serious problems. In School T,

the school system per se seemed to be functioning smoothly.

D. *Factors Affecting Students' Career Choices*

How do teachers assess the factors which affect their students' career choices? My questions addressed five issues in this regard: "the reputation of the high school," "students' own academic achievement," "level of student motivation and effort," "parental support and involvement," and "economic level of students' households."

Among Khmer school teachers, the reputation of the high school was ranked as being of the lowest priority. In Cambodia, there is no entrance examination for high schools and entrance to university is not based on high school grades. Students who want to enter national universities must take the National High School Graduation Test, the results of which are ranked according to five levels. Those who achieve the highest level can enter a national university and take public courses without paying tuition fees. Those with lower levels of achievement must pay tuition fees to take private courses at a national university or attend private universities which charge higher tuition fees.

This being the case, there is no objective measure to assess the reputation of each high school. Teachers tend to believe that the reputation of the school, if it exists, will not affect the students' decisions.

There seemed to be a general consensus amongst the Khmer school teachers surveyed that two factors—parental involvement and the economic level of the student's household—were the most important factors affecting career choices. They also agreed that students' level of academic achievement and their level of motivation and effort were the least relevant factors influencing students' decision making.

Despite the general consensus, there were slight disparities on this subject among the three Khmer schools. At Schools C and S, the teachers emphasized the significance of the parents' economic resources over the level of parental involvement, while at School P, the order was reversed. Another slight difference was that teachers at Schools S and P considered the level of student motivation and effort to be more important than their level of academic achievement, while at School C, the order was reversed.

At School P, the age composition of students for each grade showed a narrow distribution, allowing learning to proceed with greater ease. The parents of some students had moved to this school district in order to send their children to School P. These parents were anxious to give their children a "good education" and were actively involved in making decisions about their children's education. In other words, in addition to the benefit of greater economic resources, these parents were proactive in promoting their children's career development.

At School C, teachers readily acknowledged that the economic factor strongly affected students' decision making. The same teachers also appreciated that students' academic achievement contributed positively to their career development.

At School T, teachers ranked the students' levels of motivation and effort as being of the highest priority and gave academic achievement the lowest ranking. These teachers perceived

that individual factors were more important than environmental factors such as economic resources and group factors such as parental involvement. In other words, students at School T had a higher degree of autonomy in making their own decisions regarding career development.

VII Summary and Conclusion

This study has examined students' orientation patterns and the factors affecting their orientation for the acquisition of social positions. In order to analyze inter-generational mobility, I focused on the occupations of the students' fathers as well as the students' own desired future occupations. I did not include mothers in this context, because about one third of them were not participants in the labour market and it was therefore difficult to infer orientation patterns for this group.

At School C, the greatest difference appeared in the farming sector. Farming fathers constituted 27.7% of the samples, but none of their children wished to pursue the same occupation. Instead, 35.7% of their children wanted to become professionals and 25.0% wanted to be technical workers. Other fathers were civil servants but only 22.2% of their children wished to pursue the same career and 33.3% of their children wished to become professionals. On the other hand, 42.9% of the children of professional fathers also wanted to become professionals themselves. In groups where a high percentage of children pursue the same career path as their fathers, the degree of social mobility is low. From the above results, it is likely that the social status of farming will deteriorate but the social status of professionals will be well maintained.

Unlike School C, at School S there were no large discrepancies between the fathers' occupations and the students' desired occupations. The two job categories for fathers with the lowest percentages were "professional" and "office work," but children of these fathers ranked these two occupations as being the most desirable. Fathers who were civil servants had children who aspired to be professionals or office workers. When fathers were in the business sector, their children aspired to become professionals, semi-professionals, and office workers. Students at School S were generally oriented toward the types of occupations prevalent in a modern industrialized society.

At School P, there were two clear trends: the decline of civil servants and the rise of professionals. Those fathers who were professionals, civil servants, and/or office workers, had children who almost unanimously wished to become professionals. A strong inter-generational similarity was observed in professional families: 72.2% of children wanted to pursue careers in the same job category as their fathers. Inter-generational mobility in professional families proved to be low, hence the social stratum will be well maintained. The fathers' high levels of education and their occupations were contributing factors in maintaining this social stratum.

At School T, 71.1% of fathers were employed in the business sector, but a smaller proportion of their children (41.6%) wanted to do likewise, and 28.8% of their children wished to pursue office work. These results suggest a strong likelihood that the business sector among the

Chinese population will be well maintained. According to information collected during the preliminary survey, those students who wanted to do office work tended to consider this type of work as being less risky than a business enterprise. In business there is a risk of losing personal assets and property, although office workers face the threat of unemployment. As the degree of industrialization increases and the jobs available in various sectors diversify and increase, more students will opt for careers in the wage-employment sector. At present, Chinese people are predominantly engaged in business, but beginning with their children's generation, new employment patterns will most likely emerge.

In summary, there are differences in occupational structure between the fathers' and the children's generations. Compared with their fathers, students are faced with a more diversified labour market. Professionals and office workers who once comprised a limited share of the labour market will soon experience a remarkable increase in their numbers. Farming, on the other hand, will almost certainly decline.

Differences between genders and differences among school districts were also a major focus of this study. The appearance of gender differences tends to depend upon economic conditions. A wealthier household offers a more rewarding learning environment for female students, which in turn motivates them to aspire to higher levels of achievement, and vice versa. In this context, the cases of female students at School P and School C come to mind. Male students are also affected by the economic condition of their household, but it is not a decisive factor. Male students at School C considered their academic achievement to be a means of acquiring better employment.

There were differences between the suburban school district and the urban school district. Residents in the suburban school district were handicapped in terms of occupational stratification, infrastructure, and distance to the central urban area. Accordingly, they could invest only a limited amount in their children's education. They generally suffered from poorer social resources. The factor which motivated them was their children's academic careers. Those parents who sent their children to high school had relatively high levels of schooling compared to the average for the district. This shows that when parents have a high level of schooling, they make a greater effort to raise the level of their children's schooling as well.

The location of the student's household also influences the children's schooling. Families of School S students who were living in the peripheral urban district enjoyed certain advantages even if they were as poor as those of School C. The conditions of urban areas helped to counter disadvantages imposed by the lack of economic resources. For example, the proportion of certified teachers at School S was almost comparable to that of School P. Students were exposed to a diversified labour market in their daily lives and had a better awareness of the career options open to them. The parents of School S students had a lower level of schooling than those of School C, but their children were more strongly motivated to attend post-secondary institutions than their School C counterparts.

In conclusion, the most significant factor affecting the orientation of high school students is the economic level of their household, as measured by the principal breadwinner's occupation.

When economic resources are limited, social resources (the district or location of the family's residence, etc.) will compensate for the disadvantage to some degree. When both of the above resources are limited, the cultural resources of the family (e.g. one or both parents having a high level of schooling) will help to increase the motivation levels of their children.

This survey of inter-generational mobility shows that Cambodian society is presently in a phase of socio-economic change. Since the social structure is still unstable, the level of social mobility is high. If society becomes more stable as a result of the education of its children, the social stratification of Cambodian society will become more rigidly institutionalized.

Changes inside and outside of the Chinese community are affecting the socio-economic status of this ethnic group. Within their community, young people are oriented toward obtaining professional work, and as a means of achieving this goal, they wish to pursue a higher education. Outside of their community, in Cambodian society at large, the range of available occupations has diversified and social mobility has increased.

At present, there are no conspicuous conflicts or severe competition between the Khmer and Chinese for desired occupations. This is largely due to the fact that many Khmer school students aspire towards professional work while Chinese school students are still mainly interested in business.

But if educational opportunities continue to become more abundant and the rate of entry into university increases, a new middle class based on the possession of advanced knowledge and skills will be formed. If Cambodian society reaches this stage, the current balance of occupational differentiation among ethnic groups will be jeopardized. It will be the task of researchers to observe and understand how the Khmer and Chinese will compete in the domestic labour market of this future society.

Another research task will be the study of the relationship between the education system and changes in society. School education was completely destroyed under the Pol Pot Regime. The education system has been reconstructed since the collapse of the regime, but it shares many similarities with school systems in other developing countries. Through ethnographic studies of the unique process occurring in Cambodia, researchers should be able to gain significant theoretical insights into the functioning of school systems in their social context.

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