

An Ethnographic Study in the Context of Northeast Thailand:  
Equipping Organizations with Cross-Cultural Tools

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**Table of Contents**

INTRODUCTION .....	3
HISTORICAL CONTEXT .....	9
EDUCATION INITIATIVES .....	10
EDUCATION IN THAILAND .....	12
INTERNATIONALIZATION .....	13
TEACHER’S PERSPECTIVE .....	15
CULTURAL CONTEXTUALIZATION .....	16
SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS .....	19
CULTURAL INDICES .....	20
COLLECTIVISM .....	20
“SAVING FACE” .....	22
GENDER-RELATED FACTORS .....	23
HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURES .....	25
EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES .....	27
PROGRAM EVALUATION .....	28
METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION .....	29
MENTORSHIP AND SUPPORT .....	30
SHARED SPACE FOR ALL ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW .....	34
LOGIC MODEL .....	35
LOGIC MODEL NARRATIVE .....	36
EVALUATION PLAN .....	39
EVALUATION PLAN NARRATIVE .....	44
CONCLUSION .....	48
WORKS CITED .....	49

## Introduction

Anh is an eight-year-old boy who lives in the village of Ban Sam Phrao, Udon Thani, Thailand and is currently in the second grade. I met Anh during my first week visiting Isaan which is considered the Northeastern region of the country. Over the month of August 2018, I had the opportunity to partner with the non-profit organization called Shared Space for All (SSFA) and volunteer in their after-school education program located in Thailand. For four consecutive weeks, I taught English and tutored students as part of my ethnographic fieldwork study for the graduate program in International Community Development.

I remember spotting Anh, riding behind his grandfather on their rusty buggy cart, as they rolled down the long, dirt driveway to Supunnee's (Nee) house in the small yet crowded village. Nee, who is the Lead Teacher of SSFA and was also my fieldwork supervisor, has been teaching for roughly over seven years. The large, open living room in her home serves as the "classroom" for the program where the students meet after-school. This space consists of two, rectangular tables pushed together off to the left along with two whiteboards hitched on the walls adjacent to both ends of the tables, all standing on flooring made of beautiful, blue tiles that were carved with intricate detail (see fig. 1).

Figure 1

Shared Space for All “classroom”



Haymond, Esther. “SSFA Classroom.” *Fieldwork Study in Isaan, Thailand*, 18 Aug. 2018.

Red, plastic chairs surrounded all sides of the tables as well as small green stools that tucked neatly in the empty spaces. At the far end of the tables were a few cubbies lined against the wall that held the books, games, and activities for the students to use at their own discretion.

After Anh had jumped off of the buggy cart, he casually waved good-bye to his grandfather who had dropped him off near the front door and was turning around to head back down the driveway. As Anh clumsily stumbled over the doorway into the widely-spaced living room, he immediately greeted us with a *wai* (pronounced like why). A *wai* is Thailand’s proper greeting that consists of a slight bow with palms pressed together in a prayer-like gesture. The social status of an individual and the person they are greeting depends on how far the bow may

bend down. At the time, I stopped what I was doing to return his friendly greeting back with my *wai* along with a *sawadee-ka*, the verbal Thai greeting for women (men say *sawadee-crup*).

Although Anh's nervous demeanor was obvious as Nee introduced him to the rest of the students, the gentle warm smile spread widely across his face told a different story. To this day, I can still picture that friendly, toothy grin in my mind as I reflect on our fun and memorable time together. I had no idea that this child would help change my trajectory as well as my research questions that I came to Thailand intending to answer.

I quickly learned that like many of the children at Shared Space for All, Anh also comes from a poor family in the Ban Sam Phrao village. Because of his young age, Anh has had very little experience with the English language whether it be reading or writing; he was still perfecting his Thai literacy skills. I was assigned to work with Anh every day and decided that I would try to start at the basics of the English language with him. This meant that Anh and I would begin by reviewing and memorizing the English alphabet with some flashcards. Each flashcard displayed a letter of the alphabet printed boldly on the front with a word underneath that began with that letter; a picture was in the center of the flashcard that illustrated the word (see fig. 2).

Figure 2

## Anh Learning His Flashcards



Source: Haymond, Esther. "Anh and Flashcards." *Fieldwork Study in Isaan, Thailand*, 16 Aug. 2018.

During that first week of ESL (English as a Second Language)<sup>1</sup> training and learning with Anh, he hardly knew any of the letters on the cards, nor how to properly pronounce them. Although

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<sup>1</sup> Although I mostly use ESL as the main term in this paper rather than EFL (English as a Foreign Language), they have similar connotations and meanings. Laopongarn and Sercombe argue that "English in Thailand is generally seen as a foreign language (EFL) rather than a second language (ESL), partly because Thailand has never been under colonial rule" (59). However, the language is increasingly being used in domains of communication such as education, business, etc. in Thailand and for this paper, I chose to use the term ESL.

this was the case, I kept in mind that he was still very young and did not have much experience at his public school with the English language.

By the end of the fourth and last week of my fieldwork study, I was shocked at Anh's progression and improvement. Not only was he comfortably speaking to Nee and the other students without hesitation in his own language, but it was clear his ESL memory and pronunciation had improved when I tested him for the final time on the flashcards. He pronounced each letter correctly, recited the word that illustrated the picture on the flashcard, and arranged the letters correctly in alphabetical order. I was impressed with Anh's work because he learned all 26 letters of the alphabet and 26 new English words (some rather difficult to pronounce) in just four weeks. I knew the extra academic help that was given at SSFA supported his learning in and out of the classroom. I was positive that the resources and support that Nee provided to Anh and the other students at SSFA were helping them improve immensely in their academic learning tracks.

Before arriving in Thailand, I had done previous research on SSFA and conducted interviews with others involved in this nonprofit about the work they have accomplished thus far. It was not until I fully immersed myself in the Thai culture and taught with SSFA where I slowly began to understand the dynamics of the program and why their success rates were so high. That is why I chose to conduct a program evaluation of Shared Space for All in the context of Northeast Thailand as part of my thesis project. The ethnographic study I conducted uses appreciative inquiry as a method of data collection for my program evaluation. For a study to be ethnographic, "the lens of culture must be used to understand the phenomenon;" cultural immersion is crucial to fully understand the "various ways different groups go about their lives and to the belief systems associated with that behavior" (Wolcott 22; Merriam et al. 29, 33). Like

many ethnographies, my fieldwork “required many levels of personal involvement and changed me in unexpected ways” (Holmes 38). The study will ultimately help other international educators understand the necessary and essential cross-cultural tools that have widely contributed to this organization’s success in ensuring that every child’s learning needs are met.

During my ethnographic study in Udon Thani, Thailand, my interactions and observations with the people and the Thai culture led me to question how education was being used as a tool to end the cycle of poverty. International educators who implement cross-cultural education programs must be aware of the socioeconomic, cultural, and gender-related factors that influence students’ education and educational attainment in order to be most efficient, successful, and sustainable. Through a program evaluation of SSFA, who is working against the injustice of poverty on education, this methodology will be utilized and available for future international educators. Because of the newness of Shared Space for All (only two years in operation), an evaluation is a good fit for this thesis project. Upon the completion of my project, I intend for SSFA to be able to assess their work and either strengthen the favorable outcomes or make improvements for the program so that it may continue being consistent for current and future students.

The primary goal of this paper is to provide an accurate and culturally sensitive understanding of SSFA in Northeast Thailand and its implications. I have outlined historical context and cultural factors that contribute to sustainable education and educational attainment and highlighted the work of SSFA that has been accomplished thus far in Isaan. The outcome of this project will be a formal program evaluation of the organization that can be utilized for improvements of the program and can also be generated as a guideline for other international nonprofit organizations (INGOs) who are trying to implement or promote cross-cultural



education in the context of Northeast Thailand. My work serves only as an example, but if to be used in other cultures, the evaluation would have to be altered to better meet the needs of a different location. Overall, I argue the need for cultural contextualization when it comes to supporting ESL students in hopes that if other international educators develop curriculums and solutions, they will keep culture and context in mind. The following examination of the history of education for all and the progression of internationalization in the education sector will help inform the program evaluation that I created to increase the learning outcomes and literacy skills that Shared Space for All provides to all their students.

### **Historical Context**

Education is a universal right for all children regardless of gender, socioeconomic background, or age and can serve as a fundamental tool to end the cycle of poverty for those living in underdeveloped and impoverished countries (“Children”). Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once wrote, “The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education” (King). Education has also contributed to reducing multiple risk factors that concern poverty-stricken communities such as prostitution, child marriages, and domestic violence. According to the Global Campaign for Education, it was over sixty years ago that “education was declared a basic human right for every person” and was preserved in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 (“About Education for All”). However, in 2013, “more than 57 million children across the globe did not have access to primary education; many of them may never have the opportunity to set foot in a classroom” (Groody 8). Over time, initiatives and laws such as the Education for All (EFA) initiative, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and Education 2030 have been

implemented and evaluated to accomplish the ultimate goal and challenge of universal education for all.

### *Education Initiatives*

In March of 1990, “1,500 delegates from 155 countries and representatives of some 150 governmental, non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations” met at the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand (“Outcomes on Education”). The goal of the meeting was to “universalize primary and basic education and massively reduce illiteracy by the end of the decade” (“Outcomes on Education”). The conference delegates, representatives, and leaders adopted the World Declaration on EFA and a Framework for Action: Meeting the Basic Learning Needs. The document begins by stating that every child, young person, and adult should “be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs” (“Outcomes on Education”). The World Declaration of Education for All was a “demonstration of the will and commitment of countries to establish in the area of family and child education a new basis for overcoming inequality and generating new opportunities for eradicating poverty” (“Outcomes on Education”). The Education for All movement “is a global commitment to provide quality basic education for all children, youth, and adults” and has been led by United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) since 1990 (“Education for All Movement”). Not only did this declaration emphasize the importance of basic educational needs but also targeted the learning outcomes and the quality of education in place.

About 15 years later after the assessment of the EFA initiative, the United Nations adopted the 17 SDGs of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. SDG number four was specifically targeted toward education and was to ensure inclusive, quality education for all and

promote lifelong learning. In 2015, the official Education 2030 agenda was then approved by the World Education Forum and provided a Framework of Action for the SDG number four. Education 2030 goes beyond the past attempts to ensure that all have access to primary education and focuses on “inclusion, equity, and gender equality,” as well as “aims to ensure quality learning outcomes for all throughout their lives” (“Leading Education 2030”). With UNESCO, governments, and world partners responsible for this newer agenda, it was crucial that they monitor the ongoing progress at a regional, national, and global level. The architecture of Education 2030 provides state-led, voluntary “follow-up and review” mechanisms that are intended to promote accountability, track progress, and review implementation (“Education 2030”). UNESCO is the coordinator and convener of Education 2030 and also produces annual Global Education Monitoring Reports which includes data for the thematic indicators across countries (“Education 2030”). Although remarkable progress has been made across the globe to ensure that all students despite their gender or class status are enrolled in primary school, millions of children are still dropping out of school at too young an age (Huisman and Smits 3). For many countries, the challenge now is not getting children administered into school, but keeping them in school (3). Accordingly, Thailand is one country whose law entitles all children within the country to enroll in school regardless of their background or nationality; however, they have also struggled with socioeconomic and cultural challenges that hinder the progress of education for all.<sup>2</sup>

### *Education in Thailand*

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<sup>2</sup> This section was taken from the course GLST 5673 Globalization and Development.

Thailand is one of the very few countries in the world that has never been colonized by European powers. Therefore, Thailand's education system developed mostly indigenously, following its own trajectory. This Southeast Asian country's formal education system can be said to date to the late 13th century when the Thai alphabet was developed under King Rakhamaeng the Great (Michael). The higher class in society was educated in royal institutions of instruction, whereas the common folk could receive an education at Buddhist monasteries. To this day, young boys and men can receive up to six years of free education at the Buddhist temples; however, this is not an option for girls. Although Buddhist temples were more important providers of education in the past, faith-based education still plays a role in Thailand.

Compulsory education in Thailand covers the first nine years of a student's basic education which is six years of elementary school, three years of lower secondary school, and three years of upper secondary school, similar to the U.S. education system ("Thai Education in Brief"). Education at public schools is free of charge for students up until grade nine. Currently, the government also provides "three years of free-preschool and three years of free upper-secondary education," however, none of these are mandatory (Michael). The curriculum for both elementary and secondary education is set nationwide and is the "Basic Education Core Curriculum of 2008" that includes "Thai language, mathematics, science, social studies, religion and culture, physical education, art, occupations and technology, and foreign languages" (Michael). With Thailand's tremendous progress in expanding participation in education and achieving education for all in the past decade, their enrollments have also increased.

Admission is open to all children in Thailand; however, more prestigious schools may have entrance examinations, particularly in more urban areas such as Bangkok (Michael). The university admissions process has gone through changes in recent years but is generally based on

a students' upper secondary GPA and their entrance exam results. To make the admissions process "more socially fair," particularly for those who cannot afford additional tutoring, exam fees, and travel expenses, Thailand introduced the Thai Central Admission System that is utilized by 54 public universities (Michael). University admissions have been limited so that all students have a fair chance of getting into college where overall, the process has become less competitive due to a dwindling number of students. Currently, at Shared Space for All, there are four teenagers who have successfully passed their university entrance exams and are well on their way to college. Shared Space for All has specifically been training and prepping these students for their exams, and their hard work has certainly paid off.

### *Internationalization*

Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century and with the country's growing integration into the global economy, Thailand has modernized its education system based on Western models, especially following the end of the absolute Thai monarchy in 1932 (Michael). Many elements of the modernized Thai higher education system are modeled on the U.S. system of education such as "the degree system, credit system, and general-education component in undergrad curricula" (Michael). In the current era, Thailand is pursuing increased integration into the global education community. The number of cross-cultural collaborative programs between Thailand and Western education institutions is on the rise and governments have promoted the internationalization of the Thai education system. Despite political instability and a lack of strong governmental strategy to promote internationalization, partnerships between Thai and Western universities have grown in the past decade in which the number of joint degrees has increased from 92 in 2011 to 159 in 2013 alone (Michael). With the rise of internationalization, more cross-cultural

programs have been implemented where ESL is increasingly being taught throughout the third world.

Although Thailand is often marketed as the “land of smiles” with its beautiful tropical beaches, world-famous cuisine, and hospitality, this Southeast Asian country faces a number of formidable challenges that curtails academic freedom and educational opportunities. According to UNICEF, although around 95 percent of primary school-age children in the country attend school, about 14 percent of secondary school-age children are not in school (“The Challenge”). Disparities in access are obviously more pronounced at the secondary school level. Some may argue that “schooling is limited to the specific needs of a nation,” where achieving education for all is extremely difficult (Baker et al. 260). Arguably, no matter how great the need is, schooling should still remain a required and mandatory part of a child’s daily life. Research shows that the largest proportion of children and young adults who are not in school come from disadvantaged communities, migrants, or are children living with a disability (“The Challenge”). Not only is gaining access for children a huge issue, but the quality of education that is available is also a major challenge. There are significant achievement gaps between children coming from rural versus urban areas at all levels of basic education where for some, the cost of attending school remain prohibitive. Accordingly, inequalities in the Thai education system are linked to socioeconomic factors such as the understanding that “poor rural populations as well as ethnic minorities have significantly lower enrollment and graduation rates compared to the rest of the population” (“The Challenge”). It is also more difficult for small rural institutions to hire and retain well-qualified teachers. Teacher shortages in some areas also contribute to the problem as well as teacher burnout. Not only are factors such as unqualified teachers or finding more educators an issue for rural areas, but so is inadequate funding and huge or extremely small class

sizes. These are just a few socioeconomic factors that are still impacting the Thai education system and have hindered the country's goal of education for all.

### *Teacher's Perspective*

During my fieldwork, I was able to interview Sunantha Songsri, a high school English teacher who has been teaching in Udon Thani for roughly 30 years. I met Songsri at Nee's small church in the village; Songsri is also the English teacher at the public high school for most of the teenagers in the program. In the interview, Songsri exuded a positive outlook about her job being an English teacher and believes she has made a strong impact on her students. Although her family had different ideas for her career and would have preferred her to receive a government job because it seemed "more stable," Songsri pursued an English degree at her university instead (Songsri). She mentioned that even though the job market is quite competitive, she does not regret her decision about becoming a teacher because she absolutely loves her students and her job (Songsri). Although uncertain about the future and possible retirement in about six years, Songsri enjoys her career because she gets to help students "change their attitude about school" especially in regards to the English language (Songsri). She always encourages and supports her students to continue learning English and other subjects because she believes it is important, especially if they want a reasonable job in the future. She inspires her students to never give up but rather to keep chasing their hopes and dreams. Some of Songsri's former students have even kept in contact and view her as an "idol" or someone they can look up to because of her continuous encouragement to learn and grow. What I admired about her spirit was that Songsri was genuinely happy, when her students were happy.

During the interview, I asked Songsri how she measured the success of her students and if she evaluated their progress through tests or assessments. She firmly stated that she did not

assess her students through tests because she knew how they felt about them, meaning that many of them struggle with test-taking anxiety and do not perform well because they are “not confident in their English speaking or writing skills” (Songsri). Of course, teachers are given a structured curriculum from the government; however, Songsri said that in the “big picture” of teaching English, she has the freedom to use creativity to guide her lessons (Songsri). Through her teaching, she ensures the students are learning at a comfortable pace and can fully understand what is being taught. Songsri caters some of her English lessons to the needs of the students in her class, and with every new year brings new students. Songsri is a well-qualified teacher that implements creative confidence in her teaching strategies. According to Kelley and Kelley, “creative confidence is a way of experiencing the world that generates new approaches and solutions” (7). Songsri uses creativity as an opportunity to generate new solutions and ideas in her teaching so that her students can learn English at their own levels and retain the knowledge that is taught. I enjoyed interviewing Songsri and valued her perspectives; she brought interesting insights into our conversations and I felt inspired after leaving. After her interview, I was reminded of the defining qualities of a teacher that SSFA embraces and embodies in their staff. This brings me to the next section that discusses cultural contextualization as well as cultural characteristics that influence Thai student’s educational attainment and progression.

### **Cultural Contextualization**

Shared Space for All is located in the village of Ban Sam Phrao which sits in the larger city of Udon Thani, one of the four main provinces in Isaan. Although Thailand is considered a well-developed and economic powerhouse of Southeast Asia, the wealth within the country is unevenly distributed and “the poor are often exploited to meet the needs of the elite” (Neufeld 23). The Northeastern districts in Thailand “have been recognized as the most under-developed



in the country where average education achievement ranges between 6.7 and 9 years” (Ngampornchai and Adams 1). Of the Northeastern districts, Isaan is considered the poorest of the six regions in Thailand, making the people in this area the most vulnerable (see fig. 3).

Figure 3

Red Area Marks Isaan Region



“Isan.” *Wikipedia*, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isan). Accessed 14 Jan. 2019.

To the rest of Thailand, the rural people of Isaan are often depicted as uneducated, simple, and the “second-class citizens to the inhabitants of Bangkok and central provinces” (Campbell).

Many young people in the Isaan region migrate to city centers for lucrative work, leaving their children behind to live and be raised by their grandparents who likely do not speak English. Some families cannot afford to send their children to larger towns or cities to receive a better education, so the children are left to find education in the village schools that often offer little in terms of educational and life opportunity. In these situations, the group for being the highest at-risk are young women because “the pressure on them to make enough money to provide financially for their extended families makes prostitution a viable choice” (*Shared Space for All*). Other reasons for the poor leaving Isaan besides destitution include lack of job opportunities, debt, or environmental degradation. Workers who migrate from Northeast Thailand to more urban areas often end up in hard labor occupations and employment. These workers are considered the servants of Thailand and to its many traveling tourists. Shared Space for All discovered that the systematic consequences that resulted from the migration of Isaan workers were “an elevated school dropout rate, a high teen pregnancy rate, a high domestic violence rate, and a high alcoholism rate in men” (*Shared Space for All*). This becomes a vicious cycle where the village children left behind are at-risk to follow in their parents’ and older siblings’ footsteps. That is why SSFA provides free education to Isaan’s youth, so they can receive tools to break the cycle of poverty and live a sustainable, healthy life. Currently, at SSFA there are about 40 consistent students in the program.<sup>3</sup> Shared Space for All is helping end extreme poverty and hardship and offering the children in the village an opportunity to receive more education and better their chances of getting a well-paid job in the future. I will now explore cultural factors that influence and impact a student’s educational attainment in Thailand including socioeconomic factors, collectivism, gender-related factors, and household structures.

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<sup>3</sup> This section is from course GLST 5923 Fieldwork.

*Socioeconomic Factors*

According to Huisman and Smits, “both in developed and developing countries, children from families with more socioeconomic resources are more likely to stay in school” (5). Besides a family’s household income, the educational levels and market position of the parents are also expected to play in the role of a child’s education. Children whose parents have reached a certain educational level more often go and stay in school because parents may want their child to at least achieve the level of their finished education (Huisman and Smits 5). Education from the mother is especially important because those who have experienced a certain degree of education know the significance of it and “that it is within the reach of girls to complete that level” (5). Depending on the structure of the household, daughters of working mothers may be expected to help out with chores around the house which results in girls being taken out of school early. Moreover, employment of the mother may increase the authority in her family which may increase her children’s odds of continuing their education (6).

Many children living in Isaan come from families who are rice or cattle farmers where helping out on the farm is enforced to create efficient production. When conducting a focus group with the teenagers at Shared Space for All, I asked how many student’s parents were farmers. According to six of the seven students who participated, one or more parents were either cattle or rice farmers full-time in their family (“SSFA Teens”). Other occupations of parents included construction workers, restaurant workers, and some managed a stand at the local market (“SSFA Teens”). Unsurprisingly, most mothers were the caretakers of the farm and the household; even Nee’s mother was a rice farmer (Pargul). Because secondary education in Thailand may not seem important to parents and is of minor interest for working on the farm, children may be forced to drop out after primary school (Nicaise et al. 88). Parents may also

view school as alienating children from farm work, “diminishing the motivation of farmers to send their children to school” (Huisman and Smits 5). Although this may be the case for some farmers, the effects of parents’ employment and education may differ depending on the circumstances. To further understand the implications and cultural factors that affect educational attainment in Thailand, we must explore several cultural phenomena including Hofstede et al.’s model of cultural indices to make sense of such differences.

### *Cultural Indices*

It is not possible to fully understand the Thai education system and why activities are done a certain way without first understanding their culture. The book, *Culture and Organizations* by Hofstede et al., offers cultural indices that can be a helpful tool when comparing differences between cultures. According to Hofstede et al., culture is “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others” (6). Geert Hofstede, a professor emeritus at the University of Maastricht, did extensive research in the field of measuring and understanding culture. Each country is placed on a spectrum depicting the cultural dimensions of that country. According to the six cultural dimensions, Thailand is highly *Collectivist* rather than *Individualist*. This cultural dimension, that I will further explain below, is helpful and informs the way in which Thais process information and live their life; this is important to know and consider when working in a cross-cultural context.

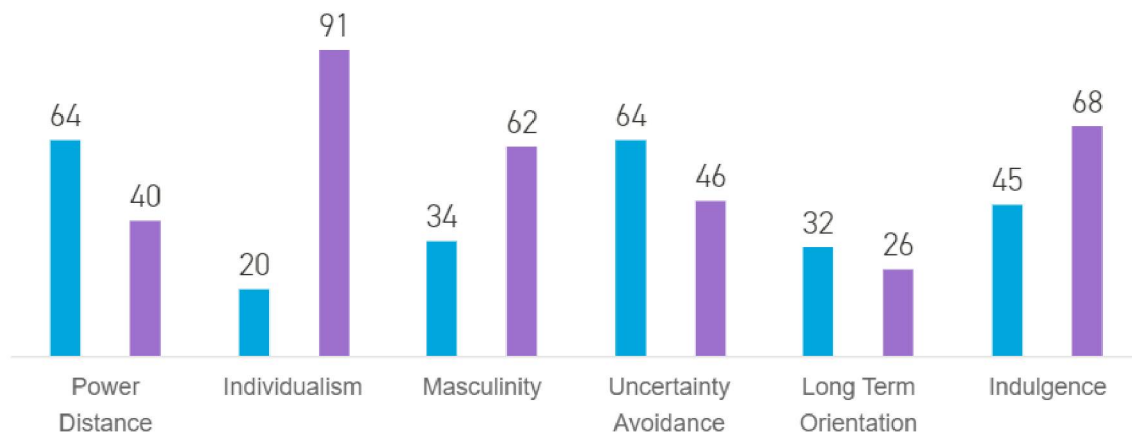
### **Collectivism**

A vast majority of the people in our world live in societies in which the interest of the in-group prevails over the interests of the individual; this is called collectivism (Hofstede et al. 91). On Hofstede et al.’s cultural dimension measuring a country’s individualism, Thailand received a

low score of 20, implying that Thais are highly collectivist. Thais rely heavily on their “in-group” and do almost every activity together with either family or close friends (91). One’s in-group can be either direct family, extended family, or anyone who is a “major source of one’s identity and the only secure protection one has against hardships of life” (91). The minority of people around the world who live in societies in which the interests of the individual prevail over the interests of the group is called individualist, such as the United States, which is considered the most individualistic country in the world. The following table illustrates Thailand’s scorings (blue) on the cultural indices, compared to the United States’ scores (purple) (see table 1).

Table 1

## Country Comparison between Thailand and the United States



Source: “Country Comparison.” *Hofstede Insights*, 2019, [www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/thailand,the-usa/](http://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/thailand,the-usa/). Accessed 5 Feb. 2019.

As one can see, Thailand is not only significantly different in terms of individualism in the country but also somewhat varies in the other six cultural indices. During my time in Thailand,

there were many situations where I experienced first-hand the characteristics of a collectivist culture. For example, Thai people love food and enjoy cooking meals for family members and friends. Food and special dishes bring the community and loved ones together and represent a huge portion of their culture. In Thailand, I never ate alone because almost every meal was accompanied by either Nee, her mother, sister, brother, nieces, or nephews. Moreover, what I also found interesting was although I was a *farang*, meaning foreigner in Thai, almost everyone that I had a friendly conversation with extended an invitation to lunch or dinner. I noticed that friends are treated like family where everyone respects and supports one another. Another implication of the Thai collectivist culture was the way in which people present themselves. Being polite and hospitable in Thai culture is crucial for relationship building and communication in any given situation. If one portrays the opposite of this lifestyle, they “lose face” and risk mild to severe consequences from family or community members.

### *“Saving Face”*

It is quite important for Thais to not “lose face” in their culture as this may embarrass oneself or one’s community. According to Nee, “saving face” in Thai is also known as *Krieng Jai*, which if directly translated means “awe of heart” (Pargul). This phrase is deeply rooted in Thai collectivist culture and is basically a way of life. The nature of *Krieng Jai* is being respectful and considerate to family and others, avoiding all areas of conflict. This is partially why Thailand is often known as the “land of smiles” because having a positive outward appearance to others is imperative. Conformity in the culture is also a way to keep up with one’s appearance and to not “lose face.” For rural Thai women, providing for one’s family is considered a duty and is of utmost importance. However, when these women physically cannot meet the expectations of caring for loved ones, their “social status will be impaired and the entire family will

experience shame” (Neufeld 29). Thai women, especially those living in more rural areas such as in the Isaan region, are either farmers or caretakers of their home. Because most rural women may often lack the skills that are interchangeable outside of their rural context, many of them look to other occupations to earn income such as sex work.

### **Gender-related Factors**

Although gender inequality and gender parity are fairly developed in Thailand’s education system, there still remains gender-related factors that impact a student’s education and life opportunities. For example, it is assumed that because housewives do not require much education, girls often drop out of school early and are married off at a young age. One particular interview with a student, who asked to be unnamed, was very emotional; for the purpose of this paper I will call them “Malee.” Malee is one of the young adults in the program whose parents are poor farmers in the village and survive off of the money raised from their farm production. In a personal interview, I asked Malee what she considered her plans were for the future once she graduated from high school. Malee brightly exclaimed that her plan is to “pass the college entrance exams” and attend a university located in Isaan to study English; however, her parents, especially her “mother had other plans” for her future (“Malee”). Malee’s facial expression quickly changed as she emotionally sighed, looking down at her bare feet, quietly stating that her mother wanted her to get married right after high school so that someone else could take care of her. In Thailand, the parents often receive a decent amount of money from the husband as a “token of gratitude” for taking care of their wife for the entirety of their life up until that point (Pargul). For many Thai families, it may often come down to items such as money and finances that contribute to and symbolize a sustainable, well-off life. Many families will go to extreme lengths, even at the risk of their children, for finding a way to provide for the entire family.

The second gender-related factor explores the obstacles of prostitution and sex work that hinder thousands of girls and young women from continuing their education and pursuing a sustainable career. Young girls are sent to larger cities to make an income for their family which for many of them, inevitably leads them into sex work. For this section, I will use “sex worker” instead of “prostitute” because it carries less of a social stigma. The term sex worker tends to “emphasize the economic factors involved in sex work” and recognizes that it is indeed a job (Neufeld 9). It recognizes the strength of these individuals rather than reflects on the life, personality, or character of the men and women involved. Because of the debt that a family may face due to raising a family, young daughters in Thailand are often forced or willingly step into the sex industry to pay off the sizable debt. Young girls and women that enter the sex industry often come from the Isaan region because this is the poorest region and the wealth in Thailand is not evenly distributed. Most collectivist countries rely on their family members as well as their community for support; however, ironically, the poor in Thailand are “forced to make accommodations for their lack of resources, by separating from their families in order to pursue work” (Neufeld 23). Although many women leave their families behind to search for work, whether it be sex, restaurant, or factory work, having no education or employment skills leaves them in a vulnerable state. Some women succumb to abusive working conditions, trafficking, and may become victims of domestic violence.

The city of Pattaya in Thailand is a sex hub that attracts not only millions of tourists a year but also young girls looking for work. The girls that come to Pattaya in search of work are mostly from the rural farmland areas in the northern regions of Thailand (Pargul). With no money, food, or means of work, these vulnerable girls must take any job that is available for them. Once they receive a job, the bar or brothel that they work at will typically give them food



and lodging, however, the girls are now forced into debt bondage with no way out. It is almost near impossible to earn enough money to send to their families back home and keep enough for themselves to be sustainable. Even if they decide to return home, their status is not welcomed because of what they have done; the result is either the girl returns as a sex worker or is otherwise shunned and disowned by her family. Education is especially important and valuable for young women because it gives them another option besides sex work. Education gives them social freedom and instills in them hope and a dream that they otherwise would not have considered.

### **Household Structures**

Besides socioeconomic, collectivist, and gender-related factors, the demographic structure of a household may influence educational attainment. Most parents or figures of authority in families have a strong say and opinion in their child's education. One factor that contributes to educational attainment and is influenced by household structures is the understanding that "because of less motivation from parents, Isaan's students do not value higher education" and choose to drop out (Pargul 13). According to the Thailand Ministry of Education, about 45 percent of Isaan's students drop out of high school because they lack the inspiration to continue pursuing higher education; this goal was not established in their thought processes when they were young ("Thai Education in Brief"). Because many young children living in Isaan stay at home and are raised by their grandparents who do not speak English, they often lack the motivation to continue receiving an upper secondary or higher education. Children are also being left behind by parents who migrate to larger cities to find work (Nicaise et al. 65). However, this may not be the only issue for abandonment or for children to drop out of school. Another reason could be because parents have "separated or died," been imprisoned, or have had an addiction

(65). Although there is extended family who takes over and cares for the child in these circumstances, children still have to deal with the emotional impact where it may be hard to stay in school. For example, I interviewed Aea Dutreudee, an assistant teacher of the bilingual daycare that I volunteered at in Thailand, who willingly shared an unexpected experience that happened in her family.

Dutreudee explained that because of the death of her father, which was two years ago, she stopped pursuing a teacher's certificate. She continued saying that the impact of her father's death on their family was so difficult that she had to pause her education to help her mother and younger brother with household chores and other activities (Dutreudee). Her father was the breadwinner of the family and so that responsibility partially fell on her shoulders, as the firstborn, to contribute to the household by earning some extra money. It was found that for many developing countries, "children from single-headed households might have to (partly) replace the work done by the missing parent" (Huisman and Smits 7). When families lack the resources to give all their children an education, girls, especially the oldest, have been found to suffer the most (7). Older sisters, as in Dutreudee's experience, are more at a disadvantage in these situations. Despite her position, Dutreudee is very happy with her job at the daycare and believes everything will work out for her family in the future because of their faith.

Another factor of household structure influencing educational attainment is seen in studying abroad internationally for students. Traditionally, Thailand is not a big sending country of international students where one reason is that parents cannot afford to send their child abroad, or they simply do not want them to leave. There is little research about Thai students' motivations and intentions of studying abroad, but international educators link outbound mobility to common push factors such as "an increasingly affluent middle class, enrollment in prestigious

international schools, and foreign language training” (“Education in Thailand”). English language skills are underdeveloped in Thailand and “foreign education can help improve the employment prospects of graduates in the highly competitive job market” (“Education in Thailand”). This is why Shared Space for All focuses on teaching ESL because learning and understanding the English language will increase students’ chance of getting a sustainable job in the future or a higher level of education. The last factor that contributes to educational attainment for Thai students is educational facilities and the quality of education.

### **Educational Facilities**

The quality of a student’s education, as well as the educational facility in which they learn, are important for participation and attendance. Obviously, when there are no teachers to teach there will be no students to attend; “the distance to school is also expected to play a role” (Mingat 22). The longer distances to educational institutions are associated with lower school attendance at the secondary level (22). The effects of travel and distance are more of a problem for girls due to parental concern for safety. Quality of education and of teachers also affects educational attainment where to an extent, it may determine whether or not a child stays in school. In developing countries, the “push out effect” is relevant which is where “bad school quality has been found to have a negative effect on the decision to stay in school” (Huisman and Smits 8). Drop out rates may, therefore, be highest in rural areas because of factors such as distance as well as the quality of teachers, resources, and educational facilities.

Cultural contextualization for cross-cultural education programs, particularly ones who are teaching ESL is important for INGOs and educators to understand because there are multiple contextual factors that may influence a student’s learning. The socioeconomic characteristics of the family background that may influence educational attainment can be seen as household

income and if the parents have more education; it is especially important if mothers have an education because it increases the odds of girls to stay in school. Another significant factor is gender-related where girls living in rural, poor areas are less likely to continue school because of wealth and finance issues; they are often sent to larger cities to find work which inevitably may lead them into the sex industry. Regarding household structures, the odds of children that come from a home of more siblings or where a parent is missing is significantly smaller. And lastly, regarding educational facilities, “district availability of teachers” has a “significantly positive effect on a child’s likelihood to stay in school” whereas, the distance to travel to school has a negative effect (21). Now we will use the cultural contextualization factors stated that attribute to educational attainment and one’s educational decisions to understand the program evaluation process and its implications.

### **Program Evaluation**

Traditionally, nonprofit organizations have portrayed program evaluation as a tool for measuring and understanding the impact of their work. After evaluating and gathering the information needed, organizations can then begin to generate decisions about how to improve the program and achieve organizational goals. One of the main objectives of the program evaluation is to “learn from experiences so that future [programs] can benefit” (Whitten 217). The program evaluation that I conducted and created is specifically for Shared Space for All who provides free education in the form of an after-school program for those living in the poorest region of Thailand. The official outcome of the evaluation can be referred to by SSFA for improvements and changes and can also be generated as a guideline for other INGOs who are trying to implement and promote cross-cultural education in the context of Northeast Thailand. My work serves only as an example, but if to be used in other cultures, the evaluation would have to be

adjusted to better meet the needs of a different demographic. One obvious caveat to this program evaluation is the fact that I was only in Thailand and able to teach for one month. As a result, I based my program evaluation off of the time that was allowed.

I chose to create an evaluation for SSFA's after-school program because of its usefulness and potential it may serve in the future. This program has been active for over two years and an evaluation has not yet been officially conducted. The evaluation will show the organization outcomes and indicators of its education program and will highlight the progress it has made on the students and community thus far. The hope is that other international organizations, who are seeking to create social change by educating others in developing communities, can view the success of SSFA and either share its story or learn a lesson from their experiences. The following outlines the methods of data collection that were utilized in the process, the leadership qualities that were given to train and empower students, and the Logic Models, Evaluation Plan, and their written counterparts that were provided in the completion of the evaluation.

### *Methods of Data Collection*

The ethnographic fieldwork study that I conducted in Udon Thani consisted of many interviews, participant observations, and focus groups that all connect back to the method of appreciative inquiry. Appreciative inquiry (Ai) is an approach that assesses what works in an organization and appreciates it. According to Priest et al., Ai "provides a useful solution for organizations that desire to break out of the problem-oriented mindset and embrace a strengths-based philosophy" (28). Other traditional theories, such as change management theory, often tend to "look for the problem, do a diagnosis, and find a solution" (Hammond 5). Ai is different and the tangible results are a "series of statements that describe where the organization wants to be, based on the high moments of where they have been" (5-6). Appreciative inquiry's outcomes

are distinguishable from other organizational development interventions because Ai “results in new knowledge, models, and theories that are co-constructed by participants” (Priest et al. 22). Organizations know how to repeat their success because each statement is grounded in authentic experience and history (Hammond 6). By examining the success of SSFA, this organization is more likely to continue to ensure that their students are receiving the best resources available because they know what works for their program. Through Ai, organizations and members are able to see what they have done well in the past which translates as positive self-monitoring.<sup>4</sup> Participants of Ai walk away with a sense of commitment, positive confidence, and “affirmation that they have been successful” (6). Innovative and creative thinking allows organizations to be able to envision what is to come and what will be.

### *Mentorship and Support*

Appreciative inquiry can also be linked to learning outcomes and objectives such as leadership training. Leadership training is an important component and can help students make the connections between the theories, activity, and practice of leadership. In addition to providing students with free education, SSFA also gives the students trained and qualified teachers who are there for emotional and mental support, guidance, and leadership skill building. The hope is that when the students graduate and move on from the program, they are able to embrace their vocation. The next generation of young people will become the best leaders and change-makers in their community. Ai is important for teaching the processes of leadership as it “shapes organizational identity, participants’ sense of self, belonging, and view of their role within the organization” (Priest et al. 29). Shared Space for All’s teachers and volunteers in the

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<sup>4</sup> This section was taken from course GLST 5333 Leadership.

program readily teach lessons of leadership to the students. One lesson that I taught to the students while in Thailand was the idea that great leaders are great learners.

Most students enrolled in SSFA's program are motivated to learn and ultimately seek to gain more knowledge. By becoming lifelong learners, these students are increasing their chances of earning a higher degree and are more likely to find a sustainable job. The emphasis that SSFA has on its students in terms of understanding the importance of leadership in community is significant and has already changed many of their lives and perspectives. By proving the importance of one's education, SSFA provides these children and teenagers with a set of tools and skills to use in their daily life. One way in which SSFA allows the students to practice their leadership skills is by supporting the elementary and middle school children. For example, the teenagers in the program will usually help the younger ones with a learning activity such as an ESL worksheet or game. By becoming the teacher and supporting a younger student, the older teenagers are given a chance to practice being a leader in the program.

A goal for the students in the program is for them to embrace their identity, vocation, and leadership qualities so that they can live their lives as best as possible despite the failures and oppositions that limit their boundaries. Another defining quality of leadership that is shared with the students is that failure is inevitable; however, when meeting opposition, one can choose to learn from their mistakes and come back smarter and stronger. According to Parker Palmer, "we must honor our limitations in ways that do not distort our nature," and embrace the change that is thrown upon us (42). The mistakes and failures that are made only contribute to the resilience and strength that result in the aftermath. Choosing to embrace the chaos and mishaps creates a more confident individual because of the given experience. By experiencing a loss or failure in school (perhaps failing a test), most students are motivated more than ever to succeed and simply

do better on the next test. Students learn from their mistakes, accept the failure, and study harder the next time which builds their character and teaches them valuable lessons. One example is an interview that I had with a former SSFA student named Kanin Kansinuan.

Kansinuan had a very negative outlook on the English language and absolutely despised learning it; it was difficult and challenging for him to learn during school. In his personal interview, Kansinuan explained that it was hard for him to be motivated to understand English because the tests were so difficult. One experience that he remembers vividly was studying for a huge English exam that was a significant part of his overall grade in the class. Although he studied so hard for that test, he remembers not passing the exam. He sadly recalled his teacher calling him “stupid and not worthy” because he could not pass that single test<sup>5</sup> (Kansinuan). Kansinuan said he went home later and concentrated so hard on his other studies that he began to develop horrible headaches. During this part of the interview, I could see Kansinuan getting emotional and even teary-eyed which made me begin to tear up as well; my heart was broken for him. He then mentioned that he took pills to get rid of his migraines, but they persisted. He ended up taking so much medication that he overdosed and was sent to the hospital; he recalled his parents being upset and even frustrated towards his teacher. It was not until he met Nee, who was doing regular visits at the high school, when he started attending Shared Space for All and completely changed his outlook on English and learning in general. At this point in the interview, I could see his mood change as he began to share his experience with Nee and SSFA. He became motivated to study English and a few days after the interview, I helped send him off at the airport to go study in Australia for three years to receive his Bachelor’s Degree.

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<sup>5</sup> His English teacher was not Sunantha Songsri because he attended a different school than the one where she taught.



One thing I appreciated about the SSFA program was the fact that Nee never discouraged the students, punished them, or said they were wrong. Instead, she encouraged her students to achieve their goals, catered to their learning needs, and provided them with the resources that were required to complete those tasks. The key was to look at a student's ability, not their disability. While teaching in Thailand, it was crucial to adapt to an individual's learning abilities and meet them halfway. If a particular activity or learning concept was too difficult for one of my students, I would change it up and instead be flexible to their needs.

Shared Space for All encourages its students to be holistic, authentic leaders who are ready to change the world. An "authentic leader in every setting aims at liberating the heart, their own and others', so that [their] powers can liberate the world" (Palmer 76). Every single student has their own story, comes from a distinct background, and has gone through different experiences. By using one's personal story, they have the full potential and power to "project either shadow or light onto some part of the world and onto the lives of the people who dwell there" (78). Although leadership is and will be hard for each student, those who readily embrace its practices may reap many benefits from it. If each student were to project and use their technical leadership skills that were learned in and out of the program, their communities would receive many valuable tools that would support them long-term.<sup>6</sup> This is why SSFA teaches its students to learn beyond the standard limits, make mistakes than to not try at all, and become the best version of their definition of a leader.

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<sup>6</sup> This section was taken from course GLST 5333 Leadership.

*Shared Space for All Organizational Overview*

**Program Description:** The program's goal is to reach and help as many youths as possible who are living in the Isaan region and are struggling academically by providing them with free education offered as an after-school program that promotes students' learning and growth.

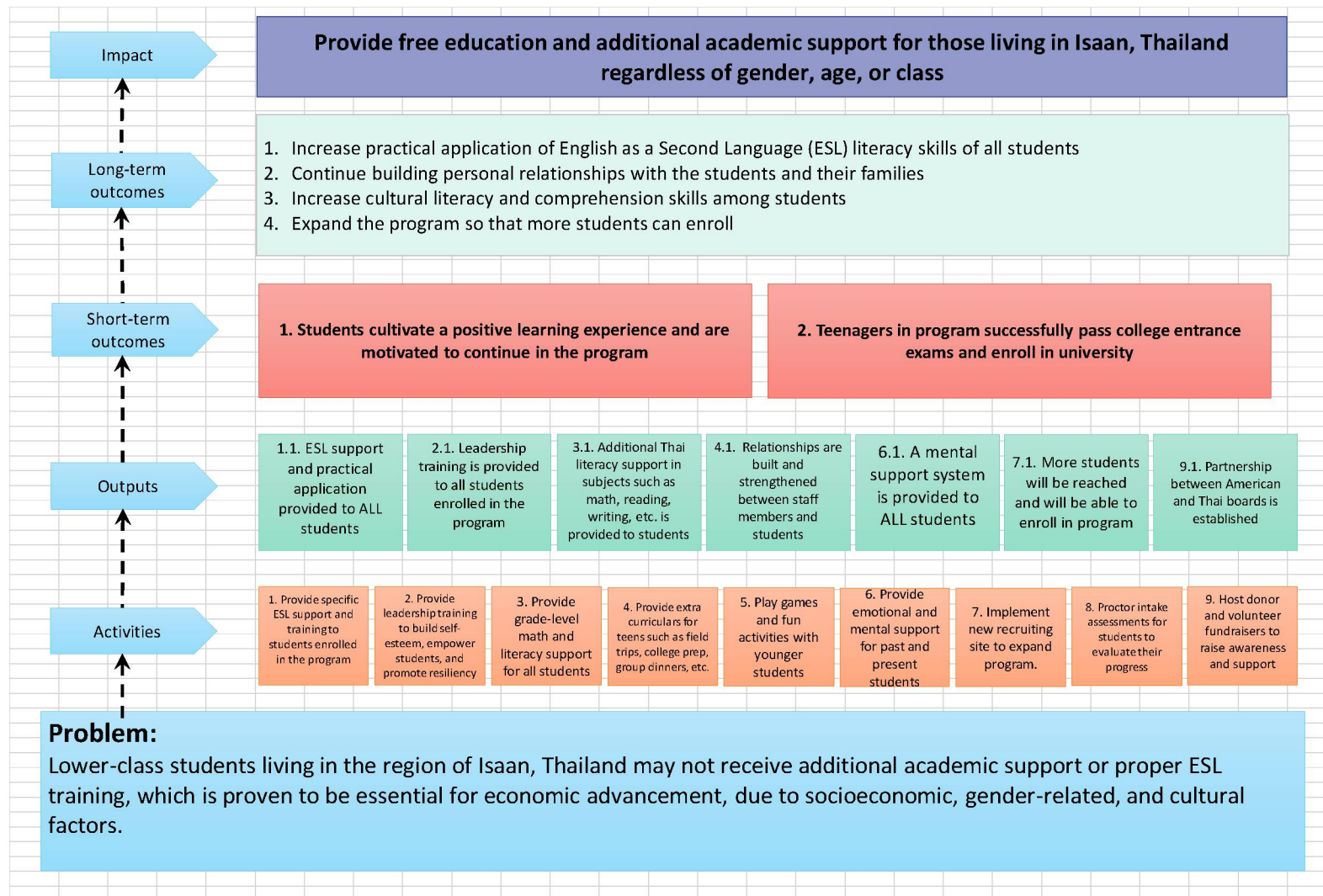
**Organization Vision:** Shared Space for All's vision is that any child or young adult that needs access to proper academic support or extra educational help will receive a safe environment to learn and communicate at during the day after school to grow as an individual and become independent and resilient.

**Organization Mission:** Shared Space for All's mission is not only to provide education to those who live in Isaan, Thailand, regardless of gender, age, or class, but to also provide the students with emotional and mental support, a safe space to learn, leadership training, and college preparation. Shared Space for All is the only organization in the village of Ban Sam Phrao, Udon Thani, Thailand that seeks the needs of the poor and offers them free education that is exclusively dedicated to supporting and helping them get to a path of stability and sustainable living.

**Problem Statement:** Lower-class students living in the region of Isaan, Thailand may not receive additional academic support or proper ESL learning, which is proven to be essential for economic advancement, due to socioeconomic, gender-related, and cultural factors.

The following consists of the Logic Model (see table 2), Evaluation Plan (see table 3), and the written portions for the models that explain the core program components and the anticipated changes after the activities are delivered.

**Table 2**  
**Logic Model**



Source: Haymond, Esther. "Logic Model." 17 Apr. 2019.

*Logic Model Narrative*

Shared Space for All meets the academic needs of the students in multiple ways. The first way is by providing the students with qualified and trained teachers, a friendly and safe environment, and updated resources such as books, curriculums, videos, etc. The resources that provided in the program such as books, games, mini chalk boards, pencils, markers, paper, etc. are mainly funded by private donors and stakeholders. With the current program facility being Nee's home, the hope of 2019 is for the building process of a new education site. The new education site will be able to hold more students, more equipment, and more teachers. These resources allow for the activities in the program to run smoothly and efficiently. Although this after-school program has only been in operation for about two years, the main goals are to increase the practical application of English as a Second Language (ESL) skills of all students, continue to build personal, long-term relationships with the students and their families that go beyond the services provided, increase Thai literacy and comprehension skills among students as well as cultural knowledge, and finally, expand the program so that more students can enroll.

To pursue and successfully achieve these long-term goals, SSFA has a comprehensive approach that includes a variety of activities in its education program. A large majority of these activities focus on building strong and supportive relationships as well as guiding them on their individual academic tracks. In order to properly teach these students and ensure they are receiving the best available support, SSFA staff maintain a positive and inviting environment for all and physically show the students that learning English and other subjects can be fun. Overall, SSFA fosters a friendly and comfortable environment. For example, because many of the students go to the same school in the village, they are able to create deeper, more meaningful relationships with one another. The desire is that students will begin to feel more confident in

their ESL learning as well as in their communication skills in group discussions and in pairs. Having the students develop a positive outlook on their school life is essential because it will motivate and empower them as they continue to pursue secondary or higher education. Many of the students come to the program because they are struggling with school; they often associate school with other negative aspects and generally think learning is difficult and never fun. During interviews with the teens at SSFA, most of them agree that “school is pretty boring” and the teachers are often “strict and struggle to make learning more interesting” (“SSFA Teens”). The idea is for SSFA to be a place where students can learn and grow but also make friends, create deeper relationships, and ultimately have fun. By communicating and understanding each other’s stories, they are able to feel empathy for others knowing that they are not alone in this process.

Along with the activities in SSFA comes an evaluating and monitoring process that is explained more in the actual evaluation plan. In order to measure the student’s progress and improvement in academic areas, teachers must evaluate through assessments and quizzes. The assessments will be small and short because students already have to study for difficult subject matters in school. Evaluations are mainly for the teachers so that they are generally aware of where the group stands in their learning processes. Teachers will then know what to improve, repeat, or change in upcoming units to meet the requirements of the group. SSFA would rather spend time and repeat parts of units rather than move on and have other students confused.

Another activity that is provided is mainly for the young adults in the program where SSFA will often take them on in-country field trips as well as have group dinners to further appreciate the communities around them and build stronger relationships as a team. Teacher Nee has also spent extensive time with the teenagers, preparing them for college. She helps them study for entrance exams by strengthening their skillsets and also helps the teens create their

applications. Building a strong support system within the program and with the students is important because they often do not have a mentor in their life to help shape and guide them. A way that SSFA staff connect with the younger elementary and middle school children is by playing a game after their activity. The game is more often a learning game that is fun yet still uses critical thinking; the students always have a great time and are excited to play a game with their friends once they finish their activity. These are two different activities that cater to all age groups in the program.

To keep SSFA's donors and stakeholder engaged and up-to-date on the activities going on, they put on annual fundraising dinners for anyone and everyone to attend. Last year, I attended the first annual dinner and was surprised by the turnout of people. With over 200 people who attended, SSFA met their fund goal and was able to raise enough money to begin the process of building a new education site. During the fundraiser, what I found most compelling were the stories of students that the executive director and president of SSFA had shared. Tears began to form in people's eyes as stories were shared of the countless number of girls and boys who were sex-trafficked, stuck in the devastating cycle of poverty with no reachable way out. This is this cause and drive for SSFA and their mission: to give children living in impoverished villages an alternative option than sex work; for the community to take pride in their youth and do anything in their strength to ensure that their future is bright. Shared Space for All provides these children with education as an alternative and with a sense of hope that otherwise might not have been established. It is clear that the activities and outcomes provided directly correlate with Shared Space for All's goals. Through this free education program, students will increase their ESL literacy skills and the practicality of these tools, as well as gain leadership skills and a greater understanding of their role in the community.

Table 3

## Evaluation Plan

Long-term Outcomes	Indicators	Data Collection Method	Data Collection Frequency	Sample Size
<p>1. Increase practical application of English as a Second Language (ESL) skills of all students.</p>	<p>1.1. Improvement in school academic grades, and an increase in their English literacy and reading comprehension skills.</p> <p>1.2. Students are able to demonstrate their speaking ability and English vocabulary to teachers and other students.</p>	<p>1.1. Relationships with SSFA staff members and students' public-school teachers are established to track progress (i.e. connection with Sunantha Songsri).</p> <p>1.2. Progress will be tracked through written and verbal assessments during one-one-one tutoring sessions or group discussions with students.</p>	<p>1.1. SSFA hosts their ESL classes 4 times a week, Monday through Thursday.</p> <p>1.2. Track the individual progress with students during assessments at the end of every unit (approx. every 2 weeks). Students will already have been assessed of their skills at entry point through a small informal assessment.</p>	<p>1.1. 25 elementary/middle school children.</p> <p>1.2. 10-15 teenagers.</p>
<p>2. Continue building personal, long-term relationships with the students and their families that go beyond the services provided by SSFA.</p>	<p>2.1. Increase in the number of relationships built with the current students as well as those who have graduated the program.</p>	<p>2.1. Relationships with SSFA staff and students are strengthened during supervised field-trips or group dinners (i.e. Teacher Nee will take group of teens on a local hike or will take them to grab dinner at a restaurant).</p>	<p>2.1. Field trips and in-country travel with teenagers may occur once every 3 months. Dinners are more often and may occur a 1-2 times a month.</p>	<p>2.1. In-country travel and group meals only include the 10-15 teenagers.</p> <p>2.2. Parental support involves all students (approx. 40) at SSFA.</p>

	<p>2.2. Increase in the number of relationships built with the families/parents.</p> <p>2.3. More in-home educational support from parents so that children continue to develop skills learned in the classroom.</p>	<p>2.2. Relationships with the younger students are strengthened when they get to play a game with a teacher, teenagers, or other students who have finished their daily activity.</p> <p>2.3. Parents feel comfortable to come to SSFA staff members with problems or questions; they continue to allow their child to attend the program and also find ways to strengthen their child's education at home.</p> <p>2.4. Weekly newsletters will be brought home by students to update parents on the activities learned in the program. There will be a new "star learner" of the week that will have a picture and description of why they were star of the week.</p>	<p>2.2. Playing a fun learning game happens every day to ensure the students that learning can still be fun.</p> <p>2.3. Parents may discuss child's progression with SSFA staff 1-2 times a week depending on the child's academic level.</p> <p>2.4. SSFA newsletters will be sent out weekly.</p>	
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<p>3. Increase Thai literacy and comprehension skills among students as well as cultural knowledge.</p>	<p>3.1. Children are able to demonstrate Thai written vocabulary, math, and writing skills as well as Thai speaking ability.</p> <p>3.2. Children can read Thai books at either their grade-level or above.</p> <p>3.3. Thai students are able to understand the reasoning behind SSFA's mission and vision and why they are doing what they chose to do.</p>	<p>3.1. Progress will be measured through written and verbal assessments during one-one tutoring sessions or group discussions with students.</p> <p>3.2. One-on-one reading with students.</p> <p>3.3. Group and partner discussions surrounding the history and current state of their country and the laws within it, understanding equality and why it is harder for some over others to receive the education they are given.</p>	<p>3.1. Similar to Outcome 1, because SSFA has classes 4 times a week, an individual's progress will be tracked at the end of every unit (approx. every 2 weeks).</p> <p>3.2. Reading with students happen on a daily basis. Each student will have time to read to a teacher at least twice a week.</p> <p>3.3. Group discussions will occur every day during the activity portion.</p>	<p>3.1. 25 elementary/middle school children.</p> <p>3.2. 10-15 teenagers.</p>
<p>4. Expand the program so that more students can enroll.</p>	<p>4.1. Increase involvement in the Isaan community and raise global awareness in order to increase program funding.</p>	<p>4.1. SSFA will have the students participate in monthly community service projects (i.e. cleaning up local school grounds, doing odd jobs such as garden/farm work, participating in community events as a group and raising awareness to others).</p>	<p>4.1. Community service projects will happen monthly and will create more networks in the community and surrounding areas.</p>	<p>4.1. This outcome will include the participation of all students (approx. 40) in the program.</p>

	4.2. Increase cultural inclusion of students at SSFA in the greater Udon Thani area by accepting all students who come from different walks of life.	4.2. Bring a friend of family member to visit SSFA for a day.  4.3. Have the group Skype with a donor who is interested in talking to some students.  4.4. Create update videos of the students for the SSFA social media platforms (Facebook, website, etc.)	4.2. Students are welcome to bring a friend to class at least once every month.  4.3. Skype calls can occur once every 3 months, depending on how many donors/stakeholders want to speak to students and see what is happening in the program.  4.4. Up-to-date videos and pictures for websites and social media platforms should be taken 3 times a week, whether it is a few photos or a short video of one of the students' current accomplishments.	
<b>Short-term Outcomes</b>				
1. Students cultivate a positive learning experience and are motivated to continue in the program.	1.1. Increase in students' positive outlook and enthusiasm towards learning English because for many of them, it is difficult and frustrating.	1.1. Participation and enrollment in the program remain consistent and steady.  1.2. Students express their feelings during one-on-one tutoring.	1.1. Although tutoring happens daily, individuals usually have one-on-one time with a teacher twice a week, due to the number of students in the program. However, students have the freedom to express how they are feeling at any time before, during, or after the program session.	1.1. The participants include any student who feels their voice needs to be heard.

<p>2. Teens in program successfully pass college entrance exams and enroll in a university.</p>	<p>2.1. Young adults at SSFA increase the amount of time spent on college preparation. Teens get specific help and support from SSFA staff.</p>	<p>2.1. SSFA teachers will measure teens' progress when working in groups or they will evaluate improvement during one-on-one support concerning subjects such as math, reading, writing, etc.</p>	<p>2.1. Teens will meet around 6 times a week at SSFA to study and help one another prepare for the exams. This will end, of course, once they have successfully taken their exams.</p>	<p>2.1. 10-15 teenagers in the program.</p>
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Source: Haymond, Esther. "Evaluation Plan." 17 Apr. 2019.

*Evaluation Plan Narrative*

The SSFA program was designed to answer the academic needs of those living in the Isaan region of Thailand by providing them with ESL education and leadership training. According to the purpose of the program, the specific long-term outcomes that will be focused on throughout the evaluation plan include increase practical application of ESL skills of all students, continue building personal relationships with the students and their families, increase Thai literacy and comprehension skills as well as cultural knowledge among students, and expand the program so that more students can enroll. The short-term outcomes of the program are for students to cultivate a positive learning experience and be motivated to continue in the program and for teenagers to successfully pass their college entrance exams and enroll in university. These outcomes are a strong priority for the SSFA after-school tutoring program.

When evaluating the increase of the practical application of ESL skills in all the students at SSFA, one specific indicator of this outcome is an increase in academic grades and an improvement in their English literacy and reading comprehension skills. The hope is that the longer the students are participants in the program, the more they learn and increase their ESL skills. Another indicator is that students are able to demonstrate their English-speaking ability and be able to have a conversation in English with confidence. When the students grow academically, they are not only becoming more confident in themselves but are also increasing their chances of a better career opportunity in the future. By achieving academic excellence now, students are more likely to be motivated in receiving higher education later in life. The evaluation plan shows that this outcome is measured through verbal and written assessments that will be conducted by SSFA staff at the end of every lesson or unit; this will be approximately every two weeks. A student's progress will also be measured through the collaboration between

SSFA staff and the students' public-school teachers. Creating that relationship is essential for students' improvement because with everyone on the same page, the teachers will be able to assess what needs to be improved, repeated, or changed. Shared Space for All is continuously looking for ways to improve the program for their students.

Building meaningful, long-term relationships with students and sharing personal stories with one another can sometimes be difficult and vulnerable because showing emotion is the opposite of "saving face" in Thai culture. It is important that SSFA welcomes and openly invites the students with a friendly atmosphere so that everyone feels comfortable and safe. By creating a positive and fun environment, students and teachers can easily share their stories, support one another, and continue to build strong relationships in the program. Indicators of this outcome are two-fold where first, there will be an increase in the number of relationships created within the program that is likely between staff and students or students and students and second, there will be an increase in relationships at the students' home. The hope is for parents to be more active and present in their child's education and even be willing to help them on their homework. Another important indicator shows an increase in the number of students who have graduated the program yet still remain in contact with SSFA staff especially with Nee. Building relationships in the program have proven to remain steady even once the student leaves. Nee wants to see what the student has been up to and where they are working, traveling, or continuing their education.

The emotional impact of this outcome can be measured through various scenarios. For example, Nee enjoys taking the teens on in-country fieldtrips to visit different areas in their country or loves to bond the group over a dinner in a local restaurant. Although fieldtrips may occur once every three months, dinners are more frequent and happen once every 2 weeks. With the elementary and middle school children, SSFA staff enjoy playing games and doing fun

activities to further the relationship and help students understand that learning can be creative. To continue creating a positive relationship with the students' parents and family, SSFA staff will send out a weekly newsletter that states what the group has been learning and the activities that they participate in. Each week's newsletter will also picture a "star of the week" which will be a chosen student who has accomplished a major goal or who has created and expressed something phenomenal. The goal of this outcome is that once the youth finish and graduate the program, they will continue to remain in contact with SSFA so that they can share their experiences with other students and cultivate even deeper relationships with staff.

Along with providing ESL skills training, SSFA also provides Thai literacy and support for students because it is equally as important for them to continue learning their native language. Some subjects such as math are more difficult to teach in English which is why Nee will usually teach this subject in Thai. Indicators for this outcome are children will be able demonstrate Thai written vocabulary, math, and writing skills as well as Thai speaking ability, and they are able to read books in their language at grade-level or above. The progress will be measured through short written and verbal assessments that will be conducted by Nee or other SSFA staff members. Reading one-on-one will also be a changing indicator that will provide the teacher with enough information to know areas on where the student struggles and needs to work on. Another part of this outcome is that SSFA also provides cultural knowledge and education, ensuring that students know the current events that are happening globally and locally; they want to make sure that students also know SSFA's mission and why they do what they do. It is important to have group discussions, especially with the teenagers who understand a little better than the younger ones, and talk about global or local problems and possibly discuss some solutions that are being put in place.

The final outcome of expanding the program is so that more students are able to enroll. With the current program's facility being Nee's home, one of SSFA's goals of 2019 is to begin the construction of an education center in the village of Ban Sam Phrao because more students want to join. It is vital to also increase the cultural inclusion of students who are living in other villages. One activity that SSFA organizes is local community service projects for the students to participate in. Projects may include cleaning up the local school grounds, doing odd jobs for the elderly in the village such as garden/farm work, or participating in community events as a group and raising awareness of the program to others. Another way in which to get the word out to others about the program is by allowing the students to bring friends after-school to visit and see what goes on and what they would expect. Having community service projects and inviting friends to visit will increase the number of students who are wanting to enroll.

Another activity that increases awareness and even funding for the program would be a Skype session with a donor who is interested in more about the program and who wants to speak to some students. By allowing donors and stakeholders the opportunity to talk to SSFA staff and students, they are able to see where they study and visualize the context as well; most donors want to know exactly where their money is being used. Keeping donors up to date on social media platforms such as Facebook is also important for engagement and consistency. Photos or short videos of students and their accomplishments needs to be shared so that others can see the tremendous work that is being done in Ban Sam Phrao. Each of these outcomes in the program evaluation are essential and fundamental for the growth of SSFA. The outcomes are directly related to the need that they are trying to meet for all youth who require extra academic support and help in the Isaan region of Thailand.

## Conclusion

For cross-cultural education programs to be most efficient and successful, INGOs and international educators must be aware of the socioeconomic, gender-specific, and cultural factors that influence a student's education as well as one's educational attainment. To support this argument, I first discussed the historical context that explains the progression of where the world stands today on achieving education for all regardless of gender, age, or social status. Then I explored Thailand's education system and the progress and challenges they have faced in regards to meeting the needs of their youth and offering the best education possible. To further support my claim, I contended the need for nonprofits and international educators to highly consider and thoroughly understand cultural contextualization before implementing any type of ESL or education program. It is crucial for others to discover how socioeconomic background, poverty, gender-related factors, household structures, and educational facilities may affect a certain culture and demographic's education and opportunity. Lastly, I presented a program evaluation of the nonprofit that I volunteered with over the summer to conduct my ethnographic fieldwork study. In that evaluation, I presented my findings and methods of data collection that helped me understand the Thai culture and why that international organization's success rates were continuing to increase. Education easily presents itself as a technical and fundamental tool for anyone, whether they are living in a developed country or poverty-stricken community. For those in the developing world, education has proven to help end the cycle of poverty and has given hope to those who have none. Shared Space for All is specifically meeting the educational needs of the oppressed children in their community and giving them the resources and a chance to better their future.



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