

Individuals' Power In Supporting Education

- Stories from high schools in five countries

Introduction

Meg (a UWC Thailand student and a Thai herself) - "Most of us would like to, but most of us could not afford to..."

Jialu (a Chinese high school student) - "The government provides free and high quality education to everyone. I can't see why we need private donations."

Marije (a senior Dutch citizen) - "My partner and I have been donating to our secondary school for over 20 years. It's always a part of our life."

Siswati Bonkle (a house wife from a middle income family) - "we even have troubles with our life. Who has spare money to donate to high schools? To the people who have no association with us at all."

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China

China has the most fast growing economy in the world in the recent years. In fact, since reforms were launched in 1978, China's economic growth is considered an even bigger miracle than the East Asia one. However since its high GDP can be largely attributed to its high population, according to the world bank institution, the GDP per capita of China is 9770.84 USD in 2015, meaning that China is still classified as a developing nation.

As a result, it still takes time for them to have the mindset of donation. Moreover, the donation system in China is incomplete and there are still a lot of people that do not have the awareness of donating. Since the majority of the schools in China are public schools sponsored by the government, people do not see the need for private donation as they consider financing schools as government's responsibility only.

UWC CSC on the contrary, has a fully complete donation system that has successfully held the donation party of the year. According to the organizer of the event Zachery Yao, the school has raised 3 million RMB by holding this event.



Eswatini

As a nation far away from most people's cognition but is paid great attention by international organizations, private donation culture in The Kingdom of Eswatini is significantly behindhand than developed countries. According to World Bank, "nationally, 58.9% of Swazis lived below the national poverty line in 2017". The fact that poverty has persisted despite the country's lower-middle-income status makes an extra expense, donation to high schools, unrealistic. ¹

Taking UWC Waterford Kamhlaba as an example, the main source of school fund comes from tuition, while only less than 5 percent comes from private donation. Besides, the admission rate of local high schools is relatively low: in 2012, the enrollment rate is 25.65%, not to mention there are only 36 high schools nationwide, which leads to the reality that most citizens do not even have the concept of acquiring high school education, let alone donating for it.

However, in UWC Waterford Kamhlaba, there are more than 50 student-run projects funded by either families or individuals. This year, the school organized a fund-raising event which had successfully collected amount of money that will all be distributed into different student-run projects. More holistically, according to the government, organizations and companies contribute a significant amount to the social development of Eswatini, including

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high school education. Following is an example of a company helped constructed a computer lab for local high school. ²

Thailand

In contrast to the above countries, giving has long been a constant fabric deeply embedded in the culture, norms, and traditions in Thailand as a Buddhist country. Approximately 94.6 percent of Thailand's population is Buddhist and Thailand had 39,883 wats (temples) by the year of 2016.

Because of this, most Thais believe in the law of karma and reincarnation. To be more specific, most Thais must do good deeds to accumulate boon, or merit, which in turn will determine the pathways of one's present and future lives. One way to tam boon, or to make merit, is to share one's own resources with those in need and donation is surely one of such sharing.

In Thailand, there are indeed numerous organizations and government policies to help assisting children in terms of gaining proper education. However, our team wondered whether that culture of giving is able to boost private donation in Thailand more than in other countries. Thus, we approached a UWC Thailand student, Meg, who is a Thai herself, to see whether that is the case.

"I personally have donated to UWC Thailand. But, you know, my family and I do not do it regularly. And I don't think the majority of Thais have habits of doing that too. Most of them are trying not to be overwhelmed by their own lives. So..."

As we may know, Thailand has the widest income inequality in the ASEAN, with 91.7% of adults living under 10,000 USD and only 0.1% earning over 1 million USD. Thus, it is understandable that most people in Thailand do not have the ability to donate privately to high schools, even to the ones where their own children go to, despite their willingness to do so.

Japan

Overall, Japanese have less motivation to make private donations because of excessively complicated censor system which requires multiple personal identifications, ranged from personal saving to criminal record as well as house property ownership certificate. Moreover, making donations would not bring them benefits such as tax reduction, which is present in the United States.

But things become different when it comes to private school donation. Parents of students are more inclined to donate money as long as it is connected to cultural preservation. As my friend who studies in UWC ISAK Japan commented, “the parents of the local students are very proud of their own culture and they went great length to demonstrate the beauty of their culture to the international students. These parents will voluntarily contact the school and provide funding for the Sakura Festival just to let us to experience their culture. Admittedly these activities are amazing and I really enjoy them.”

The Netherlands

Private funds and initiatives have always been important in the Netherlands. Historically speaking, with more than half of the land below sea-level, the Netherlands was largely supported by churches and monasteries to build dikes and dams in the 13th century³. Throughout the time, private donations become a social norm, benefitting wide range of facilities like healthcare and education for an active civil society.

With a diverse and egalitarian society, the Netherlands not only actively involves in international affairs, but maintains a strong tradition of private charitable giving. According to the research by ENOP in 2013, The total of grants by private and governmental donations in the field of charity can be estimated up to 4.37 million euros where 1.94 million comes from private funds⁴. In the World Giving Index, the Netherlands have long been in the top-ten of countries where most volunteering time and money are given for charities⁵.

In spite of receiving considerable amount of donations and financial support from the Dutch government and foundations, most secondary schools in the Netherlands regardless regular or private also gain private donations in form of money or services from private households.

According to results from the 2002/2003 European Social Survey, the proportion of Dutch households making charitable gifts is higher than any other European nation⁶. Parents of children who study in secondary schools contribute a large proportion of household donations annually.

Most of the secondary schools exist voluntary parent’s councils that identify needed projects and raise funds for the school. The parents will pay voluntary contributions or volunteer their time ⁷ and no less than 95 percent of all Dutch households contribute to

charity every year⁸. Traditionally, door-to-door collection remain a prevalent way of donation in the Netherlands. While 78% of households donate through door-to-door collection in 2013, some other ways of giving such as email sending, text messaging and end of year fund collecting gradually gain more popularity⁹.

Socio-economic characteristics in Dutch society highly influence the household donation behaviors.

- Presence of children: Household tends to donate more if they have children at home.
- Education level: Highly- educated people donate more.
- Religion: religious Dutch, especially Protestants donate more.
- Wealth: families with more financial resources donate more
- Age: elder people donate more.

In general, households who donate more are mostly altruistically donors while the private donation consistently plays an essential role in Dutch society.

Conclusion

Based on our team's investigation, among the five countries we chose, the Netherlands has the richest private donation culture to high schools. In fact, to a greater extent, private donation in west Europe is already a well-established norm. On the contrary, in Thailand and Eswatini, where economic inequality is most severe among the five nations, private donation simply cannot be a part of their daily routine. China, however, is a rather special case. With its economic prosperity being number one in Asia, the people's mindset seems to fail to keep up with the booming economy. Some still limit the concept of donation to supporting the people in mountainous regions. In fact, private donation is much more than that. Donating to high schools that are contributing to social progress is a form of charity as well.

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