

# **The Impact of Foreign Settlers on Phuket Society: A Focus on Education Change<sup>1</sup>**

**Sudrudee Bamrung<sup>2</sup>**

Prince of Songkla University, Thailand

## **Abstract**

This study aims to examine the influence of the foreign settlers on the education sector in Phuket and also to analyze the significant changes and consequences in the education sector caused by foreign settlers who have resided in Phuket in two key periods – the mining era in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the tourism industry period in the last decade. The significant changes in the education sector of Phuket show that a large number of foreign settlers residing on the island have generated an interesting impact starting from the tin mining industry period throughout the tourism industry period. The establishment of Chinese schools during the tin mining industry period was the means not only to provide education for Chinese children, but also to maintain Chinese traditions and culture. In the era of tourism industry, Western settlers have influenced the society of Phuket to become more internationalized through an increasing number of international schools.

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<sup>2</sup> Lecturer at the Faculty of International Studies, Prince of Songkla University, Phuket Campus; PhD, Thai Studies Program, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University.

The opportunity to acquire bi-lingual language ability tends to increase status and standards for parents and their children. Internationalization has become one of the major characteristics of Phuket via the education sector.

## Introduction

Phuket has always been an interesting destination for foreign settlers who have chosen the island as their home since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. What tin mining was before, the tourism industry is now – a key industry attracting large numbers of foreigners. Various factors and conditions were pivotal during these periods, during which the tin mining industry attracted a massive influx of traders and miners and Phuket transformed into a world-class tourism destination, opening up the influx of tourists, foreign investment and migration resulting in new settlements of foreign communities.

The two key industries of tin mining and tourism visibly have attracted and distinguished groups of foreign settlers in Phuket. In the heydays of tin mining, the majority of foreign settlers were Chinese migrants who came to Phuket to settle with the intention to seek a more prosperous and better existence, which could be earned by the mining of tin ore. On the other hand, during the ongoing prime period of tourism, foreign settlers are mostly from Western countries. Some of them made their first visit to Phuket as a tourist and others came looking for jobs and business opportunities. Many decided to stay in Phuket either permanently or on a semi-permanent basis using the island as the site of their second home.

The term “foreign settlers” in this study refers to foreigners who have moved from other countries to live permanently in Phuket, including those foreigners who make Phuket their second home on a semi-permanent basis. The settlements of the foreign settlers in Phuket during the mining and tourism periods having different living patterns, which are differentiated by socio-cultural contexts, conditions of

living, and lifestyles, and government policies differ during the time of the two key industries. However, they have both caused great changes in various aspects to the society of Phuket, which can be considered as an important and interesting social phenomenon.

From the study of the influx and impact of Western settlement in Phuket, the author has found various aspects of significant social changes occurring. However, the social phenomenon in the education sector is one of the most significant changes taking place in the society of Phuket. It is then the aim of this article to explore how foreign settlers have influenced the education sector in Phuket. More precisely, this article aims to analyze the considerable changes and consequences in the education sector caused by foreign settlers who have resided in Phuket during these two periods, that is the earlier mining era and tourism industry era in the last decade.

Notably, Phuket has attracted a large flow of foreign settlers to reside and make the island their home by its location and economic blueprint as key factors of each industry, starting from tin production to the present day of tourism. These two industries have moved Phuket into a vital commercial center. Therefore, this article will point out the education changes in Phuket caused by the foreign settlers in the two key industries, the Chinese as the key foreign settlers during the tin mining industry and the Western settlers during the tourism industry.

## **The Influx of the Chinese Settlers to Phuket during the Tin Mining Era in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

During the tin mining era of Phuket, since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Chinese played a significant role in creating great social dynamics mainly in economic and socio-cultural aspects. In the late Ayutthaya period, the Chinese settled in Phuket for the first time.<sup>3</sup> Later, some Chinese immigrants achieved strong influence in the economy of the west coast ports of Siam where tin production was in operation at that time. More and more Chinese settled and traded for tin in Phuket. They were motivated by one Chinese man, Phraya Thalang Kang-Seng, who, in 1769, was appointed by the Siamese government to the

<sup>3</sup> Wisanthanee, *Thalang, Phuket and Andaman Coast*, 117.

position of governor of the island of Thalang, as Phuket was called in those days.<sup>4</sup>

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the southern areas of the island, abundant deposits of tin were found, especially in “Puket” and “Kathu”, formerly the area was known as “Bukit” or “Tongkah” Harbor. These areas later were occupied by a large Chinese community. More importantly, because at that time Phuket was under a depopulated situation because of the Second Battle of Thalang by the Burmese attacks in 1809-1810,<sup>5</sup> and with the reason to re-populate the island, the Siamese government opened the island to welcome more Chinese migrants to work in mines and reside there.<sup>6</sup> Tin production had become a vital economic power in Phuket owing to its great market demand. Unsurprisingly, a big wave of Chinese immigrants moved to Phuket in order to work in the mines in the Kathu area. A second large group was found in Thung-kha, which is Old Phuket Town today.<sup>7</sup>

The influx of Chinese immigrants settling on the island soared during the peak period of the tin mining industry from 1855 to 1932. As Phuket needed more laborers to work in the mines, more Chinese were encouraged to come by transporting them directly from China between 1892 and 1901. In Phuket at that time, a majority of the island’s population was composed of Chinese immigrants. This later resulted in much of the tin trading network in the southern region of Siam particularly, in Phuket, to be under the control of Chinese hands. They played a leading role in the industry.<sup>8</sup>

In the period of tin mining, the settlement of Chinese immigrants generated great changes in various aspects of society, especially in economic and socio-cultural senses through their lifestyle and living patterns. Sino-Portuguese houses were built in the area of Phuket Town, in a mix of Chinese and European architectural styles.<sup>9</sup> This

<sup>4</sup> Preeyachanan, *The Influences on the Architecture of Phuket Old Town*, 27.

<sup>5</sup> Khoo Salma Nasution, “Hokkien Chinese on the Phuket Mining Frontier”, 83.

<sup>6</sup> Chatchai, *Urbanization of Phuket*, 8; Mackay, *A History of Phuket*, 229, 270.

<sup>7</sup> Preeyachanan, *The Influences on the Architecture of Phuket Old Town*, 30, 35.

<sup>8</sup> Punnee, *Tin Mining Industry and Economic Change*, 165.

<sup>9</sup> Suthi, *Cultural Landscape Study of the Old Phuket Town*, 2.

architectural style gained strong influence from the port of Penang. The Chinese communities in Old Phuket Town (Tong-kah) had strong trading ties and connections with the Chinese in various port cities on the Malay Peninsula, Penang being the closest one.<sup>10</sup> Penang at that time was colonized by the British. By the 1910s, Old Phuket Town or Tongkah was fully developed in this Penang-inspired style, with terraced residential rows, mansions, two-story shop-houses, temples and shrines, schools, theatres and markets. Thalang Road in Tongkah turned to be the center of key mining and trading companies with full development.<sup>11</sup>

In addition, the settlement of Chinese immigrants in Phuket led to inter-marriage between local Thai women and Chinese men. One important reason for cross-cultural marriage was business-related. Some Chinese immigrants became rich in the tin trade. For example, Tan Gaik Tam, who married a local Thai woman and later took many minor wives, needed a big family to operate as his business expanded.<sup>12</sup>

### The Impact of Chinese Settlers on Phuket Education during the Tin Mining Industry

Chinese immigrants have fostered the island's prosperity and economic growth, particularly when Phraya Rassada Khaw Sim Bee was the governor of the island. Some of them became very rich from tin trading and kept strong ties among themselves. The Chinese immigrants wanted to give their offspring an education while maintaining their Chinese identity and culture by providing this education through their own schools. The establishment of Chinese schools on the island of Phuket was an important start as one of the social changes in the society of Phuket.

In 1913, the first public school in Phuket was established: The Hua Boon School, which was operating under the Ministry of Education. Establishing a Chinese school at that time could be used as the way to arouse Chinese nationalist and anti-Thai sentiments.

<sup>10</sup> Preeyachanan, *The Influences on the Architecture of Phuket Old Town*, 36.

<sup>11</sup> Khoo Salma Nasution, "Hokkien Chinese on the Phuket Mining Frontier", 99.

<sup>12</sup> Mackay, *A History of Phuket*, 271.

Therefore, in order to ensure that the schools were under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, guidelines were established requiring the school to offer both Chinese and Thai language classes for both Chinese and Thai students by specifying teaching one hour of Chinese language class and four hours for Thai language class per day. By 1917, Hua Boon School provided a full education program taught in both Mandarin and Thai. However, they also used Hokkien as a medium of teaching. The school's funds mainly came from donations made by Chinese shops and companies.

Following the Hua Boon School, many other Chinese schools were founded in Phuket, such as Tandavanitj Vithayakom School, Seong Teik School and the Yok Eng School. The Tandavanitj Vithayakom School was a Siamese-medium secondary school on Yaowarat Road. It was established in 1917, with King Rama VI giving the school its name and opening it. Tan Mah Siang (or Phitak Chinpracha) provided funds for the school building.<sup>13</sup> In 1918, two other Chinese schools were established in Phuket – Seong Teik School located on Dibuk Road, which was built in three shop houses donated by Tan Boon Sai, and the Yok Eng School in Bang Neow, which was established in the same year. The funds to build these two schools were mainly donated by the Chinese community leaders.<sup>14</sup>

Khoo Salma Nasution states that by the 1920s, the Hua Boon School made a request to teach more Chinese language, but the request was advised against by King Rama VII. The request finally was dismissed. Later, in 1934, the Hua Boon School was rebuilt with large donations and became the biggest school in the south of Siam, with more than 1,000 students enrolled.

Establishing a Chinese school was an effective way to support the learning of the language and culture, maintain identity, and feed cultural and traditional practices to preserve Chinese values for their children and next generations. During that time the political situation and social conditions transformed the country from an absolute into

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<sup>13</sup> Khoo Salma Nasution, "Hokkien Chinese on the Phuket Mining Frontier", 104-106; "The History of Chinese Schools in Phuket".

<sup>14</sup> Khoo Salma Nasution, "Hokkien Chinese on the Phuket Mining Frontier", 106.

a constitutional monarchy. Penpisut Intarapirom notes that from the establishment of the constitutional monarchy in 1932 through the administration of Prime Minister Phibul Songkram (1938-1944), all Chinese schools in Thailand were put under very strict and serious rules in both policy and practice. As Prime Minister Phibul Songkram was keen on the idea of “nationalism”, his regime used Thai nationality as a means to classify the people of the country; in this respect, the Chinese in Thailand were perceived being different from “Thai”. In addition, Chinese schools were seen as a potential threat because of the relations they supposedly had with China. Consequently, during this period Chinese schools were mostly closed and not allowed to re-establish throughout the administration period of Phibul Songkram.<sup>15</sup>

The Chinese schools in Phuket also faced trouble under the government of Phibul. Through his nationalism policy, strict rules and regulations had to be followed by the schools. Chinese school had to increase more hours to teach in Thai as a medium, causing reduction of Chinese classes. In 1939, all Chinese schools in Phuket were forced to close permanently. The Hua Boon School was forced to close completely in 1942. During this situation, some schools were merged and changed their names. The Yoke Eng and Seong Tok schools merged with the Chong Hwa School and re-opened under this name in 1942. Around 1953, the name “Chong Hwa School” was changed to Thai Hua School in order to show its loyalty to Thailand.<sup>16</sup>

With respect to education, these events formed a key impact on Phuket society during the tin mining period and played a significant role in the lives of the Chinese settlers. The settlement of Chinese immigrants in Phuket during the mining industry showed that large communities of Chinese were formed with significant support in establishing Chinese schools as a vital means in preserving their cultural identity. Although all Chinese schools were forced to close because of the policies from Siamese government, we can still see the big impact that education, established by Chinese settlers, had on Phuket society.

<sup>15</sup> Penpisut, “A control over Chinese Schools”, 25-48.

<sup>16</sup> Khoo Salma Nasution, “Hokkien Chinese on the Phuket Mining Frontier”, 107.

## The Influx and Impact of Western Settlers on Phuket during the Tourism Industry Pre-2004

In 1967, Phuket moved markedly into a new production landscape from the tin trade to the tourist trade. By the 1980s, the island transitioned seriously into the tourism industry and turned to the stage of international tourism in this period.<sup>17</sup> The combination of being an island with rich beautiful nature, mild tropical climate and interesting indigenous traditional cultures with a long history of different groups of people residing there, combined with cooperation from the government, the private tourism sector and locals promoting tourism of Phuket have been the key factors attracting more and more tourists, both international and domestic, to visit. Today, Phuket has been transformed into a world-class tourist destination with more visitors coming to the island.

Marzuki notes that formerly Phuket used to be a rural island, then turned itself with tourism development and fast growing urbanization to be a modern area. With a new landscape for Phuket's tourist industry, not only tourists from around the world came to the island, but also a large number of foreign settlers who wanted to make the island home. They come in various forms, for example, as investors, diplomats and retirees. The massive growth in tourism development and its reputation of a well-known tourist destination were key factors motivating a great number of international settlers.<sup>18</sup>

New economic and business activities related to tourism and hospitality, for example, resorts and hotels, restaurants, bars, shopping centers, supermarkets, tour operators, transportation, car and motorbike rentals, spa services, and many other thousands of jobs, have been generated by the tourism industry of Phuket, all of which are key factors attracting more foreign settlers to reside on the island. In the tourism era, the foreign settlers have mostly been from Western countries.

Since the 1980s, huge investments in resort and hotel property by foreign investors, along with related services, has been growing. For

<sup>17</sup> Kontogeorgopoulos, "Conventional tourism and ecotourism in Phuket", 90.

<sup>18</sup> Marzuki, "Local residents' perceptions", 203.

example, Club Méditerranée or Club Med on Kata beach, Amanpuri Hotel nearby Surin beach under a joint venture from Switzerland, Japan and Indonesia, Le Meridien Hotel, Phuket Yacht Club and Laguna Beach Club from Singapore. The investment from Singapore includes the Dusit Laguna, Laguna Beach Club, Sheraton Grand Laguna Beach, Banyan Tree and Allamanda. According to Chatchai Pongprayoon, the economic growth, in parallel with the development of the tourism industry, has resulted in growing numbers of housing and real estate developments, which can be found all over the island of Phuket.<sup>19</sup>

In addition, support from the government for an action plan implemented to move Phuket to be an “International City” during 1999-2011.<sup>20</sup> This has led to significant development in infrastructure and tourism facilities of Phuket. There is high demand for housing in resort style and luxury accommodation for foreign settlers. This implies a large number of foreigners have become island residents. They want to make Phuket their permanent or second home, which can be seen from the increasing demand for residential land use.

With the rising number of foreigners moving to settle on the island, Westerners have tended to take a vital part in the transformation of the society of Phuket into a more internationalized society. The launch of the local *The Phuket Gazette*, a weekly English-language newspaper in 1993,<sup>21</sup> could be seen as a good example showing clearly the extent of Western settlement on the island. Other significant indicators of the settlement of foreigners are, for example, in 1983 the international organization Alliance Française was founded in Phuket to facilitate its key mission in promoting French language and culture. The establishment of a French consulate in 1991 and a German honorary consulate in 2002, also indicate a high number of Western settlers.

More importantly, a clear reflection on the settlement of Westerners during the international tourism period before 2004 has

<sup>19</sup> Chatchai, *Urbanization of Phuket*, 42.

<sup>20</sup> National Economic and Social Development Board, *Strategies for Southern Economic Development*.

<sup>21</sup> *The Phuket Gazette*, 15 March 2016 <<http://www.phuketgazette.net/>>.

been the emergence of three key international schools. The first one is the Buds International School Phuket, established in 1990. The school offers nursery to primary levels, welcoming both international and Thai children between the ages of 12 months and 11 years. This school is located in Tambon Chalong.<sup>22</sup>

The second private international school founded in Phuket is the Dulwich International School Phuket, founded in 1996. Later, the school changed its name to the British International School, Phuket. This school offers an English curriculum by using English as a medium in teaching. In addition, the school provides co-educational and day and boarding facilities. The architecture of the school buildings is a good reflection of Western style. Finally, the establishment of the QSI International School of Phuket in 2000 offers elementary and secondary levels and provides an educational curriculum of the United States. Kajonkietsuksa School originally opened as a Thai school in 1954. Later, this school expanded its English program in 1999.

These are some of the key social changes, particularly in the education sector, resulting from the settlement of foreigners in Phuket during the tourism industry of the pre-2004 period, with the foreign settlers mainly from Western countries. Development in the aspect of the education sector in Phuket has gradually been because of these three international schools. Therefore, from the beginning of the tourism industry period, Western settlers have started to play an influential role in the education sector of Phuket.

### **The Influx and Impact of Western Settlers on Education Sector in Phuket during the Tourism Industry after 2004**

After the tsunami natural disaster in 2004, Phuket has played host to a large number of foreign settlers, with the foreign community and entrepreneurs making up almost 10% of the population.<sup>23</sup> Another source states that the estimated number of expatriate residents in

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<sup>22</sup> Buds International School Phuket, 7 May 2016 <<http://www.buds-phuket.com/about-us/>>.

<sup>23</sup> Mackay, *A History of Phuket*, 399.

Phuket is more than 100,000.<sup>24</sup> This small island today includes a total of 22 foreign honorary/general consulates,<sup>25</sup> mainly from Western countries. The huge expansion in housing and holiday property is also key evidence of the increasing foreign settlement in the last decade. The unprecedented growth in the tourism development has moved rapidly, while the flow of foreign settlers has increased in large numbers. As can be seen from Table 1, the number of international expatriates with work permits in Phuket has risen from 6,947 in 2012 to 12,034 in 2014.

**Table 1:** International Expatriates with Work Permits in Phuket

Nationality	Total Number December 2014	Total Number December 2013	Total Number February 2012
Great Britain	1,404	1,272	1,095
Russia	1,142	848	403
Philippines	987	699	440
France	736	596	432
United States	572	528	408
Italy	591	492	357
Australia	569	493	338
China	646	429	N/A
Germany	466	419	361
Korea	637	337	284
Sweden	447	297	302
India	344	257	N/A
Japan	203	182	N/A
Myanmar	189	183	N/A
Taiwan	27	27	N/A
Others	3,071	2,576	2,527
Total	12,034	9,635	6,947

**Source:** Phuket Provincial Employment Office, 2015

<sup>24</sup> Schatz, *Comprehensive worldwide survey*.

<sup>25</sup> Royal Norwegian Consulate Phuket, *Honorary/General Consulates in Phuket*.

The global situation of an aging society has emerged mostly in developed countries. The situation could be considered an important factor in the large foreign community in Phuket. The estimated global population of age 65 or older was 461 million in 2004, and has risen at a great pace since. There could be more than 10 million people turning 65 in one year.<sup>26</sup> By 2010, the world population was 6,892,319,000 people, among this number there were 551,385,520 retirees or elderly people, who accounted for 8% of the world population.<sup>27</sup> With this situation, Phuket, as a small island, tends to be one of the dream destinations for many Western retirees who want to spend a new phase of life in a warmer climate, near beautiful beaches and a rich of culture.

By 2014, Phuket hosted 3,739 international retirees (Table 2). Development of the medical care system in Phuket has been booming during the last decade, with three hospitals under the government sector, five private-owned hospitals and 18 health centers provided on the island. The high international standard hospitals offered on the island have world-class medical facilities, for example, Phuket International Hospital, Bangkok Phuket Hospital and the newest hi-tech hospital, Debuk Hospital. This implies not only support for tourists, but also the need by foreign settlers to have strong confidence in medical security and health care matters. In particular, retirees consider the health care system as one of the key priorities in their concerns in living in abroad. Phuket has become a key provider of international standard health care, which is a magnet for foreign settlers mainly from Western countries.

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<sup>26</sup> Kinsella, *Global Aging*, 5.

<sup>27</sup> Haub, *World Population Data Sheet*.

**Table 2:** International Retirees in Phuket

Item	2014		2013	
	Nationality	Number	Nationality	Number
1	British	563	German	509
2	German	544	British	505
3	Swiss	401	Swiss	345
4	French	372	French	305
5	American	312	American	305
6	Swedish	228	Australian	226
7	Italian	194	Italian	194
8	Norwegian	124	Norwegian	128
9	Austrian	122	Austrian	100
10	Others	661	Others	613
	Total	3,739	Total	3,412

**Source:** Phuket Immigration Office, 2015

Social changes in the aspect of the education sector in Phuket in the last decade have been caused by larger foreign communities in Phuket. This has resulted in a rapid increase in the number of international schools in Phuket. There has been higher competitiveness among international schools as can be seen from a wider variety of facilities and services they have offered, which is considered a clear example of the influence exerted by the large foreign community in Phuket. Barnett states that Phuket has strong attraction as a regional hub for expatriates to live and work, which causes part of the growth of Phuket's economy, and at the same time the high quality of education provided is one of the key reasons that attract them to the island. In the past decade, 10 out of 13 of international schools were established in Phuket, with very high competition among them.<sup>28</sup> Table 3 shows all international schools in Phuket.

<sup>28</sup> Barnett, "Property Watch".

**Table 3:** International Schools in Phuket, Thailand

No.	International Schools	Establishment Year	2015 enrollment	Thai Students (%)
1	Buds International School Phuket	1990	84	20%
2	British International School Phuket (BISP)*	1996	830	27%
3	Q.S.I. International School of Phuket*	2000	115	23%
4	ABC International Nursery and Preschool	2007	45	80%
5	Oak Meadow International School and Smiley Kidz International Kindergarten	2007	100	43%
6	Phuket International Academy (PIA)*	2008	318	30%
7	Shining Stars	2008	20	25%
8	HeadStart International School Phuket*	2009	512	27%
9	Chalong International Kindergarten and School	2009	45	60%
10	Phuket International School and Kindergarten	2010	120	5%
11	Kajonkiet International School Phuket (KISP)*	2011	224	70%
12	Palm House Primary School	2011	70	50%
13	Gecko School	2013	25	60%

\*The schools that registered with International Schools Association of Thailand (ISAT)

**Source:** C9 Hotelworks Market Research, 2015

The substantial growth of the education sector with the establishment of many international schools in Phuket indicates the rising demands for education at an international school. Phuket's international schools offer a wide variety of curriculums and certificates, which children and their parents can pick their choice.

The 2015 study of C9 Hotelworks Market Research of the Phuket International Schools Market indicates that the student enrollment in 2015 in the top three schools are British International School Phuket, HeadStart International School Phuket and Phuket International Academy, with 830, 512 and 318 students, respectively. The proportion of student enrollments into the international schools in Phuket by 2015 from Preschool to Grade 12 (Year 13) was 2,508, with the majority consisting of foreign students from various countries at 62% of the total amount of students. Some of the students are dual passport holders (or *luk kreung*), mixed-blood children of Thais and foreigners). Among the large group of foreign students, British, Russian, American, Australian and South Korean students are the top five nationalities.<sup>29</sup>

Additionally, the Thai schools in Phuket offering an English program (EP) are on the second line of growth in the education sector, providing another option for parents to send their children to study, with the tuition fee being cheaper than that of the international schools. They also provide English language education. There are six Thai schools offering EP, as can be seen from Table 4:

**Table 4:** Thai Schools offering an English Program (EP)

No.	International Schools	Establishment Year
1	Satree Phuket School	1909
2	Phuket Thai Hua School	1910
3	Darasamut School	1964
4	Baan Kajonkiet Nursery	2010
5	Kajonkietsuksa School, Kathu Campus	2011
6	Kajonkiet Thalang School	2014

**Source:** C9 Hotelworks Market Research, 2015

The majority of student enrollment into Thai Schools with an EP is Thai, at 91% of all students. The expansion of international schools in Phuket has increased. HeadStart International School moved to a

<sup>29</sup> C9 Hotelworks Market Research, *International Schools Market*.

new site in August 2015 and extended its capacity to achieve a student population of 750. Phuket International Academy has plans for a new secondary school building, boarding facilities, a sports center and a performing arts center, and British International School Phuket plans to have an arts center, an Ice Center with Olympic-sized ice rink, with all centers having covered training areas.<sup>30</sup>

The rapid expansion of Phuket's education sector with 13 international schools proves the influential momentum of the foreign community residing on the island. The phenomenal growth in this sector has shed light on social change in the society and the increase of internationalization in order to sustain a large foreign community. While, this growing trend has obviously influenced the local people's value towards having their children study at international schools or at Thai Schools with an EP, they believe that studying at an international school could be an enhancing opportunity for their children to further their study at leading universities and having wider opening doors to study in aboard.

## Conclusion

The tin mining industry and tourism industry led to two large groups of foreign settlements, namely Chinese and Western, in Phuket, which has had a crucial impact on education on the island. Both Chinese and Western settlers have contributed considerably to the development, as well as the change, of the education environment of Phuket. The former, which especially played an important role in the boom period of the mining industry, encouraged establishment of Chinese schools so that their children were educated in the Chinese language and culture. This could, therefore, help them maintain pride and value of being Chinese. The latter has taken more important part in the past two decades after the decline of tin mining industry when Phuket's economy has relied mainly on tourism business. Particularly in the last decade, Westerners have directed and shifted educational values in Phuket since they have introduced an internationalized educational system to the island.

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<sup>30</sup> C9 Hotelworks Market Research, *Thai Schools offering an English Program (EP)*.

Phuket today is considered one of the most international of education hubs. The establishment of many international schools is key evidence to that fact. The market for international schools continues to rise as a result of the increase of foreign settlement. Another reason for this is that more people value international schools or schools conducting lessons in English as they provide their children with an opportunity to acquire bi-lingual language ability.

The tourism era has turned Phuket from a place for Chinese settlers to a home for Western immigrants with a larger variety of nationalities from Western countries with diverse forms of living becoming more prominent. This change has transformed the island to have a more internationalized society, as it can be seen that internationalization has become one of the major characteristics defining Phuket today.

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