

# Education and Cultural Capital Accumulation: The Life Course of Blind People<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This article analyzes how the cultural capital of blind and visually-impaired people is formed and accumulated through education, which affects their life course. As research methods, the study used interviews with and participant observation of 11 blind and visually-impaired persons and nine teachers in schools for the blind. Data were analyzed based on the framework of Pierre Bourdieu. The study found that parents' perspectives of disability had great influence on the school admissions of their visually-impaired children. Pedagogy in schools for the blind was important in forming and accumulating cultural capital in life skills, academic skills, and attitudes toward disabilities and society. Moreover, the blind persons developed social capital in the schools, which enabled them to study in inclusive education and live in society. Academic and social knowledge led to the development of habitus and independent living. Visually-impaired people's cultural capital was transformed into other types of capital, job opportunities, earnings, and social recognition. Moreover, their social participation demonstrates that disability is socially constructed, as people with disabilities can live independently and contribute to society. However, even if visually-impaired people are relatively wealthy, their social position remains unequal because other people consider their disability rather than their ability.

**Keywords:** education, blind people, disability, cultural capital, capital, social space

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## Introduction

Education is essential not only for developing skills and knowledge, but it can also reduce the gap between social classes. In other words, education is a type of capital in which people invest so that they can access economic, social, and symbolic capital. However, as Bourdieu illustrated, having an education does not necessarily bring about social equality, since educational institutions are permeated with power relations. Furthermore, education is one of the determinants that generates and maintains the advantages of dominant groups. Hence, social class and social differentiation are reproduced by education. Social inequality is indicated in educational admission. Social conditions, such as class, race, gender, and physical disability, as well as the capital possessed by parents affect their children's unequal admission and educational attainment (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990; Jenkins, 2002; Sadovnik, 2011; Sullivan, 2001).

Visual impairment can be a considerable obstacle to getting admitted into general educational institutions. Moreover, most educational institutions lack the human resources and instructional media for blind and visually-impaired students. In Thailand, legally blind people lacked educational opportunities until 1939, when the first school for the blind was established. Subsequent legislation supported people with disabilities to have educational opportunity and quality of education equal to that of the general population. The 1991 Persons with Disabilities Empowerment Act was a valuable path for blind and visually-impaired people to participate in the schools, resulting in increasing numbers, particularly in primary and secondary education. However, the number of visually-impaired people in higher education has decreased for various reasons.

One significant reason is that visually-impaired people are denied access to education or cannot attain success because of their parents' negative attitudes toward their disability. Some parents do not realize that education is essential to providing economic advantages and the ability for their children to live independently. Thus, they decide

not to enroll their children into schools for the blind or they force them to drop out of school. Furthermore, as cultural value is constructed, transmitted, reproduced, and internalized, disability means inability. This cultural value produces low self-esteem in blind and visually-impaired people, as they are considered disabled people: the physical impairment is viewed as an educational obstacle, and education is not deemed essential for their social life (Pleehajinda, 2005; Somboon, 2008; Samranpis and Rachvijit, 2007; Thongnoi, 2006).

Nevertheless, some of the blind and visually-impaired people interviewed in this research project grew up in families whose parents provided them with an education and realized the necessity of education for deconstructing disability and developing independent living skills. Moreover, they realized that education is key to understanding the social world and developing life experiences. Eventually, because of the skills and knowledge they developed, they achieved social participation and empowerment. Therefore, this study emphasizes the educational experiences of visually-impaired people in analyzing the relationship between education and the social life of blind people. The article focuses on how blind people formed and accumulated cultural capital through education in schools for the blind and used cultural capital to live independently and construct social space.

## Concepts

The sociology of education illustrates the relationship between education and society at both the macro and micro levels. Bourdieu's theoretical concepts contribute considerably to the contemporary sociology of education, which developed a model of the interrelationship among society, culture, class, and education. His thoughts on education and the education system had a significant influence on ideas regarding the reproduction of cultural capital and inequality for maintaining advantages by the dominant group (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990; Bourdieu, 1977). Nevertheless, the form and accumulation of cultural capital are processes of power negotiation since the cultural capital that

an individual possesses can be transformed into other types of capital for the construction and contestation in acquiring social space. Thus, this article used Bourdieu's concept of capital to understand how blind and visually-impaired people formed and accumulated cultural capital and how they used it in independent living.

"Cultural capital," according to Pierre Bourdieu, refers to the accumulation of symbolic components, such as knowledge, skills, academic understanding, use of academic language, tastes, manners, and credentials, which a person acquires by being part of a specific social class. The possession of cultural capital varies by class. Each class is based on shared beliefs, values, and cultural traits, such as taste in aesthetics, that indicate a consciousness of collective identity. According to Bourdieu, cultural capital consists of three forms. The first is the embodied state, which refers to cultural knowledge, e.g., values, norms, languages, manners, and skills which one inherits through the socialization process, education, and social interaction. The capital is utilized and reflected when one interacts with other(s). The second form is the objectified state, which refers to tangible cultural goods that a person possesses, such as books, clothing, computers, educational instruments, furniture, and food. These physical objects reveal both the cultural and economic capital that the individual possesses. The third form is the institutionalized state, which refers to the measure of a person's cultural capital through educational attainment, institutional recognition, credentials, and professional position. Educational opportunity relates to economic capital based on the fact that parents from high socioeconomic status possess high economic capital through which their children have considerable opportunities to enter well-recognized educational institutions where they form and accumulate various types of capital. The capital earned by these children leads them to reach a high social position. Moreover, economic capital is also associated with cultural goods; in other words, economic capital is transformed into cultural capital, which facilitates educational attainment (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986; Sadovnik, 2011; Jaeger and Karlson, 2018; Jaeger and Mollegaard, 2017).

Unequal opportunity in educational admission and attainment is related to both the economic and social capital that individuals possess and have inherited from their parents. People whose parents possess low economic capital must struggle to enter higher education because they are the first generation of college students in their families. Thus, they need to navigate information about admission and scholarships without the support of their family's suggestions, whereas parents possessing high economic and cultural capital can provide information on higher education admission and also transmit academic knowledge and life skills in school. Parents' capital belongings are transferred to their children, resulting in educational attainment; for example, upper- and middle-class children have more educational achievement than lower-class children (Di Maggio, 1982; De Freitas, 2017; Reay, 2010; Werner, 2004).

Bourdieu suggested that cultural capital is one form of capital within the system of capital transformation. Other forms of capital include economic, social, and symbolic capital. A person who possesses one form of capital can transform it to other forms. For example, the knowledge or education one has (cultural capital) can be transformed into social acceptance and social status (symbolic capital). In this regard, we cannot truly understand one form of capital if we separate it from other forms. In an educational institution, economic and cultural capital are dominant resources. Another type of capital that is developed in school is social capital, which refers to social networks and social relationships among individuals. This kind of capital is a significant part of educational admission and achievement, as well as social opportunities. Also, social capital is a resource that can be transformed into economic, cultural, and symbolic capital.

As mentioned above, cultural capital refers to important resources that people utilize to access rights, opportunities, and social space. This kind of capital is transmitted from one generation to the next within one's family and it perpetuates social inequality. Cultural capital is also acquired by the accumulation of skills and knowledge in people's everyday lives, through social interaction and socialization,

and internalized to habitus. Therefore, this research attempted to find out how blind and visually-impaired people form and accumulate cultural capital through family and school in order to live independently in society.

## Methodology

This research used the qualitative method, primarily interviews, so that blind persons and the teachers in the schools for the blind narrated their life experiences in the educational institutions and social life. It also used participant observation in order to understand the school environment as well as notice participants' gestures and emotions while they narrated their life stories. Data were collected from January 2018 to December 2019.<sup>2</sup>

The target participants were 20 people, divided into two groups. The first group consisted of 11 blind or visually-impaired people who had experience in schools for the blind as well as in inclusive educational schools. Some of the participants are now studying in higher education and others earned bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees and now work for government and private organizations. The participants were diverse in gender, age, socioeconomic status, domicile, and period of sight loss; some had a congenital loss of vision while others had lost their vision when they were young. Eight of the participants were totally blind and three had low vision, that is, they could see at a close distance. The second group consisted of nine teachers in six schools for blind, including Khon Kaen School for the Blind, Nakhon Ratchasima Blind Education School, the Northern School for the Blind under Patronage of the Queen, the Bangkok School for the Blind, the Southern Region School for the Blind in Suratthani, and Pattaya Redemptorist School for the Blind. The participants in this group had at least two years of work experience in such schools to assure that

<sup>2</sup> For ethical concerns, this research obtained approval for ethics in humans from the Human Research Ethics Committee of Thammasat University (Social Sciences) on January 9, 2018 to affirm that all of the participants consented voluntarily.

they had adequate experience and understanding of instruction, as well as the educational process and objectives of schools for the blind.

### Forming Cultural Capital and the Family

The family has an influence on cultural capital transmission. Parents play an essential role in the development of cultural knowledge and life skills of visually-impaired children. These children will develop skills for independent living if their parents encourage them to learn how to help themselves and become more aware of their environment so that they can gather life experiences. From the interviews, it was found that a number of parents had a pessimistic attitude toward their child, viewing him or her as pitiful and incapable of self-care and self-help, thereby requiring parental care in everyday life. These parents also tended to be overprotective, preventing the child from learning to be independent. Consequently, some visually-impaired children were not taught essential life skills, which limited their ability to have access to educational opportunities, as illustrated in the following examples.

When I was young, my parents didn't allow me to do anything. For example, for meals, I just sat, waiting to be served....My parents allowed me to go out only with their confidant. They always kept their eyes on me, and I knew they were nervous (Tar [Pseudonym], 2019).

I asked a blind child's parent, 'Why was your child already 10 years when you first sent him to school?' The parent replied that she was elderly. If she died, her child couldn't live independently. In my opinion, this put the child at a disadvantage. Some parents allowed their child to enter school only at the age of 15 or 18, which was too late. The child was too old to study in the school for the blind, and so I had to transfer him to vocational education (Teacher Chai [Pseudonym], 2019).

However, a number of parents were optimistic about their visually-impaired children. They raised them to develop life skills that resulted in increased sensory perception and social experiences by training their senses, such as hearing, smell, and touch (as well as sight for a person with low vision). Also, the parents, depending on their economic capital and social capital, made an effort to transmit academic knowledge to their children and provide learning development instruments, techniques, and activities. Examples of such activities include experiencing different aspects of the environment, feeling the difference between soil and sand, and calculating through buying and selling. Therefore, the children growing up with perceptive parents would have important life skills and the ability to adapt to the environment when they began studying at a school for the blind.

By helping with household activities, the visually-impaired child is a part of the family. The voice of blind people is heard and recognized by members of the family and community. Nevertheless, the evidence of data collected indicates that transmission of cultural knowledge from parents to their legally blind child is not only related to the possession of capital, but to parents' attitudes toward disabilities. Parents having high economic and cultural capital are able to transfer more cultural capital and provide cultural objects than those of low socioeconomic status. Yet, cultural capital transmission did not take place if the parents had a negative view of disabilities, as can be seen in the examples below.

My father used to take me to the rice field where he taught me how to calculate, for example, one rai equals 1,600 square meters....When he was selling rice, he'd ask me, 'if a kilogram of rice costs 2 baht 25 satang, how much is 2 kilograms?' Then calculation was my responsibility....My father also taught me a kind of basketry in which he wove the figure of a doll from the midrib of a coconut palm leaf. During the *Lam Phi Fa*, a traditional healing ritual of northeast Thailand and Laos, when neighbors hired my father to weave a doll, he told them to hire me because I could do it (Yai [Pseudonym], 2019).



Approximately 20 years ago, a computer cost 50,000 baht, which was very expensive relative to a government officer's income. But my parents bought one for me so that I could find information and do my homework (Nueng [Pseudonym], 2019).

Some parents were wealthy, had many cars, and had their own business, but they never took their visually-impaired child to experience the social world. They often posted photos on Facebook when they took a trip with their able-bodied child. So a teacher in school who was a friend on Facebook chatted with them asking why they had never brought the blind child along on the trip. After that, the teacher was blocked....In this case, we had to call the parents so that they picked their child up from the school at the end of the term. When they arrived the school, they asked the child what she was thinking or feeling (Teacher Chai [Pseudonym], 2019).

The transmission of knowledge was restricted not only by physical difference but also by the parents' economic and cultural capital. Living without sight, blind people perceived the environment and experienced sound, smell, and touch in a way that differed from their parents and other people living with sight. For this reason, a number of the parents decided to send their legally blind child to the school for the blind in order to develop the child's potentials. Moreover, the parents believed that education was an essential tool for greater opportunity in the life of a blind person.

### **Cultivating Cultural Capital in the School for the Blind**

Most of the schools for the blind are boarding schools. The children, who vary in age, class, home town, and level of eyesight, live together and are treated equally by the school staff. When the children enter the school, no matter their age, level of eyesight, or experience, all must

pass the preliminary kindergarten program and follow the school rules and schedule; for example, mobile phones and toys are not allowed. Moreover, the pupils have to learn and practice independent living skills, such as dressing themselves, using the toilet, showering, eating, doing their laundry, etc.

Most blind children learned these essential everyday life skills from their family, but some were not taught them. They had lived with their parent's total assistance, so they had never done anything by themselves. Although some children could carry out their daily routine in the familiar environment of their home, when they lived in the school for the blind, they needed to learn to adapt to new conditions and how to use items that they had never experienced before. Hence, the schools for blind are necessary to create and develop everyday life skills, while at the same time teaching braille. Both independent living skills in everyday and knowing braille are crucial keys for a blind person to upgrade from kindergarten to elementary education, as the comments below illustrate.

In the beginning, some blind children who were four or five years old couldn't chew because they had never eaten solid food. Some were unable to do anything for themselves, so we needed to teach them things like how to use the toilet because the one at school differed from the one in their home (Teacher Ying [Pseudonym], 2019).

On the first day of school, I was very anxious. I was seven years old but I couldn't dress myself because when I lived at home, my mother got my clothes ready for me. Therefore, when I moved into the school for the blind, I learned and practiced what clothes were suitable, how to put on a shirt and button it up, and even do my laundry. My parents remained supportive and helped me when I came back home (Tar [Pseudonym], 2019).

Throughout the entire elementary school, all of the pupils with visual impairment studied the Ministry of Education curriculum.

They also studied and practiced orientation and mobility skills as well as using a white cane. The principal instructional media were braille textbooks, audio media, and bas-reliefs so that the students could sense, understand, imagine, and develop experiences. For blind education, a major obstacle has been insufficient media, because of the high cost of media production, which is beyond the schools' budgets. Moreover, many blind people have no access because most of the media for the blind are imported. Currently, technological advancement facilitates blind life, and the schools provide computers for pupils so that they have increased access to information. Unfortunately, the online data that they can use are in the form of audio files, so they do not learn spelling, and thus their access to online data is limited.

Schools for the blind encourage not only academic skills but also athletics and music. To support athletics, the schools have sports areas so that the students practice goalball, swimming, running, etc. If someone is interested in becoming an athlete, the school will give them complete support in provincial, regional, national, and international competitions. Consequently, it is not surprising to see many trophies at the schools for the blind. To support musicianship, the schools hire music teachers and supply traditional, Thai, and Western musical instruments. The favorite instrument is the guitar. Nevertheless, musical interest and knowledge are transmitted more from older to younger students than by music teachers. The schools give precedence to developing skills so that the students can find knowledge by themselves; moreover, the skills and knowledge they acquire are vital resources for accessing social opportunities as well as living independently.

The skills and knowledge that blind pupils develop and practice in the school are provided so that the pupils are prepared to live in society as well as study in inclusive educational schools. To study at the inclusive educational school, each of the schools for the blind has administrative procedures for transferring students while they are studying in primary school or middle school. There are criteria for selecting the students based on their ability to live independently,

academic knowledge, and social skills. Although the pupils are studying at the inclusive educational school, they are under the supervision of the school for the blind. Housing and educational equipment, as well as uniforms, schoolbags, textbooks, etc., are provided by the school for the blind without regard for the parents' economic capital. Also, at the inclusive educational school, there is a research teacher who regularly assists the visually-impaired students. Furthermore, the schools provide tuition and a tutor every evening and on weekends.

While studying at inclusive schools, the students are able to decide whether to study at the inclusive school near their parents' home or at the school for the blind. Parents with the greatest influence on cultural transmission are those who have sufficient economic and cultural capital to provide devices like computers that facilitate their child's education. The parents are responsible for helping with homework and describing the substance of lessons. From the interviews, it was found that at first, some students wanted to live with their parents and study in the inclusive school. However, after encountering impediments and limitations of instructional media there, they chose to study and stay at the school for the blind.

Other indispensable skills for independent living that are cultivated in the school for the blind are decision-making, negotiation, and communication. This cultural knowledge was transmitted from the experiences of older students in the inclusive school, university, and work situation to younger ones. The older students had experienced discrimination, negative attitudes toward disabilities, and an environment that lacked support for blind people. Communication and negotiation skills are key for students to be able to express what they need for education, work, and independent living in society. These skills have led blind people to break down negative stereotypes of disabled people. Ultimately, the experiences of older students were just pieces of information, while the blind students determined and authorized their own paths in life. Their social capital was a facilitator, especially if they had a family member who could lend emotional and financial support as well social networks providing opportunities for higher

education. Both skills and optimism were cultivated in blind children who then developed self-awareness to develop their potential and empower other disabled people. The following quotes provide some examples.

School objectives are aimed at providing education and developing skills for the blind in order that they can live independently and have a better quality of life....Education is key to increasing employment opportunities and providing for their family (Teacher Son [Pseudonym], (2019).

At the school, seniors advised younger students about going on to higher education, university life, and professional life in order to inspire them. For example, they said, 'we can have a good position when we graduate.' When I had a problem, I often asked them for advice. They recommended what I should do....Teachers and seniors let me know that I had to communicate what I needed. If I remained quiet, other people wouldn't know what I wanted (Yai [Pseudonym], (2019).

### **Possession of Cultural Capital and Social Space Construction**

Schools for the blind are essential for visually-impaired people to accumulate cultural capital so that they can develop and practice the same skills and knowledge as sighted children. The pedagogy in the school for the blind motivates them to be aware of their potentials. Moreover, cultural values are transmitted to them, such as the value of education, higher education attainment, and a respectable profession, while their family provides cultural knowledge in aspects such as taste, language usage, and manners like those of sighted people.

The cultural capital of blind students was transformed into symbolic capital when family members and neighbors had a positive perspective on physical impairment. They had increased recognition and a significant role in the family, and their voices were heard so that their parents allowed them to determine their life course. Obviously,

receiving an educational certificate or credentials was a significant cause for social recognition and becoming a role model of the community because several visually-impaired participants were the first persons in their family and community to graduate. The results indicate that visually-impaired children can be educated similarly to other children. They deserve an education, and education is beneficial to them.

Blind people's occupations have typically been those of busker, massage therapist and lottery seller, all of which are socially devalued. Educated blind people, however, had expanded job opportunities. The cultural and social capital that were formed in educational institutions gave them an opportunity to reach for a valued occupation and position, such as lecturer, teacher, private sector official, etc. Below are some examples.

In my community, when I was back at the school after the end of the semester, neighbors provided an allowance and food for me because I was the first university student of the community and I am blind....I was a role model. They often tell their children that even though I'm blind, I graduated from a renowned university (Game [Pseudonym], 2019).

To decide on what faculty I was interested in, I asked seniors and teachers for advice. My parents were very supportive but I had to explain the advantages....When I was accepted at the university, my relatives gave me a party and provided financial support for the dormitory costs during my first year of university (Tar [Pseudonym], 2019).

During my senior year of high school, I decided to apply to university and selected the faculty I was interested in....To select the university, I searched for one in which facilities were accessible for disabled people, as well as scholarships because my parents couldn't afford to send me to the university. My parents respected my determination and trusted me. However, since I was the first university student in my family, they

couldn't provide any information about university life (Yai [Pseudonym], 2019).

The socially-valued occupations allowed the blind students not only to accumulate economic capital with which they have supported themselves and their family, to own cultural objects, such as a house, computer, smartphone, musical instrument, etc. but also to have symbolic capital. The life goals of a person, including legally blind persons, include attaining a valued career, social position, and social recognition. Even though the social construction of disability is a barrier to reaching an occupation and living in society, the blind utilize their cultural capital, e.g., knowledge, skills, and credentials for capability in getting employment. Moreover, they use their knowledge and capabilities to empower and assist other disabled people as well as people without disabilities.

In educational institutions, people with visual impairment learned the vital importance of social interaction and they also learned social adaptability in order to live in diverse social situations. In the sighted world, facilities and environments are designed for the majority of people who live with sight, resulting in obstacles for the blind. Therefore, when blind people associate with sighted people, they can request assistance regarding the facilities that are inaccessible to them. Social networking is an essential element of the social life of blind persons and refers to strong relationships as a resource that facilitates achievement. For example, when studying at an inclusive school, sighted friends have an important role in obtaining subject matter on behalf of blind students. To buy things, blind persons often need a sighted friend to select clothes and accessories. Also, in educational life, the blind are able to accumulate social experiences so that they could handle disability discrimination and negative attitudes as well as learn and absorb social expectations, e.g., dressing, language usage, demeanor, personality, etc.

The cultural and social capital that the blind accumulate are resources they can utilize to access job opportunities, social positions,

and social space. Cultural and social capital are transformed into economic capital as well as symbolic capital. The possession of social positions and social recognition enable blind persons to construct social space in which they can speak about disabled people and deconstruct disability discourse. Moreover, they can use their knowledge to empower other disabled people.

## Conclusion and Discussion

The cultural capital of persons with visual impairment is accumulated through education and can be transformed into other types of capital. The school for the blind is as essential as the family in being a part of cultural capital development and accumulation. However, educational admission of blind children relies on the economic, cultural, and social capital possessed by their parents, as well as the parents' attitudes regarding disability. The results of this research are consistent with previous studies which indicate that educational attainment of children is related to the economic and cultural capital possessed by their parents. In addition, life and study skills at school, as well as the information and knowledge needed to advance in the education system, are usually transmitted from parents to their children (Reay, 2010; Werner, 2004; Muensit, Thongyou and Lapanun, 2019).

In the case of people with visual impairment, the process of the capital transference from parents to children is different from that of the sighted because physical impairment sometimes obstructs the process of teaching and learning in the family space. For this reason, the school for the blind is a vital resource for the development of indispensable life skills, e.g., independent living, as well as academic, athletic, musical, and communication skills. Moreover, an optimistic attitude toward disability is created in the school environment where a blind person is considered an able person. Cultural knowledge and cultural values, such as educational values, aesthetics, manners, dressing, emotional expression, are transmitted through the school for the blind so that the blind are a part of society. Moreover, the family plays an



essential role in providing emotional and financial support to blind children at school.

This research also found that the cultural capital obtained through education is transformed into other types of capital, thereby strengthening blind people and giving them confidence to negotiate with their parents for their life decisions. Their voices are clear so that their family and their community recognize their potential. The possession of valued occupational and social capital leads the blind to participate in disability empowerment. In other words, the cultural capital which the blind accumulate through education is transformed into economic and symbolic capital, enabling them to overcome negative stereotypes of disability and achieve social recognition.

According to Pierre Bourdieu, education is one of the sources of cultural capital reproduction and inequality (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990; Bourdieu, 1977). The findings of this research are in consistent with Bourdieu's since parents' economic, cultural, and social capital affect the educational admission and dropout of children with visual impairment. Capital possession also has an influence on educational providence. On the other hand, the findings of this research show that cultural capital transmission is associated with not only the capital possession of parents but also with parents' attitude and understanding of disability.

Moreover, the findings illustrate that in the schools for the blind, the capital possessed by parents does not produce inequality in the cultural capital accumulation of blind children. Even though blind children come from a variety of backgrounds, all are treated equally and have equal access to educational facilities in which parents cannot intervene. The schools attempt to provide education and the means to develop independent living skills in order that blind children can live independently, provide for themselves, and achieve social recognition.

Education is the key to blind people's accumulation of cultural capital, which results in social mobility. On the whole, blind people who are educated received more social opportunities and social recognition than those who are not educated. Unfortunately, however, the cultural

capital of the blind still cannot lead to equality with the sighted. People in general are prejudiced against them or consider their disability rather than their capability. Disability discourse is reproduced and rooted in society.

In conclusion, the cultural capital accumulation of blind people through education which can be transformed into other types of capital is a significant resource for accessing essential information and social opportunities, enabling them to have a better quality of life. However, blind people's cultural capital, skills, and ability cannot improve their social mobility to be equivalent to that of sighted people because of the "visual impairment" stereotype. Therefore, for legally blind people, the reproduction of social inequality does not result from education but is connected with the social devaluation of disability. As of now in Thai society, educated blind people are not considered equal to educated sighted people.

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