



# Thailand

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## Principles and general objectives of education

The new Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, promulgated in October 1997, provides challenging guidelines for the future development of education in the country. According to Section 43, every person shall enjoy the equal right to receive basic education for the duration of not less than twelve years; such education shall be of quality and shall be provided free of charge. Every person shall have both the duty and the right to receive education and training (Sections 30 and 69). In providing education, maximal public benefit in national communication resources (Section 40) as well as the conservation and restoration of local wisdom (Section 46) will be taken into account.

The Constitution of 1997 also emphasizes the role of the private sector in providing education at all levels (Section 43). In addition, it ensures the right of local organizations to participate in the provision of education which will facilitate the decentralization of educational management. As far as education is concerned, the guidelines contained in the Constitution will be implemented through the enactment of a national education law, as stated in Section 81.

During the past four decades, as the society and economy have begun to change and become more complex, there have been some changes in the principles and concepts, including policy and objectives, of Thai education. An evolution in principles and concepts of education can clearly be seen in the National Scheme of Education and the National Education Development Plan. In recent years, Thai education has been provided in accordance with the 1992 National Scheme of Education and the Eighth National Education Development Plan (1997-2001) which reflect the principles, concepts as well as policy and objectives of education as presented below.

Under the 1992 National Scheme, education was based on four fundamental principles as follows:

- The flourishing of individual wisdom, thinking, mind and morality is a necessary and essential goal towards creating balanced development between spirituality and material and economic growth.
- Human beings must realize the importance of judicious utilization and conservation of natural resources without causing detrimental effects to the environment.
- Thai language and culture must be promoted in order to optimize the use of modern knowledge relevant to the local context and needs.



- The proper balance between dependency and self-reliance is an essential basis for co-operation at individual, community and national levels for the promotion of sustainable development.

In accordance with the provisions contained in the Constitution of 1997, the Office of the National Education Commission (ONEC, today the Office of the Education Council) mobilized distinguished educators and prominent experts from various agencies to prepare the National Education Bill, which was drafted over a period of about two years. The Bill received the initial endorsement of the Council of Ministers on 23 June 1998 and came into force in August 1999 as the National Education Act B.E. 2542. According to the Act, educational provision shall be based on the following principles: (i) lifelong education for all; (ii) all segments of the society to participate in the provision of education; and (iii) continuous development of the learning process.

In organizing the system, structure, and process of education, the following principles shall be observed: unity in policy and diversity in implementation; decentralization of authority to educational service areas, educational institutions and local administration organizations; setting of educational standards and implementing a system of quality assurance for all levels and all types of education; raising the professional standards of teachers, faculty staff and educational personnel, who shall be developed on a continuous basis; mobilization of resources from different sources for provision of education; partnerships with individuals, families, communities, community organizations, local administration organizations, private persons, private organizations, professional bodies, religious institutions, enterprises, and other social institutions.

The Act states that “Education shall aim at the full development of the Thai people in all aspects: physical and mental health; intellect; knowledge; morality; integrity; and desirable way of life so as to be able to live happily with other people. The learning process shall aim at inculcating sound awareness of politics; democratic system of government under a constitutional monarchy; ability to protect and promote their rights, responsibilities, freedom, respect of the rule of law, equality, and human dignity; pride in Thai identity; ability to protect public and national interests; promotion of religion, art, national culture, sports, local wisdom, Thai wisdom and universal knowledge; inculcating ability to preserve natural resources and the environment; ability to earn a living; self-reliance; creativity; acquiring thirst for knowledge and capability of self-learning on a continuous basis.” (Sections 6 and 7.)

## **Current educational priorities and concerns**

In recent years, Thai education has been operated on the basis of the 1992 National Scheme of Education, a long-term plan, and the Eighth National Education Development Plan (1997-2001), a five-year plan. The Eighth National Education Development Plan contained educational objectives and policies, which were consistent with the National Scheme of Education, to be implemented by operational units during the period of the Plan.



It is recognized that people are the key to development. They are both means and ends of development in the sense that they form a production factor in all sectoral development and are also beneficiaries of development. Education is conceived as a lifelong process relating to all people and all sectors of the society, which will enable human beings to develop their quality of life and make a contribution to enhance national socio-economic development capability. Accordingly, the Eighth National Education Development Plan (1997-2001) was formulated with the following objectives:

- to expand an extensive and equal provision of basic education for all people; and to extend basic education to the secondary education level;
- to improve the equality of education and its relevance to the needs of individuals, communities and the nation, and to enable learners to achieve their full potential for self-development;
- to enhance the role of Thai education in strengthening the national potential for self-reliance, and to contribute to national economic stabilization and the role of the country in the global economy.

Targets for educational development have been organized according to the following major programmes: promotion of Basic Education for All; improvement of education quality; development of the teacher education system and process, and of in-service teacher education; human resource development in the areas of Science and Technology and Social Sciences; research and development; improvement of administration and management; development of higher education; educational resource mobilization; development of an educational information system.

There has been a growing demand for a radical reform in education, seen as indispensable for Thailand to keep up with the pace of change in the world community. There have been strong efforts to push educational reforms by the both public and private sectors—for instance, the Office of the National Education Commission, the Ministry of Education, the former Ministry of University Affairs and the Commission on Thailand's Education in the Era of Globalization. The issues of educational reform have become a priority of Thai education in 1997.

Educational reforms have been initiated by the Office of the National Education Commission (ONEC, today the Office of the Education Council—OEC) since the promulgation of the 1992 National Scheme of Education. An initial reform concerning teacher education and teaching and educational personnel development was followed by the higher education reform and the reform of the teaching and learning system in 1996. The 1992 National Scheme advocated the reform of teacher education, teaching and educational personnel development, with a focus on raising the standard of professionalism of teachers in terms of ethics, as well as academic skills.

The master plan of teacher reform was approved in March 1996 by the Council of Ministers which also authorized the establishment of a special project for implementation of the reform. Accordingly, the ONEC established the Teacher Education Reform Office (TERO) to take responsibility for managing and following-



up of the operations in order that the master plan for the teacher education reform can be actually implemented during the period of the Eighth National Education Development Plan (1997-2001). The operational guidelines of the TERO were based on seven components: co-ordination; overall innovation; networking; contracting; experimentation; project-based and technology-oriented functioning. Consequently, the TERO has introduced five innovative programmes starting from 1997: national teacher awards; academic coupons (a special allowance to take part regularly in in-service training); new-generation teacher education (incentives to encourage quality teacher education programmes offered by government institutes, private organizations and NGOs); school rating (rating of educational quality by subjects and results publicized nationwide); school visits by leading Thai professionals.

The ONEC has also established the Centre for Teaching-Learning Development since 1996 with an aim to introduce educational innovations leading to reform of learning. The Centre is responsible for the development of the teaching-learning process for learners and to develop in learners desirable characteristics according to the objectives of the curricula. The teaching-learning process has to be changed from teacher-centred to child-centred. In 1997, the Centre launched a project in order to improve the quality of the teaching-learning process.

Some of the major problems of Thai higher education include: failure to produce manpower to meet the changing needs of the country and inability to create sufficient new knowledge and technology; shortcomings in academic, personnel and financial management as well as the system of appointing administrative personnel in some institutions; shortage of instructors in higher education institutions due to lack of attractive incentives and the very bureaucratic character of the traditional administrative system; and the future trend of an increasing number of upper secondary school students which will cause an immense expansion of higher education institutions.

Consequently, the ONEC formulated the principles and strategies for higher education reform, approved on 27 August 1996 by the Council of Ministers which also authorized the ONEC to prepare the master plan for higher education reform and submit it to the Cabinet for subsequent consideration. This master plan was based on the following principles:

- Unity amid diversity. Higher education should be organized under the same national policies and standards. It should, at the same time, have diversity in internal organization of each institution with an adequate mechanism for academic transfer and networking.
- Balance between quality, efficiency and equality. There must be a balance between quality and efficiency in the management of higher education, taking into account equality of opportunity of people in different areas and status, the equity of education investment and its returns as well as the utilization of resources for the greatest benefit and efficiency.
- System management for elite-mass model. Admission to most public universities is limited based on a selection process, so that Thai higher education provides the elite to be leaders in national development. At the same



time, due to greatly increasing demand, Thai higher education is also education for the masses through the provision of higher education in an open system in order to provide more opportunity and reduce the pressure from a large number of students demanding entry.

- Decentralization of administration and management. The administration and management of higher education should be based on freedom and autonomy. The universities should be responsible for their effective administration and management. However, the quality, standard and efficiency of education should be under control.

The reform of the entire education system in Thailand was recommended in the report of the special non-governmental Commission on Thailand's Education in the Era of Globalization in January 1996. It was felt that successful education reform in Thailand required a new paradigm in which families, religious institutions, business establishments, mass-media enterprises, and non-governmental organizations must be brought into a holistic view of a lifelong educational process. It is an education-for-all and also all-for-education way of thinking.

The new education system can be best characterized as a learning network concept of educational provision. It is a network in which each segment of the society may have its own unique, self-sufficient learning mechanism suitable for each community, yet remaining an integral part of national development perspectives. It is a drastic shift from uniformity and centralization to diversity and self-governance. The reform thus requires two major strategic components: the reform of learning, and the reform of management, both of which are aimed at capitalizing individual and community potentials.

Existing operational approaches have been revised and amended with the view to mitigating or eliminating problems and enhancing the quality of education until educational excellence is achieved in the year 2007. Since December 1995, activities have been conducted in four main areas:

- School reform. Efforts have been stepped up to standardize the quality of education in all levels and types of schools and educational institutions. Educational coverage has been expanded.
- Teacher reform. Training and recruitment of teachers have been reformed urgently and comprehensively both in public and private schools. Educational administrators and personnel have been developed continuously.
- Curriculum reform. Curriculum and teaching-learning processes have been reformed on an urgent basis in order to raise educational quality of all types and levels.
- Administrative reform. Through devolution, educational institutions have been empowered to make administrative decisions and to offer appropriate educational services which are as consistent as possible with the local lifestyle and conditions. Provincial organizations have been strengthened to facilitate



devolution while private participation of the family and community have been promoted and supported.

Following the educational reform guidelines, the Ninth Educational, Religious and Cultural Development Plan for 2002-2006 includes the following strategies:

- enhancing the effectiveness and coverage of educational provision, thus increasing lifelong educational opportunities for all Thai citizens;
- promoting educational quality that realizes the potential of Thai people and strengthens Thai society;
- fostering a learning society where Thai people create and disseminate knowledge;
- promoting the spiritual dimension in daily life through religious practices, morality and values;
- introducing the cultural dimension to development that strengthens the family, community and society, and aims to preserve the national identity;
- transforming a conventional management style into a performance-based one with an emphasis on decentralization, strategic planning and information technology;
- creating and enhancing professionalism in educational, religious and cultural personnel;
- establishing a national quality assurance system; and
- setting up a mechanism of partnership and resource mobilization for education provision. (Ministry of Education, 2001).

As mandated by Section 33 of the 1999 National Education Act, a 15-year National Education Plan 2002–2016 was prepared by the OEC in place of the former National Scheme of Education. Authorized for subsequent implementation by the Council of Ministers in June 2002, the National Education Plan focuses on the integration of all aspects of the quality of life. It emphasizes human-centred development and an integrated and holistic scheme of education, religion, art and culture. The Plan will serve as a framework for formulating the development plans pertaining to basic education, vocational education, higher education, and religion, art and culture. It also provides guidelines for formulating operational plans at the levels of educational service areas and educational institutions. The 15-year National Education Plan stipulates three objectives and 11 policy guidelines for implementation as follows:

- *All-round and balanced human development* (Developing all people to have access to learning; Learning reform for the benefit of learners; Inculcating and strengthening morality, integrity, ethics, and desirable values and



characteristics; Manpower development in science and technology for self-reliance and enhanced competitiveness capacity).

- *Building a society of morality, wisdom and learning* (Developing a learning society to create knowledge, cognition, the good behaviour and integrity of the people; Promotion of research and development to increase the knowledge and learning of Thai people and Thai society; Creation, application and dissemination of knowledge and learning).
- *Development of social environment* (Promotion and creation of social and cultural capital limitation; Limitation, decrease and elimination of structural problems for social justice; Development of technologies for education; Systematization of resources and investment for education, religion, art and culture). (OEC, 2004).

The Ministry of Education's Strategic Action Plan 2004 aims to accelerate the educational reform and to clarify the direction of the functioning of the Ministry. The Plan has the following objectives: to strengthen access to Education for All; to establish an efficient system of quality education; and to raise educational standards and enhance Thailand's competitiveness at an international level. Three main strategies have been identified as follows:

- Creating educational opportunities (through realization of equity and increasing access to basic education services, strengthening vocational education, higher education and public lifelong learning).
- Developing educational administration and management, and quality of learning (through learning reform for knowledge-based livelihood; strengthening capacity of teachers, faculty staff and educational personnel; strengthening management system for quality learning; and resources management for education).
- Raising educational standards and increasing national competitiveness (through developing educational standard equal to that enjoyed by developed countries, increasing capacity for research and development, and developing innovations and technologies). (Ministry of Education, 2004).

## Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

The basic guidelines and concepts of education in the country are contained in the new **Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand** (1997).

Private education is regulated by the **Private Schools Act** of 1982. According to the **Primary Education Act** of 1980, primary education is compulsory. It lasts six years and caters to children of the age group 6-12 years.

In accordance with the **National Education Act B.E. 2542** enacted on August 1999, Thai people will have equal right to receive basic education of quality and free of charge for the duration of at least twelve years. The Act represents an



unprecedented and long over-due break from traditional Thai educational norms such as lecturing and rote learning, as it sets the foundation for a more creative, questioning approach to studying. The Act also sets out to decentralize finance and administration, giving individual teachers and institutions more freedom to set curricula and mobilize resources, which in turn will tend to increase accountability and ensure that funds are targeted in the right areas. In order to operationalize the National Education Act, the Office of Educational Reform was established in 2000 for a duration of three years.

According to Section 17 of the Act, compulsory education shall be for nine years, requiring children aged 7 to enrol in basic education institutions until the age of 16 with the exception of those who have already completed grade 9. The **Compulsory Education Act**, which has been effective since 1 January 2003, requires that all children aged 7-16 years be enrolled in basic education institutions except for those who have already completed grade 9.

In October 2002, a twelve-year free basic education scheme covering six years of primary and six years of secondary education was granted to students throughout the country for the first time in history. As of May 2004, free basic education was extended to fourteen years, including the two years of pre-primary schooling.

## **Administration and management of the education system**

The present educational administrative system in Thailand is parallel to all other sectors of public administration characterized by the three-level structure: the central or national level, the provincial level, and the local level. Consequently, the administrative and planning system of education including educational personnel administration follows this structure. At the central level, policies and plans are formulated both at national and ministerial levels. At the provincial level, educational development plans—provincial five-year plans, annual plans and operational plans—are prepared and implemented by the agencies involved. The local authorities are also responsible for the formulation of local education policies and plans as well as the management of education in their locality where various types of education have also been provided by the central government.

The responsibility for educational management in Thailand is under the mandate of the **Office of the Prime Minister**, the **Ministry of Education** (MOE), and the **Ministry of the Interior**. Following the most recent administrative reform (2002), the Ministry of University Affairs and the Office of the National Education Commission have been incorporated into the Ministry of Education. Some public agencies under six other ministries (Defence, Public Health, Transport and Communications, Agriculture and Co-operatives, Justice, and Labour and Social Welfare) also take charge of the management of education in specialized fields or for specific purposes.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for the management of education at all levels from pre-primary education to secondary, post-secondary and tertiary level education. It also provides non-formal education or out-of-school programmes and supervises private schools at all levels. Besides, the Ministry of Education takes charge of all matters relating to religion and culture. Until recent years, the



administration and supervision of higher education in public universities was under the responsibility of the Ministry of University Affairs—now the **Office of the Higher Education Commission**, under the Ministry of Education.

Educational administration and planning at the central or national level can be divided into two sub-levels: national policy and planning level and ministerial or central level. The government organizations responsible for educational policy and planning are the **Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board** (ONESDB), the Office of the National Education Commission (ONEC, today the **Office of the Education Council—OEC**), and the **Budget Bureau**. They are all under the Office of the Prime Minister.

The ONESDB has the responsibility of formulating a national economic and social development plan, appraising ministerial and departmental development plans/projects, as well as monitoring, evaluating and giving recommendations on the annual budget of governmental offices. In other words, it oversees the overall economic and social development of which education is a sector. The OEC is responsible for policy making and planning of education at all levels. Its major task is to consider and propose to the Council of Ministers the National Education Scheme, the Five-year National Education Development Plan, policy guidelines and recommendations for educational development. It serves as an advisory body to the Prime Minister and the Cabinet about all matters of education in the country. It is also responsible for monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of educational development plans of agencies involved, in accordance with the National Education Scheme and the National Education Development Plan as well as the government policies. The Budget Bureau is responsible for allocation of the government budget in accordance with the National Economic and Social Development Plan and government policies. The annual budget is submitted to the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers for preliminary approval before submission to the National Assembly for final approval.

The **Office of the Vocational Education Commission** (OVEC) is the main organization responsible for technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in the country. The Commission embraces administration and management of vocational education at two levels. At the national level, the Commission—jointly with representatives from the private sector as well as concerned agencies—is responsible for formulating long-term planning and other major policies relating to TVET. At the institutional level, 412 colleges under the Commission have been merged into 28 multi-campus vocational institutes aiming at: developing a strong partnership with the private sector, remobilizing resources; developing demand-driven programmes in line with local needs; identifying and strengthening areas of excellence in each institute; and developing multi-disciplinary programmes. Each institute absorbs between 10-15 colleges spanning 2-3 provinces. This reorganization is expected to increase institutional autonomy, accountability, and consistency in meeting educational standards.

The **Office of the Basic Education Commission** (OBEC) is mandated to: propose policies, plans, and standards, and develop curricula for basic education; mobilize resources; develop administration systems; promote and coordinate information networks for teaching and learning; develop educational innovations;



supervise the monitoring, inspection, and evaluation of basic education provision. In 2004, the Commission supervised approximately 33,000 schools all over the country through 175 **Educational Service Areas** (172 ESAs in the 76 provinces and the remaining three areas in Bangkok). Each ESA is responsible for approximately 200 educational institutions in which there are around 300,000-500,000 students.

The recent reform of educational administration and management is based on the following three principles: (i) unity in policy and diversity in implementation; (ii) decentralization of authority to educational service areas, educational institutions and local administration organizations; and (iii) people's participation in educational administration and management at central level as well as in educational service areas and educational institutions.

The Bureau of Local Education Administration under the Department of Local Administration is entrusted with the tasks of administering and managing primary education in the municipalities, whereas the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration is responsible for the management of primary education in Bangkok Metropolitan Areas with financial support from and under the supervision of the **Ministry of the Interior**. Besides, some of its departments are responsible for the management of education in specialized fields. Since the administrative reform of 2002, religious affairs have moved under the supervision of the Office of the Prime Minister, and culture under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture.

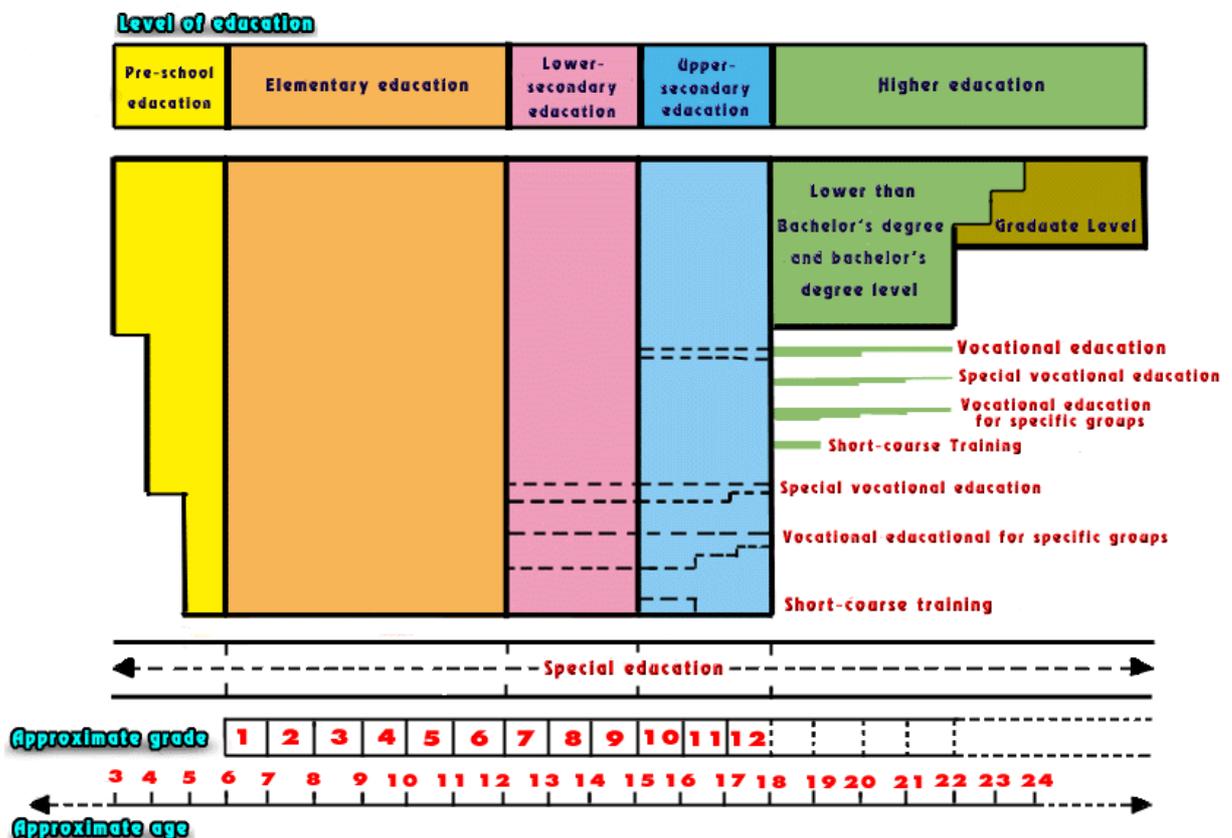
The **Teachers Civil Service Commission** takes charge of the issuance and amendment of laws, regulations, criteria and procedures concerning teachers. Civil service teachers include those who serve as classroom teachers, administrators or supportive staff. The **University Civil Service Commission** is responsible for personnel administration of civil servants in all public universities, each of which has its own sub-committee for personnel administration.

In accordance with the National Education Act, local administration organizations (e.g. municipalities, provinces, districts) can provide education at any or all levels of education according to their readiness, suitability and the requirement of the local areas. The Ministry of Education is responsible for prescribing the criteria and procedures for assessing the readiness to provide education of the local administration organizations as well as coordinating with them and promoting their capability in provision of education in line with the policies and standards required. Area Committees for Education and Educational Service Area Offices are responsible for the promotion of and collaboration with the local administration organizations in the provision of education in line with policies and educational standards.

The local authorities responsible for the management of education in their own jurisdiction are the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration and the municipalities including Pattaya City, with financial support from, and under the supervision of, the Ministry of the Interior. The **Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment** (ONESQA) is responsible for developing the criteria and methods of external quality assessment of educational institutions under the supervision of local administration organizations as well as submitting the report to local administration organizations.

## Structure and organization of the education system

### Thailand: structure of the education system



### Pre-school education

According to local conditions, there are three types of pre-primary education available for children aged 3-5: pre-school classes, kindergartens and child-care centres. In general terms, private schools offer a three-year kindergarten programme. There are two types of pre-school education available in State schools: two-year kindergarten and one-year pre-school classes attached to primary schools in rural areas. The current trend is to expand the one-year pre-school classes to two-year kindergartens nationwide. Pre-school education is not compulsory.

### Primary education

Primary education is compulsory, lasts six years and caters to children aged 6-12. According to the National Education Act of 1999, formal education is divided into two levels: basic and higher education. Basic education refers to the twelve years of schooling before higher education and since May 2004, it also includes two years of pre-primary education.

## Secondary education

Secondary education is divided into two cycles: lower and upper secondary, each one lasting three years. The upper secondary system is divided into two parallel tracks: general or academic, and vocational (leading to the lower certificate of vocational education).

Formal vocational education at the post-secondary level (vocational colleges) generally lasts two years leading to a diploma. Students may continue their vocational education at the university level (degree level, two-year programme).

Higher education is offered at three major levels: lower than bachelor's degree or diploma, undergraduate, and graduate. The first professional qualification is that of a bachelor's degree which is obtained after four years of higher study. In the fields of architecture, painting, sculpture, graphic arts and pharmacy, five years of higher study are required for a bachelor's degree; medicine, dentistry and veterinary science, require six years of study. In some fields, an associate degree is available after the first three years of a bachelor's course. The professional first degree in medicine, veterinary science and dentistry is that of doctor. In some of these professions, additional post-degree study is required before professional qualifications allowing the candidate to practice in his or her field are awarded. Advanced studies of at least one but generally two years, combined with a thesis, lead to the award of a master's degree. A doctoral degree is awarded in some fields and requires an additional three years of study following a master's degree. An advanced diploma or certificate may be obtained after one or two years of coursework. It is intended for students who already possess a degree or professional qualification.

According to the National Education Act of 1999, higher education is now divided into two levels: lower-than degree level or diploma level (two-year courses mainly related to vocational and teacher education offered by colleges and institutes under the Ministry of Education); and degree level. Degree level programmes take two years of study for students who have already completed diploma courses, and four to six years for those students who have completed upper secondary education or equivalent courses. The first professional qualification is a Bachelor degree. Most bachelor's degrees take four years of study, however some fields such as medicine, dentistry and veterinary science, take six years.

The average duration of the school year at the primary and secondary levels is forty weeks.

## The financing of education

In Thailand, the fiscal year begins on 1 October and ends on 30 September of the following year. The sources of educational finance can be classified in five categories: central government budget, local funding, non-governmental budget, foreign loans and technical assistance, and provision of education by the private sector.

Government funding has been the main source of financial resources for educational development. On the average, during the period 1987-97, the total



government spending on education equalled 3.16% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or 18.64% of the total expenditure.

In 1997, the government budget for education amounted to 214,297 million *baht*, representing 22% of the total public expenditure and 4.1% of GDP. In 1998, due to the impact of the economic crisis, the total government budget for education decreased to 201,707 million *baht* or about 3.5% of GDP; however, it represented 25.2% of the total expenditure. The budget appropriation for education approved by the Parliament for the fiscal year 1999 was about 209,920 million *baht* or about 25.4% of the total budget. The education sector has received the largest share of the total public expenditure since 1991. In 2002, the share of education represented 4.2% of GDP (4% in 2004) and 22.1% of the national budget (24.4% in 2004).

Since 1987, more than half of the central government budget has been allocated to pre-primary and primary education, declining from 58.8% in 1987 to 50.4% in 1997 (44.5% in 2003). The shares of higher education and non-formal education have risen substantially between 1987 and 1997 (15.4% and 2.8% respectively in 1997) while the shares of secondary education, vocational education and teacher education have not changed markedly (16.5%, 6.7% and 3.2% respectively).

The local administrative authorities have allocated their own budgets to finance local education. Besides, the central government has also provided an educational budget to subsidize the provision of education by the local authorities. As for the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA), the total educational budget has increased from 1,875.6 million *baht* in 1991 to 4,053.8 million *baht* in 1997. It should be noted that this budget is subsidized by the central government which is the major source of educational expenditure of BMA. From 1991 to 1997, the share of central government subsidies has been fluctuating between 73.7 and 77.0%. In 1997, the share of the local budget for education amounts to 932.8 million *baht* or about 23% of the total educational budget. The BMA has allocated only a small portion from its own budget for education. Although the budget expenditure of BMA increased from 527.1 to 810.6 million *baht* from 1992 to 1996, the share of educational expenditure in the total BMA's expenditure on the contrary decreased from 5.1% in 1992 to 4% in 1996, and the education sector had the smallest share in the total BMA budget expenditure. Regarding the Department of Education of BMA, the major source of educational expenditure comes from the central government subsidies. From 1991 to 1997 the share of central government subsidies fluctuated between 73.7 and 77%.

With respect to local funding of the municipalities, the major source of educational expenditure also comes from central government subsidies. The central government subsidies for local education of the municipalities have remarkably increased from 2,693.7 million *baht* in 1994 to 4,153 million in 1997. The largest proportion of the central government subsidies for local education of all municipalities has been allocated for primary education programmes. As regards the distribution of local expenditure for education, the municipalities have provided a much smaller percentage of local educational expenditure than the central government due to the small sums of their own revenue collected.



Another source of income for education comes from tuition fees paid by students' families. They become the revenue of educational institutions which can be used to supplement the government budget revenue. However, there is a considerable difference between tuition fees of public and private schools, and among various levels and types of education in public schools. It is observed that tuition fees for public university students account for only 2.6% of the total operating cost per capita, while those for public lower and upper secondary school students are 3.9 and 6.8% of the total cost per capita. Public university students, thus, pay relatively less for their education than students at other levels. As a result, tuition fees, especially for higher education, should be increased to reflect the true cost of education. As there has been rapid expansion of education in spite of scarce resources, particularly at secondary and higher levels, the student loan programme has been initiated since 1996 to provide educational opportunities for students from low-income families to study at secondary and undergraduate levels.

Foreign loans for educational development in Thailand have come from the World Bank, International Development Association (IDA), Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Overseas Economic Co-operative Fund (OECF). Technical assistance has been in various forms, for example, services of experts and volunteers, scholarships, equipment and grants. However, the amount of foreign borrowing for educational development has began to decrease as the government imposed restrictions on public external borrowing. Technical assistance from abroad has also gradually decreased.

## The educational process

### Pre-primary education

Pre-school education is now considered to be an essential first step towards basic education for every child. The government's policy on pre-school education has been revised and there is a definite move to expand and improve the provision of pre-school education in state schools in rural areas on a nationwide scale so that economically disadvantaged children in rural areas will be given better educational opportunities to attend pre-schools. In the draft National Policy and Strategy for ECD, 2006-2008 (under development), it will be proposed to set up the official body for overall coordination of ECD (i.e. National Committee for ECD) composed of representative from government sector, private sector, business sector and specialists.

The Office of Basic Education Commission (OBEC) has prepared the core early childhood curriculum and disseminated it to all Educational Service Area Offices to give to parents, guardians and teachers so as to ensure that they make common effort to quality development of preschool children. The Ministry of Education also organized training workshops for all educational supervisors who will support and promote educational institutes to be technical leaders on early childhood care and development.

Recently, on 30 March 2004, the Child Protection Act of 2003 has been effective and reinforced for the best interest of children. More systems shall be developed to provide appropriate care, protection and enhance development of



children. The Ministry of Interior, through its Department of Local Administration (DOLA), provides support to the Sub-district Administrative Organizations (SAO) to extend opportunities for all preschool children, between the age of 3 to 5, to receive quality ECCD service both in rural and urban settings. It also mobilizes all parties to participate in promoting quality early childhood care and development. The major aims of DOLA are to extend early childhood to get quality ECD services and to promote participation of various parties (including people, family, community, private organization, professional organization and industry) in early childhood development. Its Community Development Department, on the other hand, contributes to enhance local community's capacities to organize quality ECD activities.

At the pre-primary level, the total number of educational institutions increased from 36,384 in 1993 to 43,918 in 1996. The increased number was from both public and private schools. The enrolment ratio increased from 44.1% in 1990 to 90.8% in 1997, but decreased to 86.8% in 1998. Those who still have no access to pre-primary education are the disadvantaged in remote areas, the poor, hill-tribe children, the disabled, children of construction workers and those in deprived areas. With respect to the proportion of boys and girls with access to pre-primary education, it was found that in 1996 the proportion of female students in both public and private schools was slightly less than that of males. The total percentage of girls at this level of education was 48.2%. The proportion of the 3-5 years age group having access to education increased from 94.5% in 1998 to 97% in 2001. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, in 2004 the gross enrolment ratio was estimated at 92%.

Early childhood care and development (ECCD) targets children aged 0-5 years. ECCD programmes with organized learning activities and two or more hours per day include: nursery and day care (public/private, age 0-2) and for above 3 years old children, child development center (most are now transferred to the SAOs), kindergartens (public under OBEC, and private under the Office of Private Education Commission) and preschool classes (public–Ministry of Education, normally attached to public primary schools).

Although most of the under-3-year-old children are cared by their parents and relatives, there are public and private childcare services available for mostly for employed parents. Various childcare providers operate the services; including Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Defence and other private sectors and foundations. The National Institute for Child and Family Development (Ministry of Education) also operates day care for research and development.

Child care and development services for children in the age group 3-5 years are classified in three categories: (i) kindergarten (2 and 3 years); (ii) preschool classes (in normal primary schools, just one year prior to Grade 1); and child development center (receiving children aged 2-5 years). Kindergarten and preschool children classes are mostly organized by the Ministry of Education, as well as some other public and private sectors/foundations. The majority of child development centers are organized by SAOs throughout the country.

In case of child development centers, those directly responsible for taking care of children are called caregivers while those working in kindergarten schools are



teachers. For caregivers the minimum requirement is that they are over 18 years old and have completed the nine years of compulsory education. National standards for childcare centres now require all caregivers to undergo a six-week training course, which is based on a standard core curriculum, either before they are hired or within three months of their employment, provided by any institution approved by Ministry of Education. For kindergarten teachers the minimum requirement is a four-year undergraduate course leading to a bachelor's degree in education or a related course.

The Ministry of Education through OBEC collaborates with the Ministry of Health in implementing a school health care programme which includes pre-school or kindergarten classes. This includes health care education for children and their parents, routine health check-ups, provision of first aid or basic medicines as needed, and attention to the sanitation and hygiene conditions of the school and its surroundings. A school lunch programme is now a permanent feature of public kindergartens. This was the result of an OBEC-led campaign for subsidized school lunches for all primary schools which led to an 11-year period of government funding. OBEC concentrated its efforts on expanding access to kindergartens in rural areas where access and participation rates are lower compared to urban centres. By 2001, OBEC had established a total of 67,200 pre-school classes in 29,410 rural primary schools. These classes serve almost 1.4 million children each year. Public school kindergartens are much more affordable and accessible to most families because the kindergarten is supported through several financing sources led by the government. The provision of public funds has provided the centres with stability and fuels continuing progress for the kindergarten programme.

The curricula for ECCD programs are separately developed by each agency in accordance with the principles and guidelines stated in the National Scheme of Education, considered as a document of long-term educational strategies. Normally, the provision of learning experience mainly emphasizes on physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development through everyday activities. For example, the Department of Curriculum and Instruction Development has developed and issued a Curriculum and Guideline for Pre-Primary Education in 1997 for the age groups 0-3 and 3-5 years to be beneficial to both executives and practitioners for experience and classroom setting.

The goals, functions and standards for childcare centres are now clearly defined and disseminated in a generally systematic way. Childcare centres and nurseries are expected to provide the following services: 1) food and nutrition; 2) health (growth monitoring, first aid and immediate treatment for sick children in cases of emergency; monitoring and advice for parents regarding e.g. immunization); 3) physical care and attention to personal hygiene (hand-washing, bathing, dressing-up, ensuring adequate rest e.g. afternoon nap); and 4) support for holistic child development (love and care; space, toys and opportunities for physical movement; development of senses through exploration of their environment; a variety of learning experiences that allow for individual choices driven by their own interests; opportunities to observe, investigate, problem solve, invent, explore different media, express themselves, interact fully with peers and adults and learn social skills and acquire self-discipline).



All public and many private kindergartens implement the Curriculum for Pre-Primary Education for 3- to 5-year-olds developed by the Ministry of Education. The 2003 curriculum for pre-primary education organized for children aged 3-5 years focus on preparing them in terms of physical, intellectual, emotional/mental and social development domain. Curricula at the pre-primary level are organized into teaching units which are to orient children's daily activities, and to effectively achieve this the Office of Education Council and OBEC acknowledge the importance of adequate training for teachers, childcare givers and administrators. Implementation of the curriculum varies widely between urban and rural centres, largely as the former tend to have more highly-educated and better-trained staff, greater financial and material resources, and a higher level of active parental involvement and support, as they are often in a better position to contribute time and material resources.

In Bangkok and other large cities, where there are more private kindergartens that cater to middle- and upper-income families who can afford to pay the tuition and other fees, children are usually enrolled for three years (starting at age 3). These private kindergartens are supervised by the office of the Private Education Commission. Their statistics for the academic year 2000-2001 showed that children in private kindergartens account for 28 per cent (547,411 children) of the total enrolment figure for pre-primary classes. The average class size in private pre-schools is 30 children for each class of 3-year-olds and 31 in each class of 4- and 5-year-olds.

## Primary education

Primary education aims to provide a basis for learners to form desirable character traits encompassing morality, ethics, basic knowledge and ability, and to retain literacy and arithmetic ability.

Public primary schools are mainly organized by the Ministry of Education through various departments. The Office of the National Primary Education Commission (ONPEC) is the major organization responsible for primary education with nearly 80% of total primary school students, and about 12% of total enrolment at this level being in private schools under the supervision of the Office of the Private Education Commission. Under the Ministry of Interior, the Bureau of Local Education Administration and the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration look after municipal schools while the Border Patrol Police organizes primary schools in remote rural areas. A number of demonstration schools are organized in various universities and Rajabhat Institutes. Besides, special schools for the disabled are organized by the Ministry of Education and welfare schools are run by the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare for socially and culturally disadvantaged children.

School curricula have often been modified and revised in order to be responsive to the changing socio-economic conditions as well as advanced technologies. The development of primary and secondary school curricula is mainly under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education through the Department of Curriculum and Instruction Development. The primary school curriculum was revised in 1990 and was first implemented in 1991 (Grade I) and fully went into effect in all grades of primary schools in 1996.

The six-year primary school curriculum does not subdivide subjects into fragmented courses, but it is made up of five learning areas (i.e.: basic skills; life experiences; character development; work-oriented experiences; and special experiences) as showed below:

**Primary education: yearly time allocation to each group of subjects**

Group of subjects	Grades I–II		Grades III–IV		Grades V–VI	
	%	Periods/year	%	Periods/year	%	Periods/year
1. Basic skills group providing tool subjects (Thai language and mathematics)	50	1,500	35	1,050	25	750
2. Life experiences (dealing with the process of solving social and daily life problems with an emphasis on scientific process skills for better living. Social studies and science are the main components)	15	450	20	600	25	750
3. Character development (learning activities designed to develop desirable habits, values, attitudes and behaviour)	25	750	25	750	20	600
4. Work-oriented experiences (practical skills and experiences for career preparation)	10	300	20	600	30	900
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>3,000</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>3,000</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>3,000</b>
5. Special experiences (activities based on learners' interests; Grades V and VI only. Most schools offer English as a special experience subject)	–	–	–	–	–	600

Note: Each teaching period is a class of 20 minutes; one school hour consists of three periods.

In accordance with the 1999 National Education Act, the Basic Education Commission prescribes the core curriculum for basic education while educational institutions are responsible for prescribing curricular substance. The basic education curriculum has, therefore, been prepared at two levels, national and institutional.

At the national level, the Curriculum Framework for Basic Education has been prescribed by the Ministry of Education with three components: (i) the curricular framework specifying its objectives, standards, as well as assessment and evaluation



methods of teaching and learning; (ii) the framework for the national core curriculum to be organized consistently through four three-year key stages; and (iii) the framework for local curriculum providing schools with guidelines for adaptation of learning contents appropriate to their localities. The teaching subjects are classified into eight groups, namely: Thai language; mathematics; science; social studies; religion and culture; health and physical education; art, work education and technology; and foreign languages. The Basic Education Curriculum has been approved by the Committee for the Reform of Curriculum and Learning Process following several meetings held for comments and suggestions from all agencies concerned and target groups including the parents network, students and the public. The reformed curriculum is scheduled to be introduced in the academic year 2002, starting with the first year of each key stage and the second and the third in the following years. Guidebooks for introducing the new curriculum have been prepared to provide the details of curriculum contents as well as for the organization of learning activities, evaluation, the production of learning media, etc.

At the institutional level, educational institutions have been encouraged to develop the local curriculum. For example, pilot projects on the preparation of local curriculum have been undertaken by several schools and training packages were prepared for teachers. In preparing the school curriculum, each school is required to establish a School Curriculum Committee which is composed of teachers, administrators, scholars, and curriculum experts in each locality or in educational institutions. The responsibilities of the Committee are the planning, supporting, monitoring, evaluation and development of the school curriculum. Workshops were also organized for teachers to make an analysis of the school curriculum and prepare their teaching plans and teaching media as well as measurement and evaluation. Preparation has been made for 152 pilot schools nation-wide to implement the new Basic Education Curriculum.

There are different methods of assessment at different levels. At the primary level, there are two methods. The examination method is administered at the end of Grades II, IV and VI. But between Grades I and II, III and IV, and V and VI, there are no screening examinations. Teachers assess their pupils by keeping the records of their performance according to a set of behavioural objectives. At the end of Grade VI, the district authority sets an examination for all primary schools under its jurisdiction.

The number of primary schools, both public and private, decreased from 34,210 in 1993 to 34,070 in 1996 due to the decrease in this age group as a result of the reduced population growth rate.

The majority of the population in the age group 6-11 years has access to primary education. Public primary schools are situated in nearly all sub-districts, including rural remote areas, and border areas where primary education is provided by the Ministry of Interior and the Department of Non-Formal Education. The total enrolment decreased from about 6.9 million in 1990 to 5.95 million in 1999, mainly as a result of the reduced birth rate and dropping-out of students migrating with their parents. The ratio of students completing primary education who proceed to lower secondary level remarkably increased from 53.7% of the total graduates in 1990 to 90.2% in 1996 (92.5% in 2003), due to the efforts to extend basic education from six



to nine years to cover lower secondary education. Classes at lower secondary education level are also offered in public primary schools in nearly all sub-districts. However, there are still a number of the disadvantaged, such as primary school graduates in remote rural areas and children of poor families, who have no access to secondary education. In 1995, transition rates of students in four southern provinces were still low in spite of their high level of income and development. This was mainly due to religious beliefs and irrelevancy in the provision of education to local needs.

The gross enrolment rates (GER) in primary education have been higher than 100% since 1998 as a result of repetition rates as well as the underage and over-age population of pupils; the GER was estimated at 103.7% in 2001 and 104.4% in 2003. In 2000, the retention rate in primary education was estimated at 88.8% (89.5% in 2003). The number of pupils per classroom remained nearly the same from 1988 to 1993 with about 25 pupils per classroom. In 2003, the pupil/teacher ratio was 19:1.

## Secondary education

Lower secondary education aims to promote learners' knowledge, ability and skills beyond the primary level; to enable them to identify their needs and interests and be aware of their aptitude both in general and vocational education; and to develop their ability for work and occupational practices relevant to their age. Upper secondary education aims to enable learners to progress according to their aptitude and interests and acquire the basis either for continuing to higher education or for working and pursuing a career suitable to their aptitude both as entrepreneurs and paid workers; to promote the morality, ethics, and social skills necessary for working, pursuing a career and leading peaceful, social lives.

Secondary education in the general stream can be found in four types of schools: those teaching from pre-primary or primary to upper secondary levels; those teaching from secondary Forms I-VI (lower-upper secondary levels); those offering only Forms I-III; and those offering only upper secondary education. Besides, classes at secondary education level are also offered in some primary schools of the former Office of the National Primary Education Commission, the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, and the municipalities.

Education at lower secondary level is mainly provided by the Department of General Education, the Office of the National Primary Education Commission and private schools under the supervision of the Office of the Private Education Commission with about 72%, 20% and 6% of the total enrolment at this level in 1996 respectively. There are also demonstration schools of various universities and Rajabhat Institutes (teachers' colleges) which are outside the control of the Ministry of Education, but they follow the national standard curriculum. Primary schools under the former Office of the National Primary Education Commission, Ministry of Education and Ministry of the Interior have offered lower secondary classes in accordance with the government policy on the expansion of educational opportunities in lower secondary education. Besides, special education and welfare schools also provide lower secondary education for the disabled and the disadvantaged.

The upper secondary schooling system is divided into two parallel tracks: general or academic schools teaching the general/academic curriculum, and



vocational schools following the vocational track. Public upper secondary education in general or the academic stream is under the responsibility of the Department of General Education with about 94% of the total number of students; the other students are in private schools and demonstration schools of the Rajabhat Institutes and universities. Special and welfare education is also provided in general upper secondary schools. Public vocational education is under the supervision of the Office of the Vocational Education Commission. Nearly 50% of students are in public vocational colleges and 45% are in private vocational colleges. In addition, upper secondary education is also provided in both general and vocational streams by other ministries.

In general, vocational education is provided through formal programme, the dual-vocational training (DVT) programme, and the credit accumulative programme for adults. For the formal programme, students learn theoretical and practical subjects in schools and spend a semester in the workplace. The DVT programme is offered at certificate or upper secondary level as well as diploma or post-secondary level. The DVT curriculum and assessment system has been organized in close collaboration with enterprises; and students in this programme will spend part of their time studying theories in schools and the rest of the time participating in hands-on training in enterprises. Depended upon the contract between institutions and the enterprises, students in this programme can spend one or two days studying in schools and the rest of the week in enterprises. They can also spend the whole week, month, or semester in enterprises in order to ensure continuation and quality of training. In 2003-2004 academic years, there were 43,800 DVT students, or 7% out of the total number of vocational education students in 51 programmes and 8,900 companies.

Secondary education has become more diversified and comprehensive since the curriculum reform and change of the school system in 1977/78. The Ministry of Education initiated a drastic change of the upper secondary school curriculum in 1975. The credit or unit system was introduced, whereby course-work could be given credit and accomplished in one semester. Such a credit system was intended to give more flexibility and efficiency to learning. It could promote more freedom of choice, and did away with an annual repetition of the grade. Another drastic change was the abolition of the terminal grade examination centrally administered by the Ministry of Education. Every school would evaluate its own students, and in order to promote a standard of testing, schools were clustered into groups, for close collaboration on testing. These initial changes led to another subsequent change in 1978, whereby the curriculum became more diversified, and partially vocationalized. The new curriculum at the lower secondary level was launched in 1978, and the upper secondary in 1981.

The lower secondary curriculum of 1978 and the upper secondary curriculum of 1984 were revised in 1990 and were launched simultaneously in secondary school Form I and Form IV in 1991. The revised curricula fully went into effect in 1993.

The structure of lower and upper secondary school curricula includes four components as follows:

- Core subjects. Basic subjects that correspond to life and society in general and must be taken by all students. All of these subjects are prepared by the



Department of Curriculum and Instruction Development, Ministry of Education.

- Prescribed elective subjects. Basic subjects which are different according to local conditions and needs. The local authorities are given an opportunity to choose the subjects offered according to the number of credits, or the local authorities can prepare the subjects offered by themselves in addition to those prescribed by the Department of Curriculum and Instruction Development.
- Free elective subjects. Subjects that are open for learners to choose according to their interests, aptitudes and needs. Students can choose either the subjects prepared by the Department of Curriculum and Instruction Development or those created by the local authorities.
- Activities. All schools are required to organize three types of activities for learners: those organized in accordance with the regulations of the Ministry of Education; guidance, remedial teaching or academic development activities; and independent activities of learners.

### Lower secondary education: weekly lesson timetable

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade		
	VII	VIII	IX
<u>Core compulsory subjects:</u>			
Thai language	4	4	4
Sciences	3	3	3
Mathematics	3	3	–
Social studies	2	2	2
Health and physical education	1	1	1
Art education	1	1	1
Sub-total	14	14	11
<u>Prescribed elective subjects:</u>			
Social studies	2	2	2
Health and physical education	2	2	2
Work-oriented education	2	2	2
Sub-total	6	6	6
<u>Free elective subjects (to be selected from: Thai language, foreign languages, sciences, mathematics, social studies, health and physical education, art education, and vocational education)</u>			
	10	10	13
<b>Total weekly periods</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>
<u>Non-credit activities:</u>			
Boy scout, girl scout, Red Cross youth	1	1	1
Extra-curricular activities	1	1	1
Guidance and remedial teaching or academic development activities	1	1	1
Independent activities	2	2	2
<b>Total periods</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>

*Source:* Adapted from: Kiat Ampa & Chadjane Thaitae, 2000. Each teaching period lasts 50 minutes and at least thirty weekly periods should be allocated to teaching-learning activities. One credit unit is given per semester to any subject requiring two learning periods per week. With regard to free elective subjects, students who are Buddhists are required to choose one Buddhism course in each semester in social studies.

The entrance examination is the admission procedure taken by each agency to select entrants to public secondary schools both at the lower and upper levels. Normally, all public schools organize their entrance examination on the same days except demonstration schools which have their own admission procedures and organize their entrance examination independently. It is envisaged that there will be no entrance examination to secondary schools and admission will be based on the consideration of those living in the school service zone.

With the credit system in operation, schools set an examination for every course taken. Students accumulate grade points, and by the end of the semester, a grade point of 1 is considered as pass. There is no national assessment for the final grades at the secondary level (lower and upper). The school authority sets its own standards. However, for internal control, schools are grouped into clusters for purposes of examination-standard setting. To gain access to institutions of higher learning, students must take an entrance examination in every case, except to the open universities (Ramkhamhaeng and Sukhothai Thammathirat).

The number of public lower secondary schools remarkably increased from 5,661 in 1993 to 7,911 in 1996 (10,490 in 2003) due to the governmental policy to expand educational opportunity at this level. At upper secondary level, the number of both public and private schools increased from 2,048 in 1993 to 2,817 in 1996 with the exception of private schools in the general education stream which decreased from 147 in 1993 to 144 in 1996. Besides, there has been a rapid increase in the number of international schools and colleges both in the Bangkok area and other provinces. In 2003, there were 2,837 upper secondary schools in the general education stream (of which 171 in the private sector) and 889 schools in the vocational education stream (of which 349 in the private sector).

The number of students graduating from lower secondary level who continue their studies at upper secondary level was relatively high in 1996 amounting to 91.1% of the total graduates (92.5% in 2003). The ratio in general upper secondary education increased from 43.5% in 1990 to 49.6% in 1996 while that of the vocational stream was fluctuating between 39% and 46.7% and represented 41.5% in 1996. In 1998, the enrolment ratio at lower secondary level was about 72.1% which is a remarkable increase from 39.8% in 1990. At the upper secondary level, there was a double increase in the enrolment ratio from 1990 to 1997 both in the general and vocational streams. In 1997, the enrolment ratio was 46.8% (compared with 13.4% in 1990), of which 25.3% in the general stream and 21.5% in the vocational stream.

The total number of students in vocational education declined from 585,166 in 1999 to 571,267 students in 2003, of whom 392,246 at the certificate level. (OEC, 2004).

The transition rate of students graduating from upper secondary schools, both general and academic streams, to higher education institutions at diploma and undergraduate levels increased from 66% in 1990 to 81% in 2003. In 1996, female enrolment ratio at lower secondary level was 73.1% while that of males was 70.1%. In upper secondary education, the female enrolment ratio in the general education stream was 26.5% while that of boys was 21.1%. With respect to lower secondary education, the retention rate remained nearly the same at 93.6 and 93.3% in 1994 and 1996 respectively. At the upper secondary education level, the retention rates of students in general and vocational streams have not been much different. In 1996, the rate of general education was 80.97% while that of the vocational stream was 81.04%.

The number of students per classroom at lower secondary and upper secondary school levels was quite high at about 37-39 students per classroom. In 1993, the student/teacher ratio was 21:1 at the lower secondary and 22:1 at the upper secondary



level (21:1 and 21:1 respectively in 2003, while in vocational upper secondary the ratio was 31:1).

In 1997, the average drop-out rate at the secondary level was estimated at 12%. The average drop-out rate in upper secondary education was higher than that at the lower secondary level (near to 20% and less than 10%, respectively).

### Assessing learning achievement nationwide

The 1999 National Education Act has introduced a new system of educational quality assurance to ensure improvement of educational quality and standards at all levels. Major tasks to be accomplished are: (a) setting educational standards; (b) designing and developing a system of internal and external evaluation; (c) setting up the Office of Education Standards and Evaluation; and (d) conducting external evaluation of all educational institutions, of which the first round was expected to be completed by August 2005.

The Office of Education Standards and Evaluation (OESE) was established in November 2000 to develop the criteria and methods of external provision in order to evaluate the quality of educational institutions, taking into account the aims, principles and direction for provision at each level of education as stipulated in the Act. Research and development on internal evaluation at basic education level was conducted for the preparation of guidebooks and an internal evaluation model. Guidelines for internal evaluation of educational institutions have been formulated as follows:

- All educational institutions should conduct internal quality assurance annually.
- The continuous process of internal quality assurance of all educational institutions consists of planning, evaluation and improvement of their performance. Each institution is required to: prepare its own education development plan in line with the objectives and principles of the National Education Act, the National Education Standards as well as the aims/philosophy/charter of the institution; clearly determine the time frame of its implementation; continuously follow-up and evaluate its own performance; and finally use the evaluation results to improve and develop the quality of education.
- At all stages of internal quality assurance, emphasis should be placed on the co-ordination and participation of all parties concerned, i.e. the institution's personnel, the institution board, the parents, as well as the personnel of various agencies and organizations in the communities, educational service areas and the regions.
- Each educational institution is required to complete its internal quality assurance report before the beginning of the following academic year, presenting the evaluation results for educational quality as well as guidelines or programmes for improvement and development of educational quality in



the following year. The report must be submitted to its parent organization, the agencies concerned, the OESE and be made available to the public.

The educational standards for external evaluation at the basic education level have been approved in January 2000. The standards are used as a framework for external evaluation and guidelines for the agencies concerned and all educational institutions to develop the quality of education in the same direction.

In 1999, a national quality assessment of education at upper secondary level (Grade XII) was conducted by the Department of Curriculum and Instruction Development in three aspects: (i) student achievement; (ii) characteristics of learners; and (iii) standards of schools in terms of inputs and processes.

The achievement of upper secondary students throughout the country was rather unfavorable. Among 11 subjects assessed, the highest average score was only 57% in Thai writing. The other two subjects with average scores higher than 50% were Thai language and vocational foundation. These results appeared to be lower than the actual capabilities of the students because they did not concentrate on the test which was not relevant to their graduation. However, the quality of education should be improved in all subjects, particularly those with average scores below 40%, i.e. physics, chemistry, mathematics and English writing.

Inequalities in educational quality existed among different regions in all subjects. The highest average scores in nearly all subjects were found in Bangkok, except those of Thai writing and vocational foundation which were in Education Area 12 (eastern region) and Education Area 9 (north-eastern region), respectively. The minimum average scores in mathematics, chemistry and physics were in Education Area 9 which was one of the poorest areas of the country. In Education Area 2 where a large number of students are Muslims, the minimum average scores were found in Thai language, social studies, and physical-biological science.

Learners were also evaluated in terms of desirable characteristics by using three forms of evaluation instruments. The first one dealt with the hygienic habits of learners: personal hygiene, food and nutrition, exercise, mental health, environmental hygiene, drug prevention and accident prevention. The second was to measure learning to win or lose and to forgive, to be unselfish, to cooperate with others, to abide by regulations and rules, to love and to be united. Thirdly, general characteristics were evaluated in relation to living together, self-development and future occupation. The evaluation results showed that the qualities of 88.6% and 83% of learners were favorable in terms of hygienic habits and sporting spirit, respectively. It was found that the general characteristics of 54.5% of learners were fair, with only 39.9% showing good characteristics.

Finally, in terms of the ability to provide student-centred learning, only 54.9% of schools could meet the requirement. Moreover, less than 50% of schools had teachers with the ability to search for knowledge, think analytically, conduct research and create their own body of knowledge. The situation was even worse in rural areas. (ONEC, 2001).



In 2004 the Office of the Education Council (OEC) published the Report on Evaluation of Learning Reform at Basic Education Level in which desirable qualities of students in Grades 6 and 9 were evaluated in terms of academic achievements, academic qualities and other desirable qualities. The evaluation findings were as follows: (i) Except for social sciences, academic achievements in four other subjects (Thai language, English language, mathematics and science) were not satisfactory; (ii) Evaluation of thinking skills, knowledge-seeking skills, and working skills, such as teamwork, utilization of learning sources and planning, also revealed unsatisfactory results; (iii) Evaluation of learners' qualities of good citizenship, such as discipline, honesty and etiquette, yielded satisfactory results. Overall, desirable qualities in terms of good citizenship were higher than the set criteria (50%) while other desirable qualities were lower than 50 percent. (OEC, 2004).

## Higher education

Higher education is mainly under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education through the Office of the Higher Education Commission (until 2002 it was under the Ministry of University Affairs). In addition, other ministries and agencies also provide education at this level for their specific needs. It is offered at three major levels: lower than bachelor's degree or diploma, undergraduate, and graduate levels.

Educational institutions under the Ministry of Education providing education at diploma and undergraduate levels are Rajabhat Institutes or former teacher colleges, public and private vocational colleges, Rajamangala Institutes of Technology, physical education, dramatic arts and fine arts colleges.

The Rajabhat Institutes began in 1957 to offer a four-year programme leading to a bachelor's degree in education. Since 1984, teacher colleges have diversified their curricula to train manpower in fields other than education. The curricula are classified into three areas: education, science and liberal arts.

Formal vocational education is conducted at three levels: secondary, leading to a certificate equivalent to that given to graduates of general secondary schools; post-secondary, generally for two years, leading to a diploma; and university level, leading to a degree. The Ministry of Education and the Rajamangala Institute of Technology use different curricula to prepare students for the same certificate and diploma. Private vocational schools and colleges may follow either the curriculum of the Ministry or the Rajamangala Institute of Technology curriculum.

The Rajamangala Institute of Technology (RIT) operates as a Department of the Ministry of Education. It administers thirteen faculties in different disciplines, which offer bachelor's degree courses at different campuses located throughout the country. At present, twelve campuses are in the Bangkok area and twenty-two campuses are in other regions. A separate teaching staff offers certificate and diploma courses in varying combinations on the same campuses. In addition, The RIT trains teachers for certificate and diploma programmes, and bachelor's degree programmes have been developed as well since 1981 in response to the needs for higher-level technical manpower.



The Colleges of Physical Education affiliate with the Rajabhat Institutes in providing a two-year course leading to a Bachelor's Degree in Sport Science and Health Science for those holding a Higher Certificate in Physical Education and Health Education. The Colleges of Physical Education also affiliate with the Rajabhat Institutes for a four-year undergraduate course in Public Relations (Sport Communication) and Health Science for those having completed a Certificate in Vocational Education and upper secondary education.

The dramatic arts colleges and the fine arts colleges are run by the Department of Fine Arts. There are twelve dramatic arts colleges; one is in Bangkok and the others are in various regions of the country. There exist also two fine arts colleges, one in Bangkok and another in Supanburi province in the central region. The courses offered are both at secondary and higher education levels. At secondary level, lower dramatic arts certificate, intermediate dramatic arts certificate and intermediate fine arts certificate courses require three years of study. At higher education level, higher certificate programmes in dramatic arts and fine arts require two years of study. The Bangkok Dramatic Arts College also affiliates with the Rajamangala Institute of Technology for a two-year bachelor's degree course for graduates with a Higher Dramatic Arts Certificate.

The major role of the former Ministry of University Affairs (MUA) was to supervise and coordinate public and private higher education institutions, except some specialized professional training which falls under the jurisdiction of other ministries. Its major responsibilities were formulation of educational policy within the framework of the National Education Development Plan and standardization of curricula.

In 1996, there were twenty-two public universities and institutions, of which two were open universities and yet another two were operating independently, with their own autonomous administration system but with government financial support in the form of block grants. Private higher institutions comprised thirteen universities, one institute, and fifteen colleges.

Each public university has its own Act empowering the University Council to function as the governing body. Under the Council is the University President who is responsible for institutional administration. Beneath the President are the various faculties, centres, institutes and interdisciplinary units. The President, as chief administrator, operates universities according to the policy laid down by the University Council which is composed of the Chairman, President, Deans, Directors of Institutes of the university and other qualified persons not salaried by the university. The Deans' Council and the Faculty Senate are two advisory bodies which may also take part in governing the universities.

University curricula are designed by individual departments with approval from the university councils for the undergraduate level, and from the Ministry of Education for the post-graduate level.

The medium of instruction in public higher institutions is Thai, with the exception of some courses which are conducted in English. In private higher institutions, the medium of instruction is also usually Thai. However, some



universities such as the Bangkok University and the University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce offer some courses in English. The Assumption University offers instruction solely in English at both undergraduate and graduate levels.

Grading at all universities is based on the course unit system/semester of credit. In most universities, generally, course evaluation is done by grades and grade points for one credit. Normally, a student must obtain at least a 2.00 cumulative grade point average to graduate with a bachelor's degree. A minimum of 80% regular class attendance is required before the final examination can be taken (except where absence is due to illness or accident). Private universities use the same grading system as in public universities. This is in addition to specific graduation requirements of each institution.

Admission to limited public universities and institutions is dependent on a candidate successfully passing the national university entrance examination after having obtained a secondary school or Grade XII certificate. In addition, some public universities conduct their own entrance examination due to a quota system for some special programmes. Private institutions of higher education, as part of their admission procedure, also conduct their own joint entrance examination alongside the examination administered by the former MUA. Students may sit either or both examinations and success in one will guarantee admittance. This entrance examination, conducted separately by each institution, follows the same procedure as that of the public university entrance examination.

In 1998, the former Ministry of University Affairs (MUA) started to implement a new university entrance system to improve the national examination which has been in operation since 1967. In this new selection and placement process, combined sets of evidence of student's achievement are introduced including: achievement records in secondary school; test scores in main subjects; special test scores in certain professional programmes; interviews; and physical examination. The key principles of the new system are the following:

- higher education institutions determine their own admission criteria in accordance with their own mission;
- students have greater freedom to choose institutions and programmes of their interest;
- less competition in order to reduce unnecessary anxiety among students and parents;
- student achievement is based upon multiple indicators, thus providing a more comprehensive set of evidences concerning student's abilities.

To operate the new university entrance system starting from 1999, the Central Testing Bureau was established within the former MUA to perform the following functions: construction and consistent development of standardized tests in various main subjects; preparation and co-ordination of examination activities; central co-ordination of applications and announcement of examination and placement results.



As mentioned, within the higher education system the first professional qualification is that of a bachelor's degree which is obtained after four years of higher study. In the fields of architecture, painting, sculpture, graphic arts and pharmacy, five years of higher study are required for a bachelor's degree; medicine, dentistry and veterinary science require six years of study. In some fields, an associate degree is available after the first three years of a bachelor's course. The professional, first degree in medicine, veterinary science and dentistry is that of doctor. In some of these professions, additional post-degree study is required before professional qualifications allowing the candidate to practice in his or her field are awarded. Advanced studies of at least one but generally two years, combined with a thesis, lead to the award of a master's degree. A doctoral degree is awarded in some fields and requires an additional three years of study following a master's degree. An advanced diploma or certificate may be obtained after one or two years of coursework. It is intended for students who already possess a degree or professional qualification.

According to the National Education Act of 1999, higher education is divided into two levels: lower-than degree level or diploma level (two-year courses mainly related to vocational and teacher education offered by colleges and institutes under the Ministry of Education); and degree level. Degree level programmes take two years of study for students who have already completed diploma courses, and four to six years for those students who have completed upper secondary education or equivalent courses. The first professional qualification is a Bachelor degree. Most bachelor's degrees take four years of study, however some fields such as medicine, dentistry and veterinary science, programmes take six years.

The total enrolment ratio in higher education was 19.3% in 1997 (age group 18-21 years). In 1995, the larger proportion or about 78.4% of students were in the field of social science and humanities while only about 21.6% were in science and technology.

Increased educational opportunities at diploma and undergraduate levels have been provided by vocational colleges, Rajabhat Institutes and the Rajamangala Institute of Technology. However, as there remain a large number of secondary school graduates, a high percentage of students still have no access to higher education. At the undergraduate level in particular, admission is limited while demands for higher education are increasing every year.

Increased educational opportunities have been provided by the former MUA through the expansion of university campuses to eleven provinces in 1996, student loan programmes, fair admission to universities for the disadvantaged, establishment of a new university in Chiang Rai Province and the Programme for Outstanding Students from Rural Areas. Thus, the educational opportunities at higher level have been extended to more students of this age group.

At higher education level, there were formerly in Thailand more male than female students. However, the number of female students has increased steadily. In 1995, the proportion of female students in higher education institutions under the former MUA was 51.4% while that of males was 48.6%. But, the number of female students exceeded males only in the fields of social sciences and humanities, particularly in education; indeed, there were fewer females than males in the fields of



science and technology. It is noteworthy that, at postgraduate level (except for the doctoral degree), the proportion of female students in the fields of science and technology was less than that of male students, while that in the fields of social sciences and humanities the reverse was true.

Enrolment in higher education institutions was estimated at 1,928,608 students in 2003. (OEC, 2004). According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the gross enrolment ratio at the tertiary level was estimated at 41% in 2004 (provisional data).

## Special education

Special education aims to enable learners who are physically, mentally, psychologically and emotionally disabled to undertake learning suitable for their condition and capability. It enables talented learners to develop their aptitude to the fullest potential. Special education can be provided in special institutes or in general educational institutions from pre-school to higher education levels.

The necessity of organizing special education for disabled or disadvantaged children is recognized in the National Education Scheme of 1977. In the 1992 National Scheme, it also includes education for talented learners.

The Department of General Education runs its own special schools for the deaf, blind, mentally retarded, physically disabled and multiple handicapped, and co-operates with private foundations and state hospitals in providing personnel, equipment and technical assistance to their special schools or programmes for blind, hard-of-hearing and slow learners who may attend classes in regular schools. In 1996, there were 41 special schools: 20 for hard-of-hearing learners, two for the blind and 19 for the disabled. In the same year, 7,014 students were enrolled in special education.

In-service training in the use of teachers' manuals and teaching materials is regularly provided to special education teachers. Special education as a major subject is also offered in many Rajabhat Institutes (teacher colleges, now upgraded to the status of universities) and universities.

Since the promulgation of the 1999 National Education Act, more attention has been given to children with special educational needs. So far, the provision of education for the disabled and the disadvantaged has expanded at a steady pace. Greater efforts have also been given to the development of education for the gifted, for example, the National Centre for the Promotion of the Gifted was established. The number of disabled students with access to basic education provided by the OBEC rose from 151,919 in 2002 to 157,113 in 2003. The statistics indicated that, among the disabled groups, more males had access to education than females. (OEC, 2004).



## Private education

At present most private schools are proprietorial schools, with a few prestigious schools still being denominational. The Office of the Private Education Commission, Ministry of Education, is given authority to supervise and subsidize private schools.

There are two categories of private schools: general education schools which range from kindergartens to primary schools, secondary schools, colleges and universities; and vocational education schools or colleges. The Ministry of Education also classifies private schools into two categories:

- Non-subsidized schools are private schools that are more prosperous and can be self-supporting. The government does not give any subsidy, and consequently does not control the ceiling of the school fees which the school may charge.
- Subsidized schools are private schools which are still dependent on financial support from the government. These schools can be divided into two sub-categories: those receiving 100% subsidy and those receiving 40% subsidy of the cost per head.

The subsidized schools predominate in the country at present. Those private schools which receive 100% subsidy are usually connected with charity and religious foundations, whereas the 40% subsidized types are proprietorial. Subsidized private schools were set up before 1974. A Cabinet decision excluded any private school set up after 1974 from the benefit of government subsidy. The total annual subsidy which the government grants to private schools has been increasing from 366.7 million *baht* in 1977 to 4,083.8 million in 1998.

Private education used to have a significant role in the provision of pre-primary, lower and upper secondary education, and relieved the government of the burden of educational financial resources. But the share of private students in pre-primary and secondary education considerably decreased while the share of higher education students (diploma in vocational education and bachelor's degree) has substantially increased. A reduction in the role of private education has been due to the control of tuition fees, and the expansion of public schools in both urban and rural areas.

Since 1979, the Ministry of University Affairs has been the coordinating unit between the government and private higher institutions. The Office of the Permanent Secretary serves as secretariat to the Private University Committee which formulates policy. Each private institution has its own council which is the administrative body responsible for the general functioning of the institution as well as for organizing its internal administrative structure. Private higher institutions have formed the Association of Private Higher Education Institutions of Thailand. This organization seeks to create greater co-operation between individual institutions as well as between its members and the government.



The rapid expansion of private higher education under the MUA is due to an increase in the social demand for this level of education while public higher educational institutions can absorb only a small number of students. However, the only financial resources of private higher institutions come from tuition fees which are much higher than those of public institutions. It is thus essential for the government to provide additional support for private institutions to promote the role of the private sector in educational provision and to relieve government of the burden of educational financial resources.

## **Means of instruction, equipment and infrastructure**

Educational materials such as textbooks, teachers' guides, supplementary readings, and various teaching and learning materials for primary and secondary levels are developed by the Book Development Centre in accordance with the curriculum. In addition, teaching and learning materials produced by private publishers must be submitted to the Centre before obtaining approval from the Ministry of Education.

As technology is a crucial means of improving the quality of teaching and learning, its role has been emphasized in the 1999 National Education Act. Major activities to be implemented are concerned with the production and refinement of educational media; development of the capabilities of learners and educational personnel in using technologies for education; research and development on the production and refinement of technologies for education; and the establishment of a Fund and a central unit for the development of technologies for education. The National Education Network Project was approved on 18 September 2001. It aims to distribute information technology equitably to all educational institutions and allow joint utilization of educational information resources, with cooperation from the Telephone Organization of Thailand and the Communications Authority of Thailand. Guidelines and targets have been set with regard to two aspects: computers and equipment used for teaching and learning and those used for administration, which will be distributed in response to the needs of educational institutions and the working systems of each agency.

The Ministry of Education has developed the National ICT for Education Master Plan for 2004-2006 as guidelines for the introduction of ICT to education. There are four main strategies under the plan, namely: development of learning quality through application of ICT; development of educational administration and management as well as education provision through application of ICT; training and development of ICT-related personnel; and distribution of ICT infrastructure for education. The total budget allocated to the plan is around US\$600 million.

The ratio of computer per students at basic education level is quite low. As stated in the National ICT for Education Master Plan, the ratios of computers per head of students in primary schools, secondary schools and vocational education, are 1:120, 1:54 and 1:23 respectively. According to an OEC survey it was found that the number of computers in private schools was higher than that in state schools and access to the Internet of secondary schools is highest (89.7%) in Bangkok and lowest (24.1%) in the Northeast. Overall, it was estimated that the number of educational institutions that are able to access the Internet has risen from 8,648 in 2001 to 14,157 in 2002.



In 2002, the Ministry of Education implemented several projects regarding the development of materials and other technologies for education to be used at the level of basic education. Among these were (1) a project on development of teaching materials and other technologies for education for 8 groups of subjects as based on the 2002 Core Curriculum for Basic Education; and (2) a project on assessment and evaluation of selected materials and other technologies for education produced by the private sector. Approximately 300 electronic books and 1,500 websites have been developed and are being used as learning sources. Among these, educational institutions under the sponsorship of the SchoolNet project have developed 700 websites.

Learning environments are also the concern of the recently established Office of Knowledge Management and Development. This Office is responsible for coordinating a huge project worth US\$250 million involving the development of e-libraries and learning centres. It also covers special projects such as Thailand's Knowledge Park, Design Centre, Museum Complex for Learning, and Centre for Gifted and Talented Children. (OEC, 2004).

## **Adult and non-formal education**

Apart from compulsory education, Thailand has organized adult and non-formal education to provide an opportunity for those who have missed formal education to have a second chance for education, to provide continuing education and vocational education as well as informal education services to those outside the formal education system.

In addition to the Bureau of Non-Formal Education, Ministry of Education, there are other government departments and ministries which have been carrying out non-formal education activities. Private voluntary agencies and various foundations have also been involved in the organization of non-formal education. Industrial factories have also organized non-formal education programmes for their employees.

Non-formal education activities can be classified into the following five categories:

- Pre-school education (age group 2-6 years) which takes place in centers established by local communities, and can be family-based or of the private sector and organized by NGOs.
- Education for Literacy, provided to promote literacy for adults aged 14 years and over who are still illiterate. It covers a range of activities and programmes. For example, there is a literacy campaign with volunteer teachers and volunteer village tutors who help to promote the eradication of illiteracy among the adult population. There is also a functional literacy programme targeting illiterate adults. This programme emphasizes the integration of literacy and problem solving skills to improve quality of life. In five southern border provinces, there are activities to promote Thai language usage among Thai Muslims. Furthermore, education services to promote literacy are provided among the hill tribes using non-formal education volunteer teachers.



- General non-formal education provides continuing education programmes for those having no chance to study in the formal system. It covers primary to higher levels and is normally organized in public schools or official premises, factories or organizations. Learners are awarded the same qualifications as those in formal school system. The learning process is organized in three ways: classroom learning, distance learning, and self-learning.
- Vocational non-formal education programmes. These programmes are conducted by the Bureau of Non-Formal Education and other agencies, both government and private, using different courses of training prepared by those agencies. The Bureau of Non-Formal Education accepts credits earned outside as part of the requirement for completion of the certificate of general education as specified in the above category.
- Quality of life improvement activities are provided to the general public by the Ministry of Education and other agencies responsible for education services, welfare and public services with an emphasis on quality of life improvement.

Vocational non-formal education and skills training can be divided as follows:

*Training courses leading to the Vocational Certificate*, designed for primary graduates who have no chance to study at a higher level. The aim is to provide opportunities for training in vocational skills and quality of life promotion to target populations in rural areas, leading to a certificate equivalent to general lower secondary school.

*Short courses in vocational training*, which are provided by both public and private institutions and agencies. Courses are offered from three hours up to one year depending on the content and objectives. Pre-employment training and training to upgrade skills are offered by educational institutions as well as related agencies. Short-course vocational training is designed with self-employment in mind and articulates with formal programmes in order to serve lifelong learning needs.

*Interest group programmes* are organized according to the individual needs and interests of the general public. Those having the same interests can form groups of 5 to 15 persons and receive training up to 30 hours.

*Certificate in Vocational Education*: non-formal activities are provided to lower secondary graduates through distance learning. Both the unemployed and those working in public organizations and private enterprises are targeted. This programme requires at least three years of study, except when there is a recognized transfer of academic performance or experience.

The government launched a nationwide mass literacy campaign in 1983, the second in the nation's history. The campaign began in 18 provinces in 1984 and was gradually expanded to cover the entire country in 1986. The Functional Literacy Programme which has been implemented since 1971 aims at achieving the dual objectives of teaching literacy skills and assisting the learners to cope with problems in their daily lives. The curriculum is divided into three parts: 60% of the content is



region-based, 20% nation-based and 20% locally-based. At present, there are specialized curricula for the southern Muslims, northern hill-tribes, north-eastern, southern and central regions.

Hill tribes who live along the mountain ranges in the northern and western parts of the country are another major group of the illiterate population. In order to extend the educational services to hill-tribe communities which are not served by the primary school system, the Department of Public Welfare and the Bureau of Non-Formal Education jointly organize the Hill Area Education Project. The project, which has been introduced since 1981, aims at providing education services which are responsive to the needs and problems of the hill-tribe communities, and is thus a vehicle conducive to the improvement of quality of life and development.

Apart from the Bureau of Non-Formal Education of the Ministry of Education, other departments and ministries also offer non-formal vocational training, such as the Ministry of Labour through regional institutions and provincial skills training centers under the supervision of the Department of Skills Development.

Private institutions under the supervision of the Office of Private Education Commission which also provide non-formal education can be classified into two categories: schools offering courses following the curricula of the Ministry of Education (adult schools offering general education and vocational schools offering vocational training courses); and schools offering non-formal education curricula approved by the Ministry of Education such as religious schools, tutorial schools, correspondence schools, art schools, etc.

Finally, welfare education is provided for those who are socially and culturally disadvantaged. It is provided for children who are deprived of opportunity to attend compulsory primary classes in regular schools covering a wide range of culturally and socially disadvantaged groups. Welfare education has been gradually expanded since 1985. The former offer of primary level only has been gradually extended to cover lower secondary level in the same school, although certain welfare schools send their graduates to neighbourhood secondary schools. Welfare students are not only provided with free education, but also accommodation, food, clothing, equipment, textbooks and other necessities. At present, there are thirty-six welfare schools, one in Bangkok Metropolis and thirty-five in other regions. Students are given special vocational training relevant to the locality of a particular school for future employment.

The total number of non-formal education students increased from two million in 1992 to 4.5 million in 1996 (around 4 million in 2002, with about 51% of participants in continuing education programmes, particularly in secondary education). The highest increase was that of the Bureau of Non-Formal Education, Ministry of Education, which rose from 1.3 million in 1992 to 3.5 million in 1996.

With regard to informal education which has become increasingly important, various forms of mass media including television, radio, printed media and distance learning media have been utilized in order to enhance dissemination of knowledge and information to the general public. A large number of learning centres have been established to provide informal education to the public in addition to public libraries



and village reading centres. Religious institutions have also been encouraged to play a role as part of the learning network of the people.

According to the Population and Housing Census, in 1995 it was estimated that the percentage of literates in the population was about 93.8%.

## Teaching staff

Teacher education aims to train and develop prospective as well as practicing teachers regarding morality, knowledge, ability and skills in teaching and in motivating learners to learn. Mindful of professionalism and the responsibility of teachers to serve as a role model for learners regarding social behaviour, lifestyle and preservation of the national language and culture, the objective is to develop an inquiring mind and engage teachers in continuous improvement of themselves and their teaching capability, as well as in community development, rehabilitation, conversation and enrichment of local and national environment and culture.

There are two main types of teacher training establishments: teacher colleges (Rajabhat Institutes) and Faculties of Education within universities. Rajabhat Institutes are teacher colleges under the Department of Teacher Education which, since 1995, has changed its name to Office of Rajabhat Institutes Council, in accordance with the new Act of Rajabhat Institutes. There are thirty-one Rajabhat Institutes under the supervision of the Office of Rajabhat Institutes Council, and they play a crucial role in both pre-service and in-service training. They are educational and community research institutes for training teachers and those who will join other professions with the objectives of providing knowledge and higher professional training, conducting research, providing community service, fostering art and culture, training teachers and developing in-service teacher's capabilities. This is carried out in collaboration with schools and colleges.

Rajabhat Institutes offer different programmes of specialization, mainly a two-year course leading to an associate degree and a four-year course leading to a bachelor's degree. There are five specialized areas of education, each being subdivided into various programmes of specialization: pre-elementary education (one programme of specialization); elementary education (one programme of specialization); secondary education (twenty-one programmes of specialization); special education (one programme of specialization); and education techniques (seven programmes of specialization).

Admission is open to regular students who may enrol as full-time students and attend regular classes. Evening and week-end students are normally working adults seeking updated knowledge and skills for their future career advancement. Candidates are selected by means of entrance requirements and examination.

In the framework of the teacher education reform, Rajabhat Institutes have been transformed into Rajabhat Universities (see below).

The Office of Teacher Civil Service Commission (OTCSC) is in charge of the recruitment process of teaching staff to the civil service as follows:



- The recruitment of public school teachers is based on the merit system. There is relatively no discrimination based on sex, religion, ethics, intelligence and economic status. Applicants must possess the general basic qualifications required for a public servant, for instance, be a Thai national and not less than 18 years old. Specific qualifications are required for certain teaching positions. In addition, the applicants for pre-primary, primary, and lower secondary teaching posts must have prior professional training in teaching.
- Recruitment for entering the profession at every educational level is on the basis of competitive examinations, selection by written texts, and selection by assessment.
- Teachers on probation will secure their tenure after six months from the first day of employment. This is subject to an evaluation by a committee consisting of an immediate superior and two senior teachers.

Although civil servants in general and those in the teaching profession in particular are under different systems of personnel administration, their salaries are in practice on the same scales. While the class and structure of positions of civil servants in general have been defined on the basis of the Position Classification (PC), those of teachers have been determined on the basis of the Academic Rank Classification (ARC). This is based on the concept that those in the teaching profession utilize their knowledge, experience and expertise in teaching and thus should be promoted to higher positions with intellectual academic standing. It serves as an incentive for competent teachers to go forward in their career because most teachers can remain longer in the teaching profession and can be promoted to higher positions without having to perform administrative functions.

With regard to the promotion of each teacher's position, a job description has been prepared and specific requirements have been defined for each position. The criteria for promotion are: teaching experience, salary rates, teaching performance, and job performance or academic work output/teaching skills.

The teachers' qualifications in both public and private schools tend to become higher. Teachers with lower than bachelor's degree in public schools decreased from 28.9% in 1990 to 20.7% in 1993 and those in private schools decreased from 49.9 to 42.8%. Teachers with a bachelor's degree in public schools increased from 65.7% in 1990 to 74.7% in 1993 and those in private schools increased from 45.9 to 52.8%. However, teachers with higher than bachelor's degree in both public and private schools were still less than 5% in 1993. At higher education level, the qualifications of academic staff in institutions have become higher. The proportions of academic staff possessing Master's and Doctorate degrees in various types of institutions (except public universities) tended to increase, while those possessing Bachelor's degrees tended to decrease in 1996.

According to the standard criteria, the total workload of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary school teachers is thirty-five hours per week which includes teaching load and other tasks. The result of the Research on the Efficiency of Teacher Utilization (ONEC, 1996) revealed that the workload of teachers on the average was below the standard criteria. It was found that teachers spent seventeen to



twenty-one hours per week on teaching, five to eight hours on work supporting teaching, and two to four hours on administration and other services.

The training system for teachers and educational personnel is undergoing a remarkable reform. Initiated by the Office of Educational Reform, a curriculum for the training of new teachers at the bachelor's degree level was developed by the Ministry of Education. According to the new curriculum, four years will be dedicated to coursework while the rest of the time will be devoted to the teaching practice. In order to attract qualified students into the teaching profession, scholarships and job security were also emphasized. A project in which 7,500 scholarships will be provided has been approved by the Council of Ministers. In this regard, selected students, who enrol between the academic years 2004 and 2006, will receive scholarships for five consecutive years and upon graduation, they are required to teach 8 groups of subjects in basic education institutions.

The Office of the Education Council has also introduced a new, effective and sustainable method of in-service teacher training that takes place in educational institutions, namely the school-based training (SBT) for in-service teacher development. In this regard, four pilot projects were launched. It was recently stipulated that in-service teachers will be allowed to teach in educational institutions on the condition that they have a licence for the teaching profession. In requesting a licence, they must have at least a bachelor degree in education. All the in-service teachers currently holding a diploma are thus required to be trained for a bachelor degree in education. Therefore, they have to complete a course which takes about two academic years or four semesters (66 credits). Additionally, in-service teachers holding a bachelor degree in fields other than teaching, are encouraged to be trained for a post-graduate certificate or a master's degree in teaching. (OEC, 2004).

## **Educational research and information**

Most of the research conducted by the Ministry of Education during the period 1987-91 was in the area of economic development (26%), administrative and supportive activities (20%), educational quality (13%), health and nutrition (9%), mobilization of manpower (2.4%), morality enhancement (1.9%) and education equity (1.3%). Regarding the budget allocation for research conducted by the Ministry of Education throughout the same period, the received budget was only about 49% of the requested or about 0.03% of the total budget allocated for the Ministry of Education.

With respect to research promotion and co-ordination activities, the Educational Research and Planning Centre, under the Department of Curriculum and Instruction Development, as the secretariat for the Ministry of Education's Educational, Religious and Cultural Research Committee, was active stipulating research policies, approving research project outlines before presenting them to the Office of the National Research Commission, and conducting follow-up of research projects carried out in each fiscal year. Not much could be done concerning the aspects of co-ordination of research Plans among various agencies and educational institutions, co-operation and assistance between agencies and researchers, promoting dissemination of research results, application of research results, and public relations.



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## Web resources

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Office of the Basic Education Commission: <http://www.obec.go.th/> [In Thai. Last checked: October 2007.]

Office of the Education Council: <http://www.onec.go.th/> [In Thai and English. Last checked: October 2007.]



Office of the Higher Education Commission: <http://www.mua.go.th/> [In Thai and English. Last checked: October 2007.]

Office of the Vocational Education Commission: <http://www.vec.go.th/> [In Thai and English. Last checked: October 2007.]

*For updated links, consult the Web page of the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/links.htm>*