

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

THAILAND

NATIONAL REPORT 2004

**Forty-seventh session of the International
Conference on Education,
Geneva, 8-11 September 2004**

Overview

Education in Thailand has developed from traditional education offered in the temple, the palace and the family between 1220 and 1868 to the foundation of formal education between 1868 and 1932. The era of modernized education for national development began when Thailand became a constitutional monarchy in 1932. During the 1950s, the government became much more concerned with the development of education as a part of national reconstruction and modernization in the post-war period. Since the introduction of the First National Economic and Social Development Plan during 1961 - 1966, education has assumed a full functional role as an instrument for development in line with the National Scheme of

Education and the National Education Development Plan.

The 1997 Constitution marked the beginning of the current development of Thailand's national education. What prompted the change was the economic crisis in the region, which highlighted an urgent need to enhance people's ability to keep up with the rapid changes associated with globalization in order to thrive in a very competitive global arena. Thailand had to seriously consider how to promote and deliver lifelong learning educational services. At the same time, there was a need to ensure greater flexibility in service provision. A system, which would be more flexible in terms of curricula content, modes of delivery and educational management, was needed.

Legal Framework

The current framework for education is based on the 1997 Constitution and the 1999 National Education Act, which provide the basic principles as well as challenging guidelines for the provision and development of the education system. The Constitution greatly increased the rights of Thai citizens to political participation ensuring the right to voice opinion on major topics. Thus, for the first time, Thai people, throughout the country, were invited to participate in discussion contributing to decision-

making on the national education direction. Subsequently, a National Education Plan was drawn up, concentrating on how to address poverty and

find ways to improve the quality of life of Thai people by embracing issues of access, equity and quality in education. Education reform aims to prepare people to pursue promising careers but also provides them with the ability to make rational judgments and choices, and to live in harmony with other members of society.

The new Constitution, promulgated in October 1997, contains several provisions relating directly to education, religion and culture. And charging the State with responsibility for improving education in line with economic and social change. This means that the Government is committed to implementing, reviewing, and revising a continuous program of education reform in order to keep up with the pace of change.

The Constitution also ensures the right of all Thai people to receive a quality, basic education for at least 12 years (*section 43*). It recognizes the right and duty of all

Thai people to receive on-going education and training (*sections 30 and 69*) and importantly stresses the right to academic freedom for all (*section 42*). It protects the rights of children, youth, women, the elderly, the underprivileged and the handicapped to care and education (*sections 53, 55 & 80*). In addition, it ensures the right of local organizations to participate in the provision of education to ensure relevancy at a local level (*section 40*). Moreover, it ensures their right to participate in the management and administration of schools. It points to a need to gain maximum

benefit from national communication resources. It also stresses the need to conserve local wisdom (*section 46*). Finally, it emphasizes the role of the private sector (*section 43*)

In order to meet the above requirements, the first National Education Act was promulgated in August 1999. This Act serves as the fundamental law for the administration and provision of education and training. Amendments were made in 2002 to accommodate changes in the scope of the Ministry's work with regard religion, culture and structure.

<i>Issues Amended</i>	<i>National Education Act 1999</i>	<i>Amendments in 2002</i>
Name	The Ministry of Education, Religion and	The Ministry of Education

	Culture	
Responsibilities	Overseeing all levels of education, religion, art and culture.	Promoting and overseeing all levels and types of education.
Administrative Structure	National Council of Education, Religion and Culture; Commission of Basic Education; Commission of Higher Education	National Council of Education; Commission of Basic Education; Commission of Higher Education; Commission of Vocational Education

For several decades, in addition to education, the Ministry of Education also supervised issues relating to religion and culture and the 1999 Act was drafted in that spirit. However, since the bureaucratic reform of 2002, religious affairs has moved under the supervision of the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Culture, while culture falls under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture.

Education System

Education is classified into three types: formal education, non-formal education and informal education.

1. **Formal Education** specifies the aims, methods, curricula, duration, assessment and evaluation conditional to its completion. It is divided into two levels: basic education and higher

education, with services provided through both public and private bodies.

- ***Basic Education*** covers 2 years of pre-primary, 6 years of primary, 3 years of lower secondary and 3 years of upper secondary education. As

of May 2004, Thailand extended the provision of free basic education from 12 to 14 years, to include 2 years of pre-primary. Educational institutes at this level are more decentralized in terms of administration and management according to the 1999 National Education Act.

- ***Higher Education*** is provided at universities, institutes, colleges (and other

types of specialized institution). It is divided into two levels, namely lower-than degree level and degree level.

- Lower-than degree level or diploma level is mainly offered by colleges and institutes, public and private vocational colleges, as well as colleges of physical education, dramatic arts and fine arts. The majority of courses offered are associated with vocational and teacher education and require two years of study.

- Degree level programs take two years of study for students who have already completed diploma courses, and four to six years of study for those finishing upper secondary education or equivalent courses. The first professional qualification is a Bachelor degree. Most Bachelor degrees take four years of study, however, some fields such as medicine, dentistry and veterinary science, take six years.

Formal education covers both special needs and welfare education and vocational education.

a) Special Needs and Welfare Education

Special needs education

This type of education applies to the hearing impaired, mentally handicapped, visually impaired,

physically impaired or health impaired. It includes children with learning disabilities, autistic children, emotionally or behaviorally disordered children. Other groups of children who fit into this category are particularly gifted or talented children. The teaching and learning of special education is organized in both special schools and inclusive schools. A special curriculum is adopted in special schools while the regular curriculum, which may be adjusted, is adopted in inclusive schools.

Welfare education

Welfare education is provided for those who are socially and/or culturally disadvantaged. Students not only receive their education for free but also accommodation, food, clothing, equipment, textbooks, and other necessities. These

students are given special vocational training relevant to the locality of a particular school in order to facilitate future employment.

b) Vocational Education

This forms part of the general stream of basic education. Career and technology related to education is offered to schoolchildren at both primary and secondary levels to provide them with work experience and assist them in career preparation and the application of technology. Formal technical and vocational education is conducted at three levels:

- Upper-secondary leading to the lower certificate of vocational education
- Post-secondary leading to a diploma or other higher certificate
- University level leading to a degree

c) Special Vocational Education

This includes sports schools providing full scholarships to particularly talented students. It also includes dramatic arts and fine arts colleges offering certificates equivalent to lower and upper secondary education.

d) Education for Ecclesiastics

This is provided to novices and monks in general ecclesiastic schools in various Buddhist temples. These schools offer lower and upper secondary education curricula, equivalent to curricula of the Basic Education Commission. In addition to the general subjects, units related to religious practices are included. For higher level studies, there are two Buddhist universities in Bangkok and various campuses throughout the

country with courses at both undergraduate and graduate level.

e) Specialized Education

At basic and higher education levels, specialized education is provided by ministries, bureaus, departments, state enterprises and other public agencies according to the needs and expertise. Courses are offered for graduates from primary to upper secondary schools, from both general and vocational streams. All responsible units have developed their own curricula for specific education and training, for instance; professional soldiers and police, specific technicians, medical sciences, and specific purposes.

2. Non Formal Education has more flexibility than formal education in determining the aims, modalities, management procedures, duration,

assessment and evaluation conditional to its completion. The contents and curricula can be adjusted to meet the needs of individual groups of learners. There are 5 types of non-formal education in Thailand provided by both public and private agencies and institutes, outside the school system as follows:

a) **Pre-School (2-6 years)** takes place in centers established by local communities, can be family-based or of the private sector and organized by NGOs.

b) **Education for Literacy** is provided to promote literacy for adults aged 14 years and over who are still illiterate. It covers a range of activities and programs. 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 program targeting illiterate adults. This program emphasizes the integration of literacy and problem solving skills to improve quality of life. In 5 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.

c) **General Non-formal Education** provides continuing education programs 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.

d) Vocational Non-formal Education is offered through polytechnics, industrial and community colleges under the supervision of: the Office of the Vocational Education Commission, the Bureau of the Non-Formal Education, the Ministry of Industry, the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, as well as the Ministry of Labor through regional institutions and provincial skills training centers under the supervision of the Department of Skills Development. Non-formal education and skills training can be divided as follows:

- *Training Courses for Vocational Certificate* are designed for primary graduates who

have no chance to study at a higher level. It aims to provide opportunities for training in vocational skills and quality of life promotion to target

populations in rural areas and leads to a certificate equivalent to general lower secondary school.

- *Short Courses in Vocational Training* 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. At present, short course vocational training is

designed with self-employment in mind and articulates with formal programs in order to serve lifelong learning needs.

- *Interest Group Programs* are organized according to the individual needs and interests of the general public. Those having the same interests can form groups of between 5 – 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 program requires at least three years of study, except when there is a recognized transfer of academic performance or experience.

e) **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.

3. Informal Education enables learners to learn by themselves according to their individual

interests, potential, readiness and opportunities available through individuals, society, environment, media, and other sources of knowledge. For example, informal programs may be provided by libraries, museums, science and technology centers, and through mass media such as radio, television, newspapers, and magazines. In addition, Community Learning Networks offer programs at community learning centers, village reading centers, sub-district health offices, sub-district agricultural offices and natural learning sources in each community. The informal learning that takes place through the transmission of local wisdom, using local media, in families, and via cooperative networks should not be ignored either. Furthermore, home school is also encouraged to

involve parents' role in providing basic education according to the 1999 National Education Act. The Government has yet to come up with guidelines and other related documents to support homes and ensure the standards.

Educational Administration and Management

The most recent bureaucratic reform aims to improve the quality of services provided by bureaucratic organizations. In order to achieve this goal, the Ministry of Education undertook a review of roles and duties and began its own program of restructuring. This has led to the

merger of the three agencies formerly responsible for educational services, namely the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of University Affairs, and the

Office of the National Education Commission. These agencies have now been reorganized into a single Ministry of Education. Local administration remains, for the most part, under the supervision of the Ministry of Interior with other ministries also taking charge in specific fields or for specific purposes.

The reform of educational administration and management is based on three main principles. The first principle ensures unity in policy and diversity in implementation. The second principle facilitates the decentralization of authority to educational service areas (ESAs), educational institutions and local administration organizations. The third principle encourages people's participation in educational administration and management at central level as well as in ESAs and institutions.

In Thailand, educational administration and management is conducted by the State, local administration

organizations and the private sector. The Ministry of Education (MOE) is the main organization to be responsible for education in Thailand. According to the amendments of the National Education Act, the Ministry of Education promotes and oversees all levels and types of education. It formulates education policies, plans, and standards and mobilizes the necessary resources to achieve its goals. The Ministry of Education is also responsible for the promotion and coordination of religious affairs, art, culture and sports in relation to education. Finally, the Ministry of Education

monitors and evaluates education provision. Responsibility is divided between five main bodies.

a) The Office of the Permanent Secretary is responsible for managing general administrative works and performing functions which are not directly accountable to any other agencies under the Ministry of Education; coordinating activities within the Ministry; performing other official functions mandated by the law; preparing the Ministry's budget and work plans as well as monitoring, inspection and evaluation of results in the discharge of functions in accordance with the Ministry's policies guidelines, and work plans; performing functions relating to the National Education Act.

b) The Office of the Education Council (OEC) is in charge of proposing the National Scheme of

Education which integrates religion, art, culture, and sports into all levels of education; proposing educational policies, plans and standards for implementation in line with the National Scheme of Education; undertaking, coordinating and promoting research for the development of education, establishing learning networks, and promoting local wisdom; developing national information networks for educational policy and planning; proposing policies and plans for the mobilization of resources; evaluation of education provision as stipulated in the National Scheme of Education; and providing opinion and advice on relevant laws and ministerial regulations as stipulated in the National Education Act.

c) **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 innovation; supervise the monitoring, inspection, and evaluation of basic education provision; and conduct secretarial works of the Commission. Currently, the Commission supervises approximately 33,000 schools all over the country through 175 educational service areas.

d) **The Commission on Higher Education (CHE)** is responsible for proposing policies, plans and standards for higher education; mobilizing resources; ensuring education quality and standards in all public and private higher education institutes;

encouraging more participation of private sector to take part in higher education; coordinating and promoting development of human resources and building capacity of all students; proposing the establishment, dissolution, amalgamation, discontinuity and

improvement of higher education institutes and community colleges; monitoring, inspection and evaluation of education provision of higher education; and conducting secretarial works of the Commission.

e) The Office of Vocational Education Commission (OVEC) is the main organization responsible for technical and vocational training in Thailand. The Commission embraces administration

and management of vocational education at 2 levels:

- National Level – comprised of representatives from the private sector as well as concerned agencies, is responsible for formulating long-term planning and other major policies relating to technical and vocational education and training in Thailand.
- Institutional Level – 412 colleges under the Commission are merged into 28 multi-campus vocational institutes aiming at developing a strong partnership with the private sector, remobilizing resources; developing demand-driven programs in line with local needs; identifying and strengthening

areas of excellence in each institute; developing multi-disciplinary programs. Each institute absorbs between 10–15 colleges spanning 2–3 provinces. Reorganization is expected to increase institutional autonomy, accountability, and consistency in meeting educational standards.

S t r a t e g i c A c t i o n P l a n

The Ministry of Education's Strategic Action Plan, announced in 2004, aims to accelerate educational reform and to clarify the direction of the functioning of the Ministry. The Plan has the following missions: 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:

1) Creating educational opportunities by:

- Generating equity and increasing access to basic education services by assuring opportunities and

generating equal access to education; encouraging and supporting all social segments to participate in educational provision;

- Strengthening vocational education by creating and promoting appreciation of the value of professional education on an extensive scale and a continual basis; encouraging and supporting the private

- sector to invest in the provision of vocational education; supporting educational provision at bachelor's degree level in technological or vocational field;
- Strengthening higher education by means of providing opportunities at higher education level; establishing and expanding university campuses in the regions; producing manpower in line with the national development; providing health care services for research purposes; and assuring and motivating the private sector to invest in higher education;

- Promoting access to lifelong learning for the general public by developing continuing education and lifelong learning, as well as providing the public with academic services

2) Developing educational administration and management and quality of learning through:

- Conducting learning reform for knowledge-based livelihoods by developing curriculum and learning media; improving the provision and standards of learning; promoting moral and ethical values; and developing innovations and ICTs for learning;
- Strengthening the potential of teachers, faculty staff and educational personnel by

improving their professional standards; developing personnel administration systems and supporting their development; establishing and improving the systems relating to remuneration, welfare and other benefits; enhancing their quality of life and solving the problem of teacher shortage;

- Strengthening management systems for quality learning by improving laws, rules and regulations, enhancing the efficiency in educational administration and management; strengthening the potential of schools under the aegis of the Royal-initiated Projects; supporting the transition of state universities to state-supervised universities; supporting privatization of

public schools; improving ICT application for educational administration and management; developing systems related to planning, monitoring and evaluation; and encouraging and supporting all agencies to conduct educational administration and management in line with the principles and criteria of good governance;

- Managing education resources by encouraging the sharing of resources to enhance educational efficiency and improve/upgrade standards of educational institutes.

3. Raising educational standards and increasing national competitiveness through:

- Developing educational standards equal to those enjoyed by developed countries by strengthening cooperation in education with organizations located in-country and abroad; providing scholarships for education, overseas training and study tours; collaborating with other countries in manpower production for niche markets; conducting academic exchanges with educational institutes overseas; supporting participation in international academic competitions; supporting the provision of international programmes; supporting the publication of bilingual textbooks and production of educational materials,

promoting Thailand to serve as the education center for neighbouring countries; promoting academic excellence and developing programs for the gifted; promoting education in relation to science and technology; and developing

personnel in the fields of economics and international relations;

- Increasing the capability in research and development by promoting research and development at an international level; producing professional researchers and providing resources for research; enhancing state-private sector joint research for commercial purposes; and creating excellence in centers that focus

on the development of graduate studies and research;

- Developing innovation and technologies by through knowledge; promoting and improving technologies and inventions of the young generations; promoting local wisdom; improving the quality of selected products originating at the sub-district level – the so-called OTOP products as well as products from Small and Medium Entrepreneurs (SMEs) so that they reach international standards.

Through the implementation of the Ministry of Education' s Strategic Action Plan, it is expected that all people will have equal and continual access to education; people will be endowed with knowledge, competence and ethical values, contributing to economic development and building and knowledge-based society; and the national competitiveness will be enhanced. An overview of the Strategic Action Plan is presented in the next page.

Strategic Action Plan

P.1

Strategic Action Plan

P.2

A c h i e v e m e n t s

All agencies concerned are actively carrying out educational reform along the lines stipulated by the National Education Act and according to the goals of Strategic Action Plan. Major initiatives have been taken at both policy and planning level and institutional and grassroots level, and have resulted in significant changes in the system and management of education. Some of the relevant achievements together with selected projects related to access, quality, and standards for international competitiveness, are described below.

1. Expansion of Free Schooling to Fourteen Years

Issues of access have been approached and addressed in a number of ways. At the policy level, two significant changes have taken place. In

October 2002, twelve-year free basic education covering 6 years of primary and 6 years of secondary education was granted to students throughout the country for the first time in history. As of May 2004, this subsidy was extended to fourteen years, including the two years of pre-primary schooling. In addition, the Compulsory Education Act, which has been effective since 1 January 2003, requires that all children aged 7-16 be enrolled in basic education institutions except for those who have already completed grade 9.

2 . T e a c h e r D e v e l o p m e n t

The Ministry of Education has placed high priority to teacher development to ensure quality of education. The revision of the curriculum for teacher training has undertaken. According to the new curriculum, the first four years is dedicated to

t h e c o u r s e w o r k w h i l e t h e l a s t
year is focused on teaching practice. Furthermore,
in-service teachers are required to be trained to
keep up themselves with the changing world.

3. Educational Standards and Quality Assurance

Currently, three types of educational standards have been set up, namely national education standards; educational standards of internal quality assurance; and educational standards for external quality assessment. National education standards serve as a basis for both

internal quality assurance and external quality assessment. All related agencies have developed a set of national standards for each level of education

as the guidelines of the other types of quality assurance. Quality assurance system is composed of quality control, quality audit, and quality assurance. The system, criteria and methods for quality assurance are formulate to link both internal quality assurance and external quality.

4. Introduction of ICT to Education

The Ministry of Education has developed the National ICT for Education Master Plan during 2004

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2006 as guidelines for the introduction of ICT to education. There are 4 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;

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training and development of ICT-related personnel;
and distribution of ICT infrastructure for education.
The total budget allocated to the three-year
master plan is bath 24 billion (equivalent to US\$
6 0 0 m i l l i o n) .

5. The Needy Schools Project

At the institutional level, the **Needy Schools Project** responds to access of education. A decision was made to keep smaller schools, defined as those with less than 120 students, open since many of them are located in poorer, rural areas. Without them, students would have much greater distances to travel to school and in the long term this could easily discourage them from attending. The Ministry of Education also made a commitment to work closely with them in order to improve the learning

environment, develop staff and build resources. A substantial budget was set aside for school development in addition to the subsidy for free education. Creativity and innovation were required to make the best use of the money available. One solution came in the form of a project using **Mobile Computer Units**, consisting of vehicles equipped with approximately fifteen computers each plus one teacher. These mobile units visit between two and three schools per day. The aim of their visits is to develop new ICT skills among students and teachers, as well as to increase access to a broader base of knowledge and information. As such, this project addresses not only issues of access but also quality and standards.

6. Child-friendly Schools Project

The **Child Friendly Schools Project** focuses on improving learning environments. It recognizes the need to ensure safe environments in which to nurture children, with child-friendly spaces to encourage creativity and learning, plus opportunities for social interaction. The Ministry of Education collaborates on this project in partnership with a

number of international organisations namely: UNESCO, UNICEF, UN-HABITAT and SEAMEO.

7. Office of Knowledge Management and Development

Learning environments are also the concern of the recently established **Office of Knowledge Management and**

Development. This Office is responsible for coordinating a mega-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.

8. One District – One Fellowship Program

Access to education, in particular higher education, is often restricted for financial reasons. Scholarships, such as the **One District – One Fellowship Program**, can help to address this problem. This 5-year project, which run from 2004–2009, will, each year, provide 921 fellowships to Thai secondary school students from poor families to enable them to continue their studies at

u n i v e r s i t y l e v e l
either in Thailand or abroad. In addition, there are plans to introduce income-contingent loans (ICL) to ensure that all can afford higher education fees. These loans would be repayable once a student has graduated and started work and repayments calculated in accordance with salary earned.

9. Dream Schools Project

Building and strengthening networks among schools has proved an efficient way to upgrade schools and teachers. As a result, the **Dream Schools Project** was launched at the beginning of 2004. The aim of the project is to improve the quality of education by establishing a so-called Dream School in every district across the country. Each of these schools would be well equipped, have highly skilled teaching staff and would be managed by trained educational administrators. Selected schools now act as model schools for the district and take an active role in the training and upgrading of other schools. This project requires substantial investment and it has been necessary to build partnerships with private sector in order to guarantee funding for the 921 schools selected.

10. Fellowships and Scholarships

To raise educational standards and enhance Thailand's competitiveness at an international level cooperation with governments, international organizations and institutions as well as other relevant bodies is

encouraged. To this end, the Ministry of Education has agreements for **Annual Scholarships** and exchange programs with a number of countries. Thailand benefits greatly from **Training/ Seminars** aimed at capacity building in the areas of English language and ICT. At the same time, Thailand offers its expertise in the form of projects to assist the development of infrastructure and human development with neighboring countries.

Future Perspectives

The 1997 *Constitution and the 1999 National Education Act* have paved the way for major educational reform. In this regard, several laws, rules and regulations have been issued and amended; the Ministry of Education and the administrative structure have been reorganized; the teaching–learning process has been improved; new concepts and approaches including educational standards and quality assurance have been conducted. In summary, the educational administration and management; teachers, faculty staff and educational personnel; resources and investment for education and technologies for education system have been and will be further reformed as a

continuous process. Therefore, crucial factors in education need to be reviewed along with the formulation of future tasks in Thai education and strategies and plans for educational reform.

The era of globalization was characterised by the tremendous breakthroughs such as nano-technology, genetics, robotics and artificial intelligence. In the field of education, the advantages of utilizing technologies for education have driven several countries on the threshold of fundamentally and holistically reforming its education system. Web-based instructions in online courses have been delivered through the distance learning system and a vast collection of citations, articles and full text from journals, books, conference proceedings and etc. have been provided in the digital libraries operated by world-

renowned universities and organizations. The utilization of technologies in education, in particular, the information and communication technologies, has enhanced lifelong learning opportunities by making learning accessible

anywhere and anytime. Technology also encourages increasing participation in education of the disadvantaged and the disabled. Through the facilitation of certain devices, people in remote areas will be able to access to learn in the way that suits them best.

Regarding the widespread and upward trends in education such as utilization of technologies in education and the promotion of education for the development of revolutionary sciences and technologies, Thailand has already jumped on the

bandwagon. Recently established under the supervision of the National Science, Technology and Development Agency (NSTDA), the National Nanotechnology Centre has received the government's support to develop nano-materials, nanobiotechnology and nano-electronics and apply them in seven key factors: food and agriculture, automobile, electronics, garments and petrochemical, OTOP (Selected Products from Sub-Districts), energy and environment, and medical and health. In the future, it is critical that Thailand be more actively involved in innovations in education as well as developments in science and technology in order to thrive in a knowledge-based economy and society.

At the same time, it is also essential that education in Thailand focus on making Thai people fully aware of our history and culture as well as learn to show respect for different ethnic groups and appreciate the diversity of other cultures. Further efforts in education reform should also take into account the equilibrium between global standards and local relevance as well as the balance between equity and quality.

So as to function effectively in a complex and interdependent world in which spectacular and expeditious scientific and technological innovations are prevalent, it is imperative that individuals be equipped with versatile knowledge and skills. On the other hand, the phenomena of political and cultural turbulence that have caused terrifying effects throughout the world immediately require

the capability to resolve the conflicts that have occurred within a country as well as between countries on an everyday basis.

In this regard, a major feature of our education reform is to strengthen the physical, mental, and intellectual health of our students. The holistic development of students has called for a complete overhaul of the existing curriculum. Thus, a new curriculum reflects a balance between academic subjects and extra-curricula activities. Furthermore, the new curriculum pays greater attention to the development of life skills, cultivating an appreciation of music, and encouraging participation in sports and activities conducive to team working.

Conclusion

Thailand has always attached great importance to education and has consistently set apart an enormous allotment of the government's budget for educational tasks. During the past decade, however, the quality of the country's education when compared to the sizable resources and investments made for education has been questioned as never before. The devastating economic crisis together with the new sense of Thailand's educational disadvantage in comparison with several countries has spotlighted the quality of Thai education in terms of its accomplishment in alleviating the economic and social problems of the country.

Therefore, it is high time for Thailand to push forward education reform.

Following the *1999 National Education Act*, which has been the spearhead of major education reform, quality improvement has become the ultimate goal in the provision of education in addition to maintenance of equity and social justice. The issues of quality in education for ordinary students as well as the gifted and the disadvantaged require more attention to enable the nation to become a true knowledge-based economy and society.

As a result of the dedication and efforts of responsible agencies in moving forward the extensive and radical reforms as stipulated in the *Constitution and the National Education Act*, significant improvement can be seen in many

aspects of education in Thailand. Laws, rules and regulations are fundamental in education reform; however, measures and strategies to bring about understanding and support as well as encourage participation from all parties concerned and the general public are also crucial to further improve on the success of educational reform for sustainable development of the country.

Of all the future tasks in educational reform, creating a desirable mind-set of those in the various levels of educational management as well as the public is consequently the most challenging but essential task. The success of educational reform in the era of a knowledge-based economy and society also require that policy-makers and decision-makers take a proactive attitude towards setting up

educational strategies and plans for educational reform in several aspects and at various levels.

THAILAND PROFILE IN 2003

Area	:	513,115 sq.km.
Capital	:	Bangkok
Climate	:	Monsoon with average temperature between 23.7°C and 32.5°C
Population	:	64.2 million
Labor force	:	35.3 million
Population growth	:	1.09%
People	:	The majority are Thai. The rest includes ethnic Chinese, Malays, Lao, Vietnamese, Indians, and others.
Literacy Rate	:	95.7 %
Life expectancy	:	Male 64.9 (2001)
	:	Female 73.2 (2001)
Regional	:	Buddhism, the national religion, is the professed faith of 95% of the population, but there is absolute religious freedom.

Language : Thai is the national and official language.
Dialects are spoken in rural areas. Other languages are Chinese, Malay and English.

Constitution : Constitutional Monarchy

Currency : Baht (1 US\$ = 40.47 Baht, as of June 2004)

GDP (current price) : 6,263.7 billion Baht

GDP growth : 7.0% (as of March 2004)

Per Capital GNP : 84,540 Baht (2002)

Government Expenditure : 1,028,000 million Baht
as % of GDP : 16.4 %

Inflation : 2.2 %

Unemployment rate: 1.5 %

**Table 1 Key Indicators of the Labor Force
in Thailand During 1998-2004**

Indicators	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
1. Persons in the Workforce (in millions)	32.4	32.7	33.2	34.0	34.2	35.1	35.7
2. Unemployed Persons (in millions)	1.4	1.4	1.2	1.1	0.8	0.6	0.55
3. Employment Rate (percent)	92.9	93.7	94.2	94.8	96.4	97.9	97.8
4. Unemployment Rate (percent)	4.4	4.2	3.6	3.2	2.2	1.8	1.5

Source: 1. *Important Economic Indicators: Labor (1998-2003)*, National Statistical Office.
2. *Outlook of Employment Conditions for 2004*, National Statistical Office

**Table 2 General Subsidies for Per Head
Expenditures of State School Students**

Unit: baht

Types and Levels of Education and Responsible Agencies	Ordinary Students	Dis-advantaged Students in Welfare Education Schools	Students from Low-Income Families	Students Non-Formal Education System	Students in Schools for the Disabled	Students in Sports Schools
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
General Education						
• Primary						
-- boarders		12,600	6,400		13,020 (OBEC) 20,920 (ONPEC)	
-- day students	1,100	4,140	1,560	2,080	4,140 (OBEC) 21,700 (ONPEC) 1,400 (OBEC/ Inclusive Schools)	49,040
• Lower Secondary						
- General Stream						
-- boarders		13,100	6,400		13,500 (OBEC) 21,700 (ONPEC)	46,850/ 50,390
-- day students	1,800	4,220	4,300	700	4,620 (OBEC) 12,820 (ONPEC) 4,300 (OBEC/ Inclusive Schools)	(small- full- scaled)
- Vocational Stream*				4,440		
• Upper Secondary						
- General Stream						
-- boarders		14,000			14,000 (OBEC) 22,200 (ONPEC)	46,850/ 50,390
-- day students	2,700	5,120		1,000	5,520 (OBEC) 13,720 (ONPEC)	(small- full- scaled)
- Vocational Stream*				4,240		

Source: Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education.

Remarks* Vocational stream at lower secondary level is also included in the non-formal education system.

Table 3 Number of School-Age Population

Level	Age Group	2000	2001	2002	2003
Pre-primary	3-5	2,892	2,906	2,961	2,987
Primary	6-11	5,838	5,835	5,820	5,808
Secondary	12-17	5,833	5,750	5,723	5,737
(Lower Secondary)	12-14	2,827	2,845	2,881	2,914
(Upper Secondary)	15-17	3,006	2,905	2,842	2,823
Higher	18-21	4,431	4,344	4,220	4,077
Total	3-21	24,827	24,585	24,447	24,346

Table 4 Number of Educational Attainment of Thai Population

Age	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
15 and over	7.1	7.2	7.2	7.6	7.8
15-21	9.4	9.5	9.5	9.7	9.8
15-59	7.7	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.9
60 and over	3.5	3.6	3.6	3.8	3.9

**Table 5 Enrolment Rates in Basic Education,
Academic Years 1999-2003**

Level of Education	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Pre-primary	96.2	95.7	93.1	90.6	85.0
Primary	102.3	103.2	103.8	104.8	104.4
Lower secondary	83.4	82.8	82.2	82.2	84.6
General upper secondary	33.2	36.7	38.9	38.8	37.5
Vocational upper secondary	22.1	20.7	20.4	21.3	21.5

Source: *ONEC, Thailand Education Statistics Report 1999-2003, Thailand Education Data 2001 and Bureau of Educational Research and Development*

Table 6 Number of Educational Institutions (2003)

Number of Educational Institutions (2003)	Total	Public	Private
Whole Kingdom *	92,939	87,104	5,835
Pre-Primary	44,760	42,075	2,685
Primary	33,043	31,426	1,617
Lower secondary	10,490	9,903	587
Upper secondary (General)	2,837	2,666	171
Upper secondary (Vocational)	889	540	349
Below Bachelor Degree	646	324	322
Bachelor Degree	208	131	77
Postgraduate Degree	66	39	27

* Some institutions may provide more than one level of education

Table 7 Student – Teachers Ratio

Student – Teachers Ratio	2002	2003
Pre-primary	1:20	1:20
Primary	1:19	1:19
Lower secondary	1:21	1:21
General upper secondary	1:21	1:21
Vocational upper secondary	1:31	1:31

**Table 8 Transition Rates in Basic Education,
Academic Years 1997-2003**

Level of Education	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Lower Secondary	93.3	90.7	87.8	89.9	92.7	90.0	92.5
Upper Secondary	87.1	83.4	84.7	81.9	80.2	88.2	82.0
• General	45.7	50.2	52.9	52.8	51.3	53.5	50.3
• Vocational	41.4	33.2	31.8	29.1	28.9	34.7	31.7

Source: *ONEC, Thailand Education Statistics Report 1999-2003, Thailand Education Data 2001 and Bureau of Educational Research and Development*

Table 9 Retention Rate

Retention Rate	2000	2001	2002	2003
Primary	87.2	87.5	88.4	89.5

Lower secondary	91.8	92.3	91.5	90.3
Upper secondary	83.5	83.0	80.9	82.0
- General	87.2	87.7	86.6	86.7
- Vocational	78.2	75.1	71.3	73.6

**Table 10 Number of Graduates in Vocational Stream
Classified by Level of Education:
Academic Years 1998-2002**

Level of Education	Academic Years				
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Certificate Level	92,952	113,174	99,390	85,609	86,702
Diploma Level	53,738	61,193	65,908	76,865	72,676
Higher Diploma in Technical Education	790	1,097	0	164	485
Total	147,480	175,464	165,298	162,638	159,863

Source: Bureau of Policy and Planning, OVEC.

**Table 11 Number of Students in Vocational Stream
Classified by Level of Education:
Academic Years 1999-2003**

Level of Education	Academic Years				
	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Certificate Level	420,223	404,206	395,199	406,067	392,246
Diploma Level	163,773	188,605	196,541	189,097	178,057
Higher Diploma in Technical Education	1,170	233	1,017	1,545	964
Total	585,166	593,044	592,757	596,709	571,267

Source: *Bureau of Policy and Planning, OVEC.*

Table 12 Number of Disabled Children Enrolled in Basic Education Institutions, Academic Years 1999-2001

Level of Education	1999	2000	2001
Pre-primary	2,101	22,896	16,710
Primary	11,103	107,880	114,183
Lower Secondary	2,986	10,966	9,860
Upper Secondary	1,641	713	920
Total	17,831	142,455	141,673

Source: *ONEC, Report on the Monitoring and Evaluation of Education Reform: Educational Rights and Duties, 2002.*

Table 13 Number of Disadvantaged Children Enrolled in Basic Education Institutions, Academic Years 1999-2001

Level of Education	1999	2000	2001
Pre-primary	223,825	378,540	564,761
Primary	182,631	181,168	239,889
Lower Secondary	632,571	735,009	1,005,744
Upper Secondary	613,785	670,464	657,169
Total	1,652,812	1,965,181	2,467,563

Source: *ONEC, Report on the Monitoring and Evaluation of Education Reform: Chapter 2 Educational Rights and Duties, 2002.*

**Table 14 Student Enrolments in Higher Education Institutions,
Academic Years 1999-2003**

Level of Education	Academic Years				
	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003 ^e
Diploma	455,080	470,002	462,187	439,363	400,071
Undergraduate	1,099,219	1,232,215	1,294,561	1,371,058	1,396,242
Certificate	2,684	2,615	2,324	2,138	4,139
Master Degree	83,936	83,936	89,818	108,055	120,116
Doctorate	2,348	3,190	5,080	5,120	8,040
Total	1,643,267	1,791,958	1,853,970	1,925,734	1,928,608

Source: *ONEC, Thailand Education Statistics Report 1999-2003, Thailand Education Data 2001 and Bureau of Educational Research and Development.*
^e Estimated Figures

**Table 15 Transition Rates in Higher Education,
Academic Years 1997-2003**

Level of Education	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003 ^e
Higher Education*	92.8	81.8	75.9	75.0	80.2	83.1	83.0
- Diploma	55.9	50.7	46.1	49.2	43.4	43.6	44.7
- Undergraduate	36.9	31.1	29.8	25.8	36.8	39.5	41.3

Source: *ONEC, Thailand Education Statistics Report 1997-2003, Thailand Education Data 2001 and Bureau of Educational Research and Development.*

Note: * Excluding new entrants in open universities
• Estimated Figures

Table 16 Number and Increasing/Decreasing Rates of Graduates by Level of Education, Academic Years 2000- 2002

	2001		2002	
	Number	%	Number	%
Total	3,540,820	100.0	4,029,755	100.0
Functional Literacy	134,782	3.8	-	-
Continuing Education	1,803,714	50.9	2,057,136	51.05
• Primary	228,502	6.4	284,982	7.07
• Secondary	1,575,212	44.5	1,772,154	43.98
Lower Secondary	914,865	25.8	982,612	24.38
Upper Secondary	660,347	18.7	789,542	19.59
- General	650,530	18.4	777,854	19.30
- Vocational	9,817	0.3	11,688	0.29
Vocational Education and Training	1,602,324	45.3	1,972,619	48.95

Source: *ONEC, Thailand Education Statistics Report 2001-2002 and Department Non-Formal Education.*

Table 17 Number and Percentage of Participations in Non-Formal Education by Level and Type of Education, Academic Year 2001 and 2002

Level of Education	Academic Years			Increasing/ Decreasing Rates
	2000	2001	2002 ^e	
Primary	890,735	935,269	979,084	0.10
Lower Secondary	787,851	706,020	735,893	-0.06
Upper Secondary	508,082	483,568	522,245	0.03
- General	318,450	335,194	352,141	0.10
- Vocational	189,632	148,374	170,104	-0.07
Higher Education	383,539	599,497	618,437	0.07
Lower-Than-Degree	193,109	197,995	204,395	0.06
Bachelor Degree	164,828	167,911	169,604	0.03
Certificate	1,423	1,813	8,819	4.14
Master Degree	23,615	33,081	30,810	0.33
Doctorate Degree	564	702	414	-0.17

Source: *ONEC, Thailand Education Statistics Report 1999-2003 and Thai Education Data 2001.*

• *Estimated Figures*

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Table 18 Education Budget

Education Budget	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Amount (Billion Baht)	220.6	221.6	222.9	235.1	251.2
% of GDP	4.3	4.3	4.2	4.2	4.0
% of National Budget	25.7	24.6	21.8	23.5	24.4

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