



TOWARDS  
A LEARNING AND  
SHARING SOCIETY  
IN THAILAND

# Towards a Learning and Sharing Society in Thailand



## Quick Facts about Thailand (1990-2010)

- The population grew from around 54 million in 1990 to almost 61 million in 2000 and about 67 million in 2010. The population growth rate is currently around 0.6%.

- In 1990, the urban population stood at 10.4 million. By 2010, it had risen to almost 17 million. The urbanization rate of 31% is lower than in some neighbouring countries.

- There are an estimated 2 million migrant workers and their families living in Thailand, including around 400,000 indigenous and hill tribe people.

- GNP per capita rose from just below \$2,600 in 2000 to over \$4,200 in 2010.

- There has been a rapid increase in the number of internet users nationwide from 2,300,000 (3.7%) in 2000 to 17,486,400 (26.3%) in 2010.

- The elderly population is growing at a much faster rate than the population as a whole. In 1990, there were 4.2 million elderly people or 7.7% of the total population. In 2010, there were over 7.9 million (11.8%). By 2020 it is expected to reach almost 17 million (17.2%) with the number of older people exceeding the population of children.





## 1. An Introduction to Education in Thailand

For more than a century, the Ministry of Education of Thailand has committed itself to the development of Thai Education. The Ministry of Education constantly strives to deliver education which is in response to the rapidly changing world that we live in. The challenges met along the way have encouraged the exchange of cooperation and establishment of an information network which aims to integrate Thailand into “The world community”. In this regard, the Ministry of Education has initiated policies that stimulate all dimensions of quality and equity in education for all Thai citizens in order to develop them to become desirable human resources with high potential, morals and ethics as well as maintaining their Thai identity and competitiveness in the world arena.



## 2. Educational Policies

Current educational policies have been formulated to push forward the second decade of education reform (2009 - 2018). The framework of the reform consists of the following 4 main dimensions :

1. The development of a new generation of quality Thai citizens who are intelligent and well equipped with both physical and mental health;

2. The development of new generation teachers who are intellectual, have integrity and are able to conduct successful classes;

3. The development of new educational institutes and learning centres which are in response to the needs and interests of all its stakeholders;

4. The development of a new educational administrative system which decentralizes its authority to educational institutes and stimulates participation from all sectors.

Recent education reform is seen as being a crucial mechanism in developing Thai citizens to become desirable human resources through these various important projects :

**1. The New Generation of Teacher Project** : 5 year teacher education curriculum which aims to prepare teachers with higher qualifications and increased teaching skills;

**2. Quality Sub-District Schools** : the dissemination of quality and equity in education to all Thai people nationwide;

**3. The International Standards School** : the enhancement of educational provision at international level;



**4. The International Training Centre** : The provision of training to educational administrators, teachers and educational personnel through the cooperation of SEAMEO Regional Centres;

### 5. ASEAN University Network (AUN) :

Synergy of cooperation of higher education institutes in order to encourage academic exchanges in the region;

### 6. The Teacher TV Project :

Educational innovation in the form of quality TV programs being broadcast through multi-media with the aim of upgrading the capacity of teachers, educational personnel and learners;

### 7. The Thai Cyber University :

Training through internet networking amongst 9 Thai universities aiming at the capacity building of Thai educational personnel;

### 8. The Fix It Centre Unit :

Technical services from vocational institutes to the Thai community in the areas of maintaining and fixing electricity appliances and professional equipment.

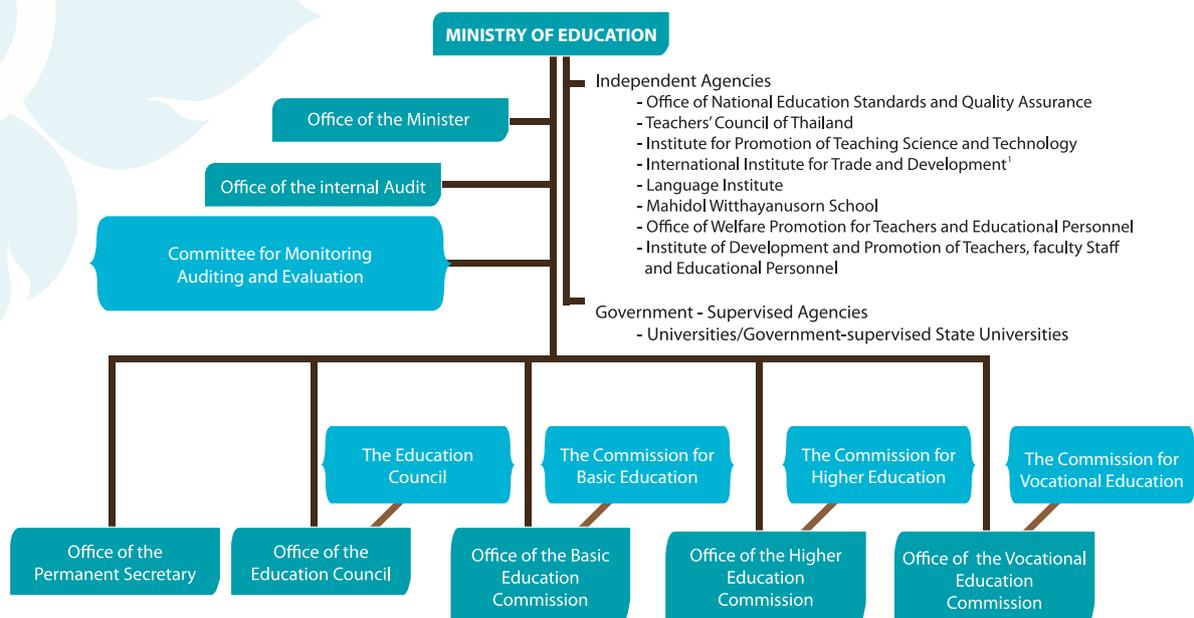


### 9. Sub-District Learning Center :

Is an educational learning center that provides quality and equity in education. It also provides quality access to lifelong learning for all Thai citizens nationwide.

## 3. The Administrative Structure of the Thai Education System

The Administrative Structure of the Thai Education System emphasizes on the decentralization of administrative responsibilities to 5 main organizations at local level with the consolidation of education planning at central level as follows;



<sup>1</sup> Operating as a regional training centre, the International Institute for Trade and Development was established by the Royal Thai Government and UNCTAD as a non-profit and independent organization.

Figure 1: The Administrative Structure of Education in Thailand

### 3.1 The Office of the Permanent Secretary

The Office of the Permanent Secretary (OPS) is the main organization responsible for enhancing the role and capacity of students to ensure sustainable development of the nation.

### 3.2 The Office of the Basic Education Commission

The Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) is responsible for the provision of educational opportunities for all children of school age and youth from pre-primary to upper secondary levels.

### 3.3 The Office of the Vocational Education Commission

The role of the office of the Vocational Education Commission (OVEC) is to provide the general public with access to technical and vocational education, and to provide a standardized vocational curriculum which takes into account the demands of the labor market.

### 3.4 The Office of the Higher Education Commission

The Office of Higher Education Commission (OHEC) is responsible for scrutinizing all educational policies. They are also responsible for planning and standards at both undergraduate and graduate levels.

### 3.5 The Office of the Education Council

The Office of the Education Council (OEC) is responsible for proposing the National Scheme of Education, which integrates religion, art, culture, and sports into all levels of education. It must also propose relevant policies and plans for the mobilization of resources and the evaluation of the provision of education.



## 4. The Thai Education System

The Thai education system is made up of more than 37,000 educational institutions with nearly 20 million students. The Thai Government has allocated a budget for educational provision at more than 400,000 million baht. The current Thai Education system stems from reforms set in the 1999 National Education Act which implemented new organizational structures, this act promoted the decentralization of administration and called for innovative student-centered teaching practices. The Thai education system (Figure 2) provides 9 years of compulsory education, with 15 years of free quality education, starting with three years pre-primary to the end of upper secondary, guaranteed by the Constitution. It covers tuition fees as well as uniforms, textbooks, learning materials, equipment, and a range of extra curricula activities.



# THE THAI EDUCATION SYSTEM

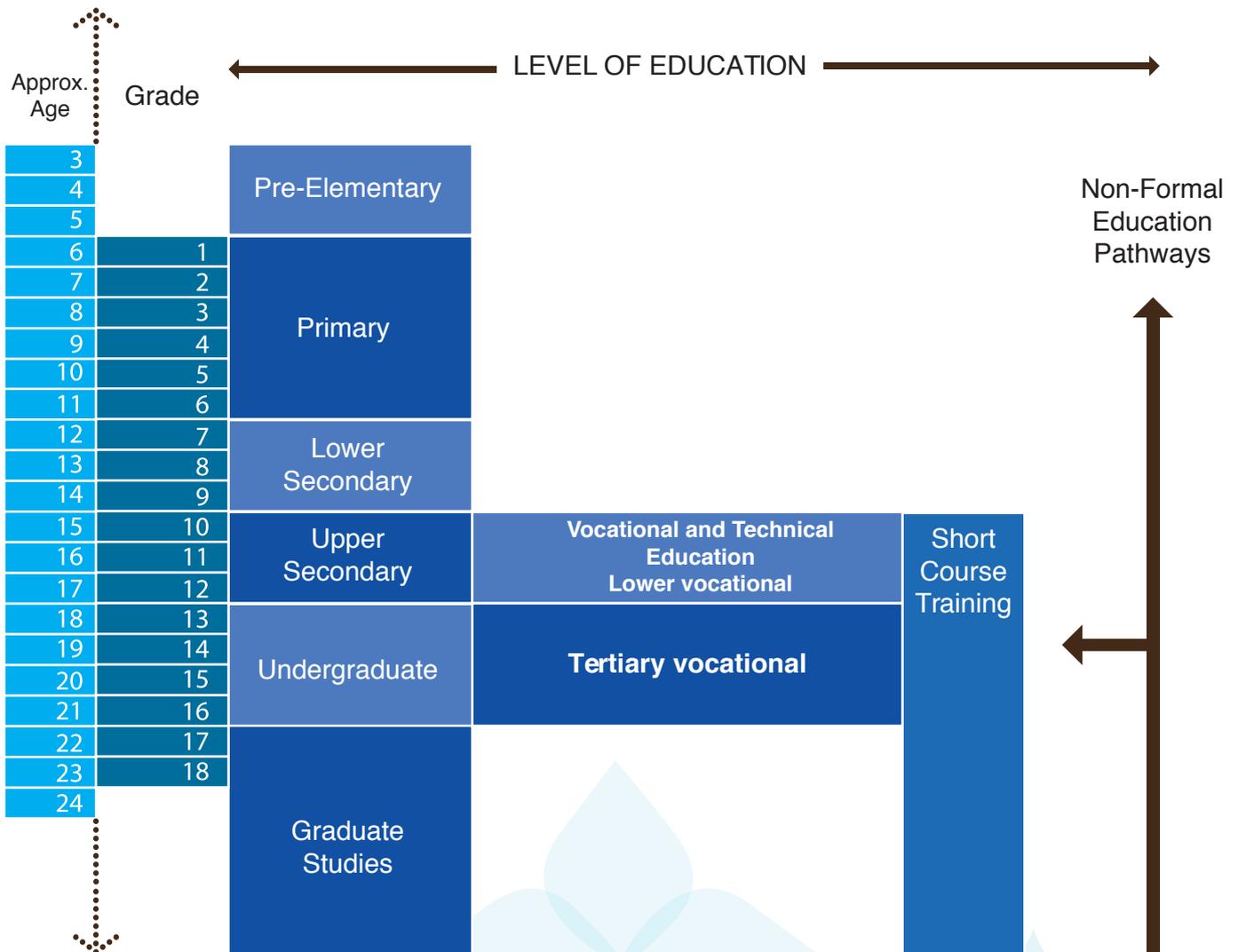


Figure 2: The Thai Education System

Moreover, the Thai Education System can be divided into the following 3 types:

- Formal Education
- Non-Formal Education
- Informal Education

## 4.1 Formal Education

Formal education specifies the aims, methods, curricula, duration, assessment, and evaluation conditional to its completion. It consists of Early Childhood Education, Basic Education, Vocational Education and Higher Education.



#### 4.1.1 Early Childhood Education

About 1.8 million children (aged from 3 to 5 years) receive early years' education, which is provided by both government primary schools and the private sector. Between the years of 1990 to 2010, the percentage of children enrolled in this group more than doubled to reach 74.2 %.

#### 4.1.2 Basic Education

Basic Education in Thailand is divided into 6 years of primary schooling, (Prathom 1 to 6) followed by 3 years of lower secondary (Mattayom 1 to 3) and then 3 years of upper secondary schooling (Mattayom 4 to 6). Between 1990 and 2010 the percentage of 15-17 years old continuing to upper secondary level was at around 70.3 %.

Eight core subjects form the National Curriculum: Thai language, mathematics, science, social studies, religion and culture, health and physical education, arts, careers and technology, and foreign languages. Flexibility is built into the curriculum in order to integrate local wisdom and culture, so that it is consistent with set learning standards in each of the core subject groups. The promotion of thinking skills, self-learning strategies and moral development is at the heart of teaching and learning in the Thai National Curriculum.



#### 4.1.3 Vocational Education

Formal vocational and technical education is conducted at two levels: certificate level and diploma level. Nine fields of study are undertaken as majors: industry, commerce/business administration, agriculture, home economics, fishery, tourism industry, arts, textile industry and information and communication technology.

#### 4.1.4 Higher Education

Higher education is provided at both undergraduate and graduate levels. Its various curricula are designed in accordance with social and economic requirements through 79 public universities, 72 private universities. In addition, equity in higher education is extended to reach out to local citizens by uniting 19 communities nationwide.



## 4.2 Non-Formal Education

Non-Formal education increases the educational opportunities for the out of school population; this is widely seen as a mechanism for lifelong learning. It is flexible both in terms of its content and its curriculum. In order to support the promotion of a lifelong learning culture through the non-formal education sector, internet connections have been made increasingly accessible in the rural areas of Thailand, community learning centres have also been established and distance learning programs promoted.



## 4.3 Informal Education

The vision of developing a learning society includes the promotion of the idea that learning can also take place outside of the formal setting of the classroom. Informal learning is reinforced by 8,000 special community learning centres (CLC) which are supported in each province by the Office of Non-formal and Informal Education as well as through a support network of over 800 libraries, 15 science museums, educational television, radio programs and internet access at every school.



## 5. International Cooperation in Education

To further enhance the countries national competitiveness and educational provision, Thailand cooperates both bilaterally and multilaterally with national, regional, and international bodies to continually focus on its educational improvement.





## 6. Conclusion

In order to overcome the challenges that are brought about by borderless circumstances, the Thai government aims at accelerating the achievement of the second decade of national education reform to efficiently provide all Thai citizens with quality and equity in education. The hope is that this will ultimately build Thai human resources with the desirable characteristics that are required to allow them to make a good living and live happily in a multicultural world.



### Facts

- In 2010, 22.3% of the national budget was allocated to education. From just over 379 billion baht, approximately 282 billion went to basic education, covering pre-primary and secondary education.
- There were a total 4,698,446 Thai nationality children in the 0-5 age group in 2009.
- There were just over 2,394 million children in the 2-5 age group in 2009 of whom 1,780,074 were enrolled in kindergarten or pre-school classes in the formal system.
- Families remain the main providers of care and development among the 0-3 age group while the majority of 3-5 year olds attend kindergartens and pre-primary institutions.
- Since 1990, enrollment in pre-primary education among the 3-5 age group has more than doubled, rising from almost 33% in 1990 to 75% in 2010.
- In 1990, the proportion of children attending public pre-primary institutions was 69% and private 31%. In 2009, it was 79.6:20.4 respectively. In the Bangkok Metropolitan Area, the difference was much less marked at 41:59.
- A total 3,459 child centres for the disadvantaged under the jurisdiction of Local Administration Organizations (LAO) have been established. A further 14,326 child centres, previously under the jurisdiction of other agencies, have been transferred to the LAO.
- Average year schooling has risen from 5.7 in 1990, to 7.2 in 2000 to 8.1 in 2010.
- Between 1990 and 2010, the proportion of upper secondary students as a percentage of the total population rose from just under 27% to over 70%.
- From pre-primary to the end of lower secondary, boys slightly outnumber girls in the formal schooling system. However, girls tend to stay on for more years schooling and more girls than boys pursue higher education.
- In 2009, the Gender Parity Index at pre-primary level was just over 100% and at primary level over 99%.
- Recent estimates suggest that HIV infection in the 15 to 24 age group accounts for as much as 50% of the total number of new infections.
- In the 15-19 year age group, there are 70 pregnancies for every 1,000 females as oppose to the global average of 65. In 2007, the first cases of HIV infection in teenage mothers between the ages of 15 and 19 were reported.
- Literacy rates continue to improve among men and women. However, in the aged 40 and above age group, the literacy rate among women was only 85% compared to 92% among men.

### Sources :

- *Ministry of Education, Ministry of Public Health, National Statistics Office, Office of Women's Affairs and Family.*
- *2009 Education Statistic, EFA 2000 Assessment : Country Report and Office of the Education Council.*

# Towards a Learning and Sharing Society in Thailand

## Further Information

Ministry of Education  
<http://www.moe.go.th>

Office of the Basic Education Commission  
<http://www.obec.go.th>

Office of the Education Council  
<http://www.onec.go.th>

The Commission on Higher Education  
<http://www.mua.go.th>

Office of the Permanent Secretary  
[http://www.moe.go.th/OPS\\_Page/](http://www.moe.go.th/OPS_Page/)

Office of the Vocational Education  
Commission  
<http://www.vec.go.th>

Office of the Private Education Commission  
<http://www.opec.go.th>

Office of the Non-formal and Informal  
Education  
<http://www.nfe.go.th>



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