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Teachers and Equitable Education **THAILAND**



Equitable
Education
Conference 2021



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**Executive
summary**



Snapshot of equity gaps in Thai education

- Thailand has been plagued by education inequity, it is also struggling to keep up with the pace of the ever-changing world, providing education to foster 21st century skills for students has proved difficult. The most fundamental issue is the sharp divide in **socio-economic status** in the student population, with over 1.2 million students designated as extremely poor. On average, education expenses account for 22% of the total expense for extremely poor families.

- The disparity in socio-economic status is reflected in unequal **learning access** after the age of compulsory education (upper-secondary school and higher education), where students from the richest families are twice as likely to complete upper-secondary school and higher education. Out-of-school children and student drop-outs remain a major issue. It is likely that 'acute poverty' from the economic disruption from COVID-19 pandemic will exacerbate the issue.

- Overall, Thailand has issues with **learning outcomes** across the board, consistently ranking below OECD average in PISA, with 34.6% of students scoring below Level 2 in all subjects. There is also a disparity in learning outcomes between the richest and poorest students, with the bottom quintile (in terms of socio-economic status) of students lagging behind the top quintile by approximately 2.5 - 3.5 academic years. The national test also shows disparities between schools of different sizes, where the smallest schools underperformed compared to larger schools. Digital disruption from the COVID-19 pandemic may further worsen learning outcomes.



Current efforts to reform

- Thailand's education is progressing in a **transition phase** to enable equitable education. Thailand national development strategic blueprints including the National Economic and Social Development Plans, the National Education Plan and the National Reform Plan on Education prioritizes equitable human capital development among the most important development agendas.
- To promote equitable education and improve learning outcomes, new public agencies such as the **Equitable Education Fund (EEF)** have been established to directly tackle education inequity. The Education **Sandbox Act (2019)**, an innovative legislation, was passed to provide room to pilot innovative education policies and practices. The Ministry of Education is replacing the current content-based curriculum with a **competency-based curriculum**.
- There are trends of government agencies supporting pilot schemes to test out and refine innovative practices. The private sector is also having more interest to take part in tackling education inequity, with startups and social enterprises growing in number, with a diverse array of various different missions.



Challenges to teachers

Teachers are at heart of tackling education inequity, being one of the closest people to their students. They are facing increasing pressure to deliver high quality education which needs to foster the essential 21st century skills of children. They face an lone, uphill battle as parents often put the responsibility of their child's education and development on teachers.

- **Inefficient teacher allocation** rules and mechanisms, which put small, rural schools at a disadvantage, may cause teacher shortage, forcing available teachers to work longer hours. **The layers of bureaucracies, redundant reporting and excess administrative tasks** draw teachers' focus away from their core responsibility - to facilitate the development of their students.
- **Digital disruption and the COVID-19 pandemic** put pressure on teachers as they need to rapidly catch up with technology for online learning. Teachers also had to invest more time and energy to track and monitor students to maintain engagement outside the classroom, stretching their ability to take care of individual students even further.
- **Vocational teachers** also need to catch-up with the ever-changing requirements of the job market.



Efforts to address the challenges to teachers

- To reduce excessive administrative workload and align teacher incentives with student development, a new teacher performance appraisal system is launched. Under the **Performance agreement (PA)** scheme, performance evaluation will be based on learning design, student assignment and sample teaching video clips that could be submitted via an online system.
- To tackle teacher shortage, the OTEPC launched a **new teacher allocation criteria**, factoring in the number of students, number of teaching hours and subject expertise.
- EEF and OVEC are looking into partnerships with the private sector to help improve teaching and learning for vocational teachers.



Supporting professional development of teachers

- Pre-service teacher training is regulated by the Office of the Teachers' Council of Thailand, with all courses following a similar core format, following the Teaching Professional standards.

- **The Homegrown Teachers Programme**, supported by the EEF, provides scholarships for disadvantaged students to undergo 4-year pre-service teacher training, then be deployed as a teacher back at schools in their local community. The training programme is specially designed to equip pre-service teachers with the necessary skills and attitude to combat the challenges of teaching in small, rural schools. They will also continue to receive support and mentorship for another 6 years into their service.

- The **Teacher Professional development programme under the patronage of HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn** sponsors scholarships for in-service teachers, who do not have formal qualifications in education, such as teachers in Border Patrol Police Schools and Non-Formal and Informal Education Office. The teachers will undergo distance learning and be awarded a teaching diploma.

- **Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)** provide a platform for exchange of best practices and ideas to tackle common problems faced in classrooms. Different groups of teachers or schools can adapt the concept to suit their own professional development demands.

- **Teacher networks** also play an important role in professional development. There are trends of public agencies supporting networks such as the Professional Teacher Clubs (PTC) by OVEC and the TSQP network by the EEF. On the other hand, many networks are self-organized such as the Remote Area Teachers Network.



Mechanisms to support teachers

- Policy-wise, the Office of the Teacher Civil Service and Educational Personnel Commission (OTEPC) has launched 'Performance agreement (PA)' to align rewards with teacher's performance in delivery of student outcomes.
- The **Princess Maha Chakri Award (PMCA) Foundation** has commemorated outstanding teachers, throughout ASEAN, whose dedication and strong track record of making life-changing impact is recognized.
- **School principals** provide academic leadership to schools. They also play an essential role to teachers' professional development as mentor or coach to teachers by giving feedback on lessons and classes. Outside the classroom, they can facilitate the process of identifying collective vision in developing students by working with teachers and communities, integrating learning management with community context.



- The **Education Service Area Office**, also known as the Education District Office, is a focal point for policy implementations and feedback. The Education Supervisors work closely with teachers and schools to identify areas for development. They are responsible for knowledge management among a network of schools within their jurisdiction, and also cross-jurisdiction, exchanging experiences with schools in other districts.
- The Office of the Teacher Civil Service and Educational Personnel Commission (OTEPC) had reformed their **teacher deployment policy** to ensure that schools receive an appropriate and more equitable number of teachers. The new criteria factors in the number of students, number of teaching hours and subject expertise. The new policy also has a more generous provision of administrative support staff to schools, hoping to bring teachers' focus back to their classroom.



Supporting Teachers during the COVID-19 Pandemic

- During the Pandemic, Teachers needed to quickly improvise and adapt to provide online lessons. Many students also struggle to adapt to the new means of learning. Much time and effort were spent on adapting lessons and also to provide 'on-hand' learning materials for students without access to online classes. They also need to invest time in tracking and monitoring students, including completing learning readiness surveys.
- They play an essential role in promoting student welfare and well-being. During the pandemic they work closely with public health officials to curb the spread of COVID-19. They also act as a channel for community outreach.
- To equip teachers with tools to support students' mental well-being, OBEC has developed a capacity-building program to align understanding of the role and responsibility as well as a protocol on child protection and related support systems. To help teachers adapt to online teaching, the MOE launched many public-access webinar series and resource websites.



- Other actors have also provided opportunities and support to teachers. The Princess Maha Chakri Award Foundation (PMCA) had organized an online seminar on ‘Learning during Covid-19 Pandemic: Create and Challenges’ sharing best practices among awarded teachers. The EEF has developed a set of materials for schools and teachers to use in communicating with students and parents such as the ‘back to school’ guidebook on COVID-19. The Department of Health, Ministry of Public Health has also collaborated with the Ministry of Education to develop the “Sandbox Safety Zone in School (SSS)” guideline, laying out various measures for schools to implement before reopening on-site classrooms the upcoming semester.

- The pandemic may also have aspects of blessing-in-disguise where teachers use their creativity and innovate. Many teachers and networks have successfully developed self-directed learning packages. Communities and parents have self-organized to hold learning-pods (a small-group home school). Much research has also been commissioned into looking into the phenomena of ‘learning-loss’ and learning-recovery.



**Summary of
Current Status:
Equity gaps in
education &
Attempts to
reform**



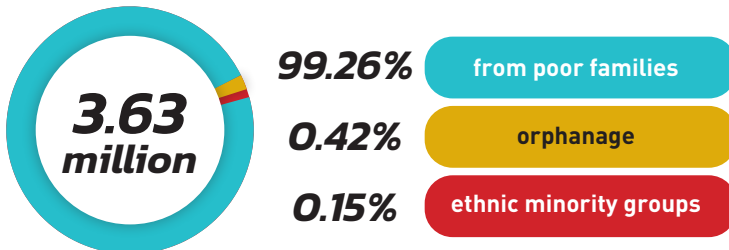
Overview

Over the past decades, Thailand has had an issue with equity in both **Learning Access** and **Learning Outcomes**, while the **COVID-19 pandemic** has topped further complications to the prevailing issues.

The underlying socio-economic issues

The most fundamental equity issue in Thailand is the sharp divide in the socio-economic status, also seen in the student population. Thailand has 10.5 million students in the basic education level (from pre-primary to upper-secondary). Among them, 3.63 million are categorized in a **disadvantaged group** of which 99.26% are from poor families, 0.42% orphanage, 0.15% ethnic minority groups. According to the Equitable Education Fund's biannual survey for the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programme, 574,412 students are designated to be 'poor' and 1,244,591 students are designated to be 'extremely poor'.¹

Among 3.63 million disadvantaged children



To paint a clearer picture, educational expenses may account for over 22% of the total expense for extremely poor households, compared to 6% for their more well-off counterparts. An extremely poor household will earn around 1,332THB (\$40) per person per month or only 44THB (\$1.33) per person per day, while the education expense (excluding cost of travel) per household is around 1,195 - 4,829 THB (\$36 - \$146) during term times.² With their economic conditions, the families may find it difficult, and perhaps too costly, to support their children's education.

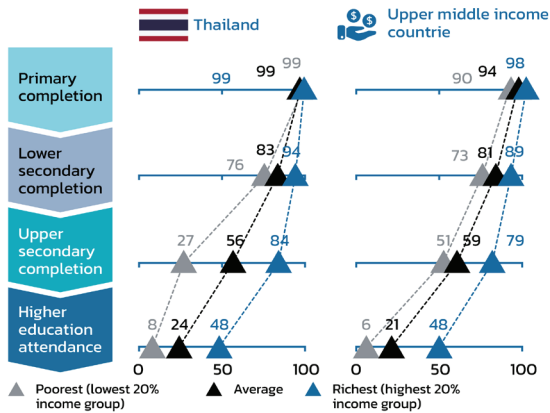
Learning Access

The underlying socio-economic conditions, among other structural issues, affects students' access to education. Despite high levels of primary school completion rate at 99%, the completion rate drops sharply with the higher level of education, with 83% of the student population successfully completing compulsory education (lower secondary school in Thailand) and only 56% and 24% progressing on to Upper Secondary and Higher Education, respectively. Diving deeper into the data, the underlying inequity between students of different socio-economic status. The lowest quintile (bottom 20% in terms of socio-economic status) of the student population has only 27% completion rate at the Upper-Secondary level and only 8% goes on to study in Higher Education. Despite government efforts to provide education loans, it is only offered from the high school level onward with only 0.82% of the poorest families having access to the loans.



Educational attainment in Thailand drops significantly after upper secondary, where highest disparity is observed

Net attainment of each income group, 2015 (% of people)



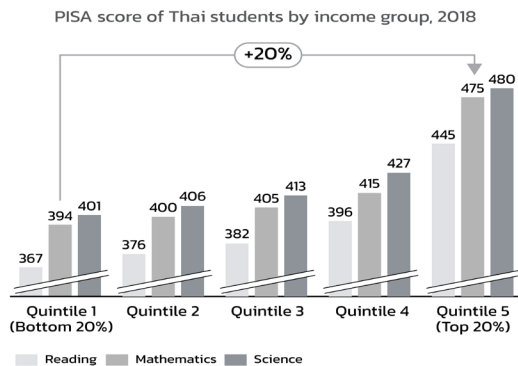
Source: UNESCO, EEF, Roland Berger

The figures also invite a conversation on out-of-school children and student drop-outs in Thailand. In 2020, Equitable Education Fund Research Institute estimated 430,000 out-of-school children while 1.8 poor and disadvantaged children are at risk to drop out. The ILO estimates that almost 1.4 million youths between the ages of 15-24 (or 15% of the demographic group) in Thailand are Not in Education, Employment, or Training – NEET).

Learning Outcomes

Thailand has a long history of issues with learning outcomes, consistently ranked below the OECD average in the triennial Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). In 2018, Thailand ranked 68th in reading, 59th in mathematics and 55th in science out of 79 participating countries with up to 34.6% of the sampled students scoring below Level 2 in all subjects.³

There is also a disparity in learning outcomes of students in the poorest and the richest households. Students from the bottom quintile (lowest 20% by OECD's socio-economic status index) scored around 18% lower than students from the top quintile, or a gap of learning by approximately 2.5 - 3.5 school years.⁴ Furthermore, the types, size and location of schools also appears to affect the educational outcomes. The Ordinary National Educational Test (O-NET) taken at the end of Mathayom 3 (Grade 9) shows that schools of extra-large size (2500+ students) have the highest average score on all subjects, with scores decreasing with the school size.





The on-going COVID-19 Pandemic

The economic disruption from **the COVID-19 pandemic** had brought many families to face 'acute' poverty, and without appropriate interventions, they may possibly become permanently poor. The current figure of 1,244,591 extremely poor students represents an increase of 63.4% over pre-pandemic levels. Student drop-out by the end of 2021 academic year is expected to increase to 65,000 students.⁵

During the pandemic, schools on-site learning have ceased. Teachers are asked to provide online lessons and 'on-hand' materials to students. This has caused many disadvantaged students to disconnect from education. The poorest families lack access to digital devices and the internet. A survey by the National Statistical Office of Thailand in 2008 shows that only 17% of students from an extremely poor family (average income of 1,200/person/month) have a computer at home, compared to 91% of the family at the best economic status. Internet penetration among poor households in Thailand is only 1.6%, compared to 60.87% of non-poor households. The disruption in learning will likely lead to the 'learning loss' phenomena, exacerbating the current inequity issues.



Thailand's National Blueprint has clear intentions to tackle education inequity

Thailand's development direction has integrated the inequity concerns with human resources and education development under **the 20-years National Strategic Plan**. Periodic strategic direction for social and economic development also prioritizes issues of inequity. The **12th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2017-2021)** has set a national development direction based on fostering innovations. The Plan set priorities on human resource development, building capacity of workforces and citizens of all ages while tackling inequity. The **13th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2022-2026)**, currently a draft, aims towards a value-based economy and a sustainable developed society. Priority agendas include supporting educational opportunities for the disadvantaged to end intergenerational poverty, promotion of life-long learning, and developing essential 21st century competencies for all. The third strategy of the **National Education Plan (2017-2036)** focuses on the promotion of 'learning society' and human capital development in citizens of all age groups. Emphasis is also given on early childhood development, where standards for care centers and early childhood education will be developed.



The **National Reform Plan on Education (2020)** has laid out **five high impact areas or 5 Big Rocks** namely (1) ensuring access to learning opportunities and education equality from early childhood level by supporting innovation to prevent dropout rate; using 13-digit identification numbers in collaborative mechanisms among function-based and area-based agencies. (2) improving learning management with competency-based learning in response to the 21st century challenges by adopting active learning; endorsing variety of evaluation and assessment system to be applicable for learner context; reducing usage of national test on teacher and school principal's appraisal (3) reforming teacher development and standardization of teacher and educational personnel training by introducing new admission procedure and criteria to attract talent to teaching faculty; teacher training programs for local need and academic area; set of indicators and standard of teacher and educational personnel competency (4) emphasizing training and maximize dual curriculum in vocational education for employment and jobs creation by introducing incentive measures to attract students in basic education to vocational education; co-created competency-based curriculum with private sector; professional certifying for dual-curriculum graduate; integrated teacher competency development program within industrial operation (5) reforming governance system and research role of higher education institutions by assessing capacity of higher education institutes on manpower development; enabling systems for life-long learning i.e. certified curriculum, digital learning platform, credit bank; reform governance and research and innovation system. The plan provides an operational framework for cross-ministry collaboration between various agencies including the Equitable Education Fund, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, Ministry of Finance, and the office of Vocational Education Commission.



In line with the reform proposals, there are efforts to push for a new **National Education Act** which is currently undergoing parliamentary deliberation. Some of the key proposals include repositioning teachers to take on the role of 'learning facilitators'; recognition of the role of instructors who do not possess a degree in education; and the establishment of the Institute of Curriculum and Learning Management, a new government agency responsible for developing and maintaining the national curriculum and learning outcome assessments. The Act will also establish a National Education Policy Committee, the new policy-making body responsible for advising the cabinet, reviewing the national education plan, and ensuring public participation in shaping the Thai education system. The Office of Non-Formal and Informal Education will be transformed into the Department of Learning Support, emphasizing the importance of life-long and self-directed learning.



National Efforts to reform Thai Education

Beyond the national plans which form the strategic blueprint governing the direction of the Thai education system, there were efforts at the national- and project-level to establish public agencies and pass innovative legislations to tackle issues of education inequity. A few notable examples include:

1. Establishment of the Student Loan Fund

In 1998, the Student Loan Funds was established to provide low-interest education loans to poor students at upper-secondary and higher education levels. The loan covers tuition fees, education -related expenses, and living expenses. In 2019, 538,398 students received a total of 26,397.32 million baht.

2. Establishment of the Equitable Education Fund

The 2017 Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand has declared the intention to set up a new government agency to directly tackle the issues of inequity in education. In 2018, in a landmark legislation, the **Equitable Education Fund (EEF)** was established to provide support, both financial and non-financial, to disadvantaged children and youth. The fund's mission is to tackle inequity through partnerships and knowledge-generation. In particular, the EEF supports schools, teachers and other organizations and enterprises who are important in bringing about education equity in Thailand.



3. Education Sandbox Act (2019)

Enacted in 2019, the Education Sandbox Act decentralizes decision making authority on education management to school and area-based agencies in pilot areas. The intention is to create a participatory mechanism between central government, local administrative organization, private sector, and civil society to design learning direction under local context, by providing room for more innovative practices. Lessons learned from ground in the sandbox areas will form evidence-based policy feedbacks, which can be used to fine-tune the national education policies. In 2021, there are 432 schools from 8 provinces of Chiangmai, Kanchanaburi, Sisaket, Satun, Rayong, and southernmost provinces of Pattani, Narathiwat and Yala in the pilot programme.

4. Competency-based Curriculum

To facilitate the development of 21st century skills, the Ministry of Education is revamping the national curriculum to become competency-based, replacing the previous content-based curriculum. With the new curriculum, teachers will be able to focus on truly bringing students up to the challenge of the 21st century. Six core competencies are self-management, higher-order thinking skills, communication, teamwork and collaboration, civic education, and sustainable living in harmony with nature and science. The curriculum will be piloted in 265 schools within 8 provinces of the Education Sandbox.¹ The implementation plan is to conduct public hearings both online and offline from September 2021 – February 2022. Schools express their interest to adopt a competency-based curriculum from November 2021 – January 2022. By May 2024, every school nationwide is expected to adopt a competency-based curriculum.⁶

¹<http://www.edusandbox.com/>



Project-level Efforts to reform

At the project-level, multiple innovative approaches have been taken by government agencies, the private sector, universities, EEF, and other partners to address problems of education inequity. Some notable innovative project and practices includes:

1. Dual Curriculum of Vocational Education and High School Education

The dual certificate program integrates vocational and high school curriculum together via the cooperation between the Office of Basic Education Commission (OBEC) and the Office of Vocational Education Commission (OVEC). Local businesses provide internship and professional practice positions for students. The dual program will provide employable skills for high school students, preparing readiness and opportunities to enter the workforce. As a result, potential earning could ease economic pressure particularly for a low-income family, hoping to reduce the school drop-out rate.

2. Education Provision for Disadvantaged Children in the 'District Schools' of Mae Hong Son Province

TUNICEF in collaboration with local education authorities in Mae Hong Son developed the 'District School' concept, taking into consideration the local context of the mountainous area and ethnic diversities. In the area, an alarming number of 1,200 children are out of school, with students in schools having low academic proficiency. Learning centers are grouped for administrative purposes into a single, larger 'school'. One 'District School' is operated with multiple 'classrooms' that are separately located. As a result of 10 years of development, the number of out-of-school children has declined, and 100 percent of District School graduates continuing on to secondary school, among others.



Since 2018, the Equitable Education Fund (EEF) has supported projects which directly tackle the heart of education inequity, often as a pilot, aiming to provide key lessons and insights for other actors to effectively take on the challenge of reducing inequity:

3. Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program

The Equity Bursary program is designed to provide financial support to extremely poor students to ensure access to basic education and prevent school drop-out. Students will receive 3,000 Baht/person/year to support living expenses which may include commutation expenses. Aiming to reduce financial burden families in poverty, the programme asks that in exchange for receiving the bursary, the family must ensure that the student maintains a school attendance record of more than 80%. Teachers also submit student weight and height to monitor physical development and detect potential malnutrition. The program covers students from kindergarten to lower secondary school. As of the second semester in 2020, the program supported 1,173,752 students from 28,828 schools nationwide.⁷

4. Information System for Equitable Education (iSEE)

iSEE is a data-visualization platform based on a database of more than 4 million disadvantaged children and youth, linking 13-digit identification numbers and Geographic Information System (GIS). The database relies on data from the biannual CCT survey, and data linked from other databases in collaboration with other governmental organizations such as the Ministry of Education. The platform allows anyone to see the inequity gap of Thai education in numbers at any time. Government agencies and private sector actors have found the platform useful in planning pilot programmes, and also CSR programmes, allowing help to reach students in the most need. iSEE marks one of the efforts in linking education data from various public agencies.



5. Teachers and School Quality Improvement Project (TSQP)

The Teacher-School Quality Programme (TSQP) aims to create a model in school improvement for disadvantaged medium-sized primary schools across Thailand. The programme promotes sustainable 'self-improving schools', by connecting experienced mentors, school leaders and teachers to create a 'professional learning community' on teaching, learning and school management, following the principles of 'whole-school approach' to school development. Currently, the programme reaches over 700 schools in Thailand, with over 11 institutions, ranging from university faculties to foundations, acting as coaches and mentors for schools. To ensure longer term sustainability, and to institutionalize the supporting mechanisms, the EEF is also partnering with OBEC to ensure that supervisors from the Education District Office also take on a supportive role.

6. Area-based Equitable Education Network:

EEF has partnered with 20 provinces to tackle education inequity, focusing on out-of-school children and youths and early childhood groups. Twenty participating provinces are Chiangmai, Mae Hong Son, Lampang, Nan, Phrae, Sukhothai, Phitsanulok, Khon Kaen, Maha Sarakham, Surin, Amnat Charoen, Ubon Ratchathani, Nakhon Ratchasima, Kanchanaburi, Nakhon Nayok, Rayong, Surat Thani, Phuket, Yala, and Songkhla.

The program aims to create a local collaborative mechanism on education among key actors, starting by gathering data of target groups. Provincial multi-disciplinary working groups are to develop supporting recovery plans including re-enrollment and professional skill training for out-of-school children and youth. According to the EEF annual report 2020, the programme recorded over 51,527 out-of-school children and youths.



For the early childhood group, additional resources from EEF were allocated to the local administration organizations (LAO) to upgrade the quality of Local Child Development Centers in accordance with the national standard. Over 317 centers in 20 provinces were upgraded in 2020.

7. Scholarships to advance education opportunity

7.1 Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn - Higher education Scholarship for resilient students

The piloted scholarship aims to provide opportunities in higher education for resilient students who have high academic performance and come from poor families. According to the OECD, 18.4% of the poorest quartile of students are able to score as high as students in the top 25% socio-economic status. Most of these resilient students have aspirations to study in higher education. However, a survey by the NSO has shown that only 5% of the bottom 25% socio-economic group end up actually studying in higher education.

The scholarship addresses the financial problem and provides higher education opportunities for aspiring students to study at the undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral levels in the program related to the new S-Curve Industries, STEM, and digital technology.

7.2 Innovation Scholarship for High-level Vocational Training

Currently, manpower in a vocational profession is considered insufficient to serve the growth engine industry, hoping to uplift the country from the middle-income trap. Promoting high-level vocational training does not only provide competent manpower for industries but also strengthens the capability of training institutions. The goal of this program is to enable the social mobility of disadvantaged students and eventually eradicate intergenerational poverty through vocational education and employability.



The program provides financial support to disadvantaged students with good academic proficiency to further study in a high-level vocational certificate or diploma. Each year 2,500 targeted scholarships will be given to students in Grade 9 and Grade 12 of secondary school, and third-year vocational certificates. Students will learn occupational skills from a work-integrated learning program (WIL) in the 10 S-Curve industries. The program includes institutional development funding to ensure the competency-based outcome of vocational education. The selected institutions are required to conduct quality improvement activities, oversee student welfare to prevent drop-out, and promote employment opportunities for students by the engaging business sector. During 2019-2020, the program awarded scholarships to 7,067 students to study in 153 institutions.

7.3 Homegrown Teacher Scholarships

The Homegrown teachers programme (Kru-Raak-Thinn) aims to tackle the longstanding problem of high teacher turnover in small, rural schools. Disadvantaged high school students from rural areas with aspirations to become a teacher, will be able to take on a scholarship to undergo pre-service teacher training at an EEF-partnered institution. The course is designed to equip pre-service teachers with the necessary skills and attitude to combat the challenges of teaching in small, rural schools. After they graduate, they will be deployed back to teach at a small school in their hometown for at least another 6 years, where they will continue to receive support and mentorship to further their professional development. Currently, there are 11 EEF-partnered universities, which will take on 5 cohorts of collectively 1,500 Homegrown Teachers scholars. The first cohort of Homegrown teachers graduates will be deployed to schools in 2024.

Actors from the private sector are looking to take part in the reforming Thai education

During the past decade, Thailand has seen a rise in interest from the private sector to tackle education inequity. Startups and social enterprises with focus on the education sector have grown in number, with a great variety of missions. Notable example (non-exhaustive list) includes InsKru – an idea-sharing platform to empower teachers; WE Space – a gamification for online career counseling; Look’n Say – an application to support deaf children; Vulcan Coalition – an AI data crowdsourcing to assist disabled persons for job opportunities; Seen by Base Playhouse – a soft skills assessment platform; Mindset Maker – a positive psychology interaction platform scholarship; Edverest – a scholarship/bursary matching platform for underprivileged students; Dynamic school - teacher development program for the context of underprivileged schools; Love to Read - promotes early childhood development with reading; Vichanorksen - showcasing platform for underprivileged kids’ unseen potential; Edef - volunteering program to create a learning space and education model designed for the needs of children with hearing impairments; Teach for Thailand - a teaching fellowship program to develop future leaders for the education sector; Saturday school Foundation - volunteering program to unleash children potential via Saturday Extracurricular Classes.



There is also a very welcomed rise in the level of Public-Private Partnership. As Thailand's education problems are complex, involving many stakeholders, Public-Private Partnership plays a crucial role as it brings together a wider set of actors, crowdsourcing effort and ideas to tackle the problems. A notable example includes the Thailand Education Partnership (TEP) is an alliance of over 25 organizations including education institutions, social enterprises and education foundations. TEP works closely with public agencies to discuss and put forward ideas to tackle education inequity, occasional organizing forums and roundtable discussions.



**Teachers and the
journey towards
Equitable
Education**



Teachers are at the heart of tackling education inequity. They are some of the closest people to students. Many represent a space of support and comfort for the most in need. This chapter will explore the challenges faced by teachers in achieving equitable education, ways in which the challenges are being addressed and possible support that we can provide to teachers.

The increasing expectations on roles of Teachers

As teachers are expected to lead students towards attaining the essential 21st century competencies, they are continuously challenged to develop themselves and grow as a profession. Teachers are expected to have the ability to customize learning, manage classrooms, complete assessments and evaluation, while accounting for diversity in the classroom. With the soon to be adopted competency-based curriculum, teachers are also expected to apply project-based learning, community-based learning, integrating subjects with community issues to ensure comprehensive learning and skill development. Moreover, the Thai social context has established high expectations on teachers. Teachers are expected to be role models to children. Many parents also expect that teachers will be able to provide complete care to their children's development and education, which is arguably a very high expectation as student development, including attitude and behaviours, are shaped even when they are not in schools.

Challenges faced by teachers

Teachers across the country have faced continuous challenges in different degrees resulting from structural factors, social context, and expectation, digital disruption, as well as the ongoing pandemic.

Structural factors based on legal conditions, budget allocation, and justified data have established institutional norms that interfered with the daily operation of teachers, often drawing away their focus or time on non-developmental issues. Structural issues of the education system include centralized decision making, generic policy approach, blurry line of accountability from layers of government hierarchy, budget allocation per number of enrolled students, category of school sizes and location, evaluation protocol, teacher allocation.

In particular, there are also issues with the **teacher allocation** mechanisms. According to the World Bank (2020) report, the student-teacher ratio of 16:1 in primary schools is considered not low compared to international standards. However, similarly to the budget allocation rules, teachers are allocated on a per-student basis with 1 teacher for every 20 students. The implication of the rule is that smaller schools, particularly with less than 120 students, will have fewer teachers than the number of classes. With the teacher shortage, available teachers will need to handle more class hours, possibly over the recommended limit of 20 hours per week, along with extra administrative tasks to keep the school running. In the smallest schools, teachers are likely forced, out of necessity, to handle multi-grade classes even without formal training. The



increased workload may drive away even the most determined teacher, with teacher burn-out a common sight, affecting the quality of teaching and learning for students. Once the 2-year stay period is finished, many teachers in smaller schools will request to be redeployed to other larger, more urban schools. In other words, it can be said that there is a trend of brain-drain of the most highly qualified and experienced teachers towards larger schools. With over 57% of OBEC's nearly thirty-thousand schools, serving 1.26 million students, are designated as being 'small', the adverse effects of the teacher allocation rules are worrisome.

Teachers' time and focus is also often spent dealing with administrative tasks. A blurry line of accountability from layers of government hierarchy has created a bureaucracy that requires a teacher to submit many reports and information upon various requesting agencies. Redundant administrative work has sometimes taken over teachers' time for students or caused a distraction from the teacher's core responsibilities in facilitating the development of students.

The **budget allocation** system, which allocates budget to schools on a per-student basis, has put smaller schools at a disadvantage. Smaller schools may find themselves constantly plagued with insufficient resources. They often need to fundraise, in order to fund activities or hire specialist teachers (i.e. hiring foreign teachers).



Digital disruption, exacerbated by the **COVID-19 pandemic**, have also put more pressure on teachers. The pandemic has forced classrooms to adopt the digital technology for online learning. Teachers must rapidly learn to use cloud storage platforms, webinars, and conference call applications. Pedagogically, they must also adapt their classes to an online learning environment. Many teachers and students had, or still have, struggles to adapt to the new learning environment. Moreover, the pandemic had caused many students to miss classes, or even drop out. As a result, teachers had to invest more time and energy to track and monitor students to maintain engagement outside the classroom. For students who cannot access the digital classes, the teachers must prepare some 'on-hand' learning materials, delivering it to the students.

For **vocational teachers**, they are expected to be able to facilitate the development of skills required by the labour market or future employer. They face an increasing pressure of catching up to the rapidly changing skills requirement of the job market. Teachers with general education backgrounds could also face a challenge in facilitating the development of specialist skills. Many vocational teachers may also have not had experience outside of education, making it hard to empathize with the true working requirements in a professional practice.



Resilient Schools

Even with an abundant amount of structural challenge, schools and teachers have improvised well to cope with the challenges and provide the best education, given all the said limitations. Many schools have successfully connected with communities to fundraise or crowdsource additional resources. Many teachers have also successfully self-organized their own PLCs or professional support groups, without needing to wait for support from the third parties.

Moving Forward

Despite many efforts to alleviate the challenges, there are more spaces where support can be given. To alleviate teacher shortages, which in part is due to the mismatch in supply and demand of certain specialization, university-level pre-service teacher training programmes may need to be under a closed system. Additional incentives such as hardship allowances could be considered to encourage teachers to post in remote schools and reduce the 'brain-drain' phenomena which has plagued small, rural schools. The allowances should also be given at a progressive rate, increasing with each additional year in hardship posts to encourage long term stays. There should also be specialized career paths for school leaders and teachers who are known as the 'fixer', receiving recognition for turning around disadvantaged schools. To enhance the professional experience of vocational teachers, vocational education institutions may partner with businesses and provide opportunities for short-term job rotations for teachers.

Current efforts alleviate the challenges & Potential areas for improvement

To address the structural factors, the Ministry of Education and other agencies are looking into curbing the bureaucracies and limiting 'non-developmental' tasks. To reduce bureaucracies from the process of teacher performance appraisal, the Office of the Teacher Civil Service and Educational Personnel Commission (OTEPC) has launched '**Performance agreement (PA)**' to align rewards with teacher's performance in delivery of student outcomes. Performance evaluation will be based on learning design, student assignment and sample teaching video clips that could be submitted via an online system. The online system does not only relieve bureaucratic burden from teachers but also ensures fairness as a system will randomly select an assessor.

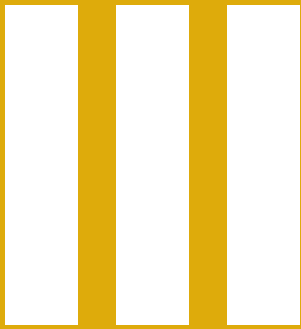
To reduce teacher shortage, in 2020, the OTEPC had reformed their teacher deployment policy to ensure that schools receive an appropriate and more equitable number of teachers. The new criteria factors in the number of students, number of teaching hours and subject expertise. The new policy also has a more generous provision of administrative support staff to schools, hoping to bring teachers' focus back to their classroom. However, the roll-out is still proving difficult as it will greatly disrupt the status-quo of teacher allocation.



Various agencies are looking into the possibility of reforming the budget allocation formula. The Equitable Education Fund has commissioned a research project into '**Equity-based Budgeting**', which is hoped to further shed light into a more equitable system of budget allocation. There are ongoing considerations to pilot 'Block-grants' in the Education Sandbox area. **Innovative Financing**, such as social impact bonds, is being looked at as an alternative source of funding for promising initiatives. As the knowledge on this topic is still limited, public agencies may look to fund further research or bring any promising proposals to pilot.

To support professional development of teachers, OBEC is supporting teachers to organize into a Professional Learning Community (PLC) where teachers can exchange and learn from peers, or join an online community, using a knowledge-sharing platform.

To increase parental and community involvement in education, teachers and schools may look into integrating subject content with community-based issues. An appropriate management of project-based learning rooted in real community-based issues will help students foster creativity and critical thinking, while also involving parents and members of the community.



**Supporting
Teachers to
become Leaders
in promoting
equitable
education :
Professional
Development
of Teachers**



Preparing Thai people for the 21st Century is, among others, a priority policy agenda for the Ministry of Education. To do so, the capacity of teachers, professors, and education personnel must be enhanced. This section will explore strategies to support teacher's professional development, both at the pre-service and in-service level, and also networks to professional development.

Pre-Service Training Initiatives

Pre-service training and development program is the essential foundation to ensure that incoming-teachers are equipped with the necessary skills and attitude to provide high quality education for all students in their care.

In order to control the quality, pre-service training programmes are standardized. Accreditation mechanisms were established by the Teachers' Council of Thailand, imposing standards on faculty of education, faculty of education science in higher education nationwide. Over 1,625 pre-service training programs are certified mostly being four-year undergraduate programmes and diplomas.

The continuous effort to improve the professional standard has been gradually evolving in response to the challenges facing teachers from digital disruption. The 21st-century skills, local context orientation with important participation of parents and community are key components in the standard.



The Secretariat Office of the Teachers' Council of Thailand also develops **Teaching Professional standards** with three components (1) knowledge and experience (2) in-service performance (3) professional conduct. The council has prepared for quality assessment benchmarking with the teaching professional standard. Performance evaluation criteria will also take into account the complexity of context i.e. location, size, available resources of the school.

Notably, Thailand is seeing the rise of many innovative Pre-service Teacher development programmes which seek to directly tackle the issue of education inequity. The most recent example is the Homegrown Teachers Programme, supported by the EEF. The programme aims to tackle the longstanding problem of high teacher turnover in small, rural schools. Disadvantaged high school students from rural areas with aspirations to become a teacher, will be able to take on a scholarship to undergo pre-service teacher training at an EEF-partnered institution. The course is specially designed to equip pre-service teachers with the necessary skills and attitude to combat the challenges of teaching in small, rural schools. After they graduate, they will be deployed back to teach at a small school in their hometown for at least another 6 years, where they will continue to receive support and mentorship to further their professional development. Currently, there are 11 EEF-partnered universities, which will take on 5 cohorts of collectively 1,500 Homegrown Teachers scholars. The first cohort of Homegrown teachers graduates will be deployed to schools in 2024.



In-service Training Initiatives

Notable examples includes:

Teacher Professional Development project under patronage of Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Secretariat Office of the Teachers Council of Thailand, the Office of Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn's Projects (OPSP), and Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University was established in 2015 on "Teaching professional development program" with tuition sponsorship for distance learning.

The diploma program aims to enhance the capacity of teachers, who are non-educational degree graduates and currently teaching in schools in remote areas. Eligible participants are those who currently teach in schools of Border Patrol Police, Office of the Non-formal and Informal Education, Office of Basic Education Commission (OBEC). The participated teachers will be entitled to apply for a teaching license. During 2015-2020, 686 teachers have been trained.

Professional Development via a working environment of 'Professional Learning Community (PLC)'

PLC is meant to encourage collaborative working culture with an area-based and whole-school approach, aiming for student quality as an outcome. PLC is a process that aims to promote a teacher's work culture that focuses on the outcome of student quality and working method of teachers collaboration. In PLC, teachers can share their best practices and learn from each other on teaching, leading, an opportunity for learner development, among others. The local university also contributes to mentoring the PLC development process.

Exchanging teaching experience and practice among teachers is a great way to improve learning management. The Plan-Do-See is the 3-step process in PLC. Development components are (1) creating shared values and norms (2) setting collective focus on student learning (3) Collaboration among teachers (4) being open-minded for expert advice (5) engaging in reflection dialogue.

Examples of PLC cases are Barn Yarng Kham school in the northern province of Phayao, deploying PLCs to improve teaching and learning for the subject of Science. This PLC is unique as they also invite parents to be part of the learning community. Another key feature is that all classes have an 'Open Door', where members are able to participate and observe classes to provide feedback. In Mae Hong Son, Pang-ma-pah Pittayasurp school has hill tribe students who struggle at school, facing the challenges of ethnic diversity. The school has used PLCs to co-create and design learner development direction. The design 'STAR' is an abbreviation for Supporting life skills, Thinking and solving problems, Achieving academic goals, and Realising ethnic identity.

The Secretariat office of the Teacher Council of Thailand (KSP) has launched a webinar, providing learning and training options upon teachers' interests such as stories of role model teachers with child-centric approach, showcasing research projects and education innovation from schools, and workshops. An initiative on knowledge management synthesizes good practices from the professional learning community to be resources for teachers. Practices cover topics of Digital literacy & Computing Science, Mathematics, Science, Early Childhood, Reading & Writing, School Reform, Life skill. As part of the effort on knowledge transfer and ensuring the impact on students, KSP in collaboration with universities further developed research projects to adopt good practices drawn from the professional learning community in piloted schools.



National Institute for Development of Teachers, Faculty Staff and Educational Personnel (NIDTEP) was established as a focal point on policy development and coordination on the development of teaching professional and education personnel. Examples of training courses are managing online workshops, digital literacy, competency development for executives, capacity building for policy and planning analysts, etc.

The Teacher Professional Development Institute (TPDI), an academic agency under the supervision of the Teacher Council's Council of Thailand, was set up to develop and certify training programs for teachers to ensure quality standardization. A variety of content, being offered as offline and online training programmes, covers every level and subject. The program also categorizes the level of knowledge complexity from basic, intermediate, and advanced levels. To ensure equal access to the professional development program, a training coupon has been given to teachers nationwide and teachers can decide to enroll in courses of their interest. Encouraging stakeholders to participate in a training program, TDPI has opened for contributors from any organization to submit their training courses to get certified and be part of the TDPI program. As of September 2021, a total of 4,708 courses were accredited.

A developing and supporting program for teachers working with out-of-school children and youths

Out-of-school children and youths are evidence that needs to be addressed in the current education system as progressing to achieve educational equality. Issues concerning out-of-school children and youths are varied in each region. These groups of teachers play a critical role in extending learning and development opportunities to this concerning children and youths. Teachers' profiles are diverse, including both formal and non-formal teachers, some with formal pedagogical training and some without. Some teachers are affiliated with an educational institution or non-profit organization while many of them are volunteering teachers from the public health profession, religious and community leaders. With their students' complex situations, teachers see the need for capacity improvement to be able to assist and develop their students of various concerns such as child protection law, coaching skills, employable skills. The supporting system, resources, tools and working team are insufficient. Many teachers have to find financial support by themselves while some teachers are supported by a foundation or association. This group of teachers is a key connector bridging learning opportunities with children excluded from the education system.

To help tackle the issue, EEF initiated a development and support program by creating a network of 3,140 teachers in 74 provinces. The support system includes area-based collaboration with local authorities, a case-handling system for children, a database of teachers or caretakers for out-of-school children. The program offers teachers working tools, knowledge, skills, through a workshop. The development process is empowering current teachers, capacity building for a new group of teachers, developing working tools, creating network and collaboration, alternative learning management.



Networks to support Teachers' Professional development

As exhibited by PLCs, networks are great opportunities for professional development. Teachers can exchange best practices, brainstorm solutions and crowdsource ideas. Notable networks which support professional development and promote equitable education includes:

Remote Area Teachers Network is a network of teachers and school leaders of schools in mountainous areas, remote areas, and islands covering 1,303 schools and 71 education area services. Members of the network engage in exchanging best practices and experience in designing education management under various challenging contexts of schools in remote areas. Regular topics include handling of insufficient resources and leveraging the advantages of ethnic diversities. The network has advocated for a school-based development approach and customized resource allocation to address inequality gap.

Professional Teacher Clubs (PTC) supported by the Office of Vocational Education Commission (OVEC) bring together teachers of the same subject to exchange their ideas and experience with the participation of industry representatives through meetings, workshops, and seminars. The network is expected to foster cooperation and collaboration with businesses to improve vocational curriculum, teaching and learning. The cross-sector collaboration also aims to provide teachers with industrial and business experience, and also work-based learning of students, as well as placement for students training or internship. There are currently 30 PTCs supported by OVEC.



The **Teacher-School Quality Programme (TSQP)**, by the EEF, brings together a network of 727 schools with over 11 mentors across Thailand. Teachers and School Leaders are able to participate in a cross-school professional learning community.

There are also sprouting networks of **privately organized Teacher Networks**. Kor-Karn-Kru is a network of progressive teachers which subscribes to a regular PLCs, they collaborate closely with InsKru, the knowledge sharing platform. EDUCA is the first privately organized education fair with a focus on teacher professional development, holding an annual conference since 2007. Pohpanpanya Academy provides online training courses for teacher professional development at very low costs.

creating shared values and norms (2) setting collective focus on



IV

**Supporting
mechanisms for
teachers**



Being one of the closest persons to disadvantaged students, teachers are at the heart of the fight to promote equitable education. They provide academic support, mental support and also pastoral care, putting the well-being of their students in focus. This section will explore how teachers are supported by various mechanisms at many levels.

Incentives to support teachers who promote Equitable Education

Teaching professionals, who can devote their lives, embracing challenges and expectations to develop students to the fullest potential, are motivated by their passion and sacrifices. Standard office hours do not apply to teachers as most often needed to become 24/7 supporters for their students. Both internal and external incentives are meaningful in recognizing teacher devotion.

As teacher salary was considered generally lower than other government officials' compensation, in 2004, changes were made in regulations to restructure and increase teachers' compensation. Generic incentive scheme was added to offer additional compensation as each teacher progresses in their academic ranking. In addition to salary and welfare, teachers who work in a special area are eligible for flat-rate hardship allowance. However, it is important to note that the increase in compensation for teachers appears to contradict with the decline in academic proficiency and learning outcomes of students. In 2019, the Office of the Teacher Civil Service and Educational Personnel Commission (OTEPC) has launched 'Performance agreement (PA)' to align rewards with teacher's performance in delivery of student outcomes. Under the PA, the



Education District office, school principals, and teachers will define their collective vision for student development in accordance with their local context. Performance evaluation will be based on learning design, student assignment and sampled teaching video clips that could be submitted via an online system. The online system does not only relieve bureaucratic burden from teachers but also ensures fairness as a system will randomly select an assessor.

At the international level, the Princess Maha Chakri Award (PMCA) Foundation has commemorated outstanding teachers, throughout ASEAN, whose dedication and achievements are recognized. The Princess Maha Chakri Award Foundation, in association with eleven Ministries of Education from all ASEAN countries and Timor-Leste, will each search for, and nominate exceptional teachers that have a strong track record of transforming their student's life. At the national level, OBEC gives 'Memorable teacher' awards to teachers whose dedication has profoundly evidenced academic proficiency improvement especially in disadvantaged, learning-disordered students, or having behavioral issues.



Roles of School leaders, Education District Office and Local Governments in supporting teachers

School principals are one of the most important persons as they are the closest to the daily work of teachers. The leadership support of the school principal is a critical lever to equitable education. They are expected to be the 'academic leader' of the school. They can support teachers by facilitating the process of identifying collective vision in developing students by working with teachers and communities, integrating learning management with community context. They also play an essential role to teachers' professional development as mentor or coach to teachers by giving feedback on lessons and classes. The best principals will also be able to facilitate collaboration and knowledge-sharing on best practices within the school. To combat the challenges of lack of funding, particularly in smaller schools, creative school principals act as the 'Chief Fundraiser', connecting with the community, organising for donations and charity events to obtain funds for school improvements.



The **Education Service Area Office**, also known as the Education District Office, is a significant connector in vertical and horizontal aspects to enable equity in education. With over 245 offices, overseeing nearly 30,000 primary and secondary schools across Thailand, they are responsible for capacity building of schools and personnel in their jurisdiction, communicating and supporting policy implementation and managing budget allocation. The offices are an essential vertical focal point for policy deployment. They are to ensure that policies correspond to local context and challenges, and that these policies are implemented among schools in their district. On the other hand, the office is a critical source of information for policy-makers, providing bottom-up feedback along with contextualized policy proposals and localized supporting mechanisms. Horizontally, the district offices support strategic capacity-building programs. They are also responsible for knowledge management among a network of schools within their jurisdiction, and also cross-jurisdiction, exchanging experiences with schools in other districts.

Multiple stakeholders may also collaborate to support schools' effort to provide equitable education. The EEF along with Naresuan University has developed 'Q-Info', a school management information system, which will help school leaders and teachers monitor attendance and academic performance of their students. Phuket Municipal schools, an early adopter of the system, has also received support and guidance in formulating the obtained data to become a 'blueprint' to further develop their education. Under the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programme, the EEF provides funding for schools to source for extra meals or organize enrichment activities for extremely poor students.



Policies on Teacher Deployment to promote equitable education

In the past, teachers were allocated on a per-student basis, with each school receiving one extra teacher per 20 students. This had caused smaller schools to receive an inadequate number of teachers, forcing them into embracing multi-grade teaching even without any formal training, among other problems. So, in 2020 the Office of the Teacher Civil Service and Educational Personnel Commission (OTEPC) had reformed their teacher deployment policy to ensure that schools receive an appropriate and more equitable number of teachers. The new criteria factors in the number of students, number of teaching hours and subject expertise. The new policy also has a more generous provision of administrative support staff to schools, hoping to bring teachers' focus back to their classroom.



V

**Supporting Teachers
during the COVID-19
Pandemic**



COVID-19 pandemic has been disruptive and provided many challenges to teachers and students. However, it has unveiled many leadership qualities and creativity of individual teachers and schools to overcome challenges for the benefit of their students. The crisis has also shown the true potential of cross-sector networks, bringing the vision of 'All for Education' to a reality.

Challenges for teachers during the Pandemic

The pandemic has brought disruption and uncertainty to classrooms across the globe, shaking the emotions of students, parents, and teachers alike. Schools have faced ambiguous policies regarding COVID-19 protocols, with semester dates being pushed back repeatedly, and on-site schools being shut-down in fear of community spreads. Teachers needed to quickly improvise and adapt to provide online lessons, which is not easy given that the average Thai students and teachers do not have much experience of learning on online platforms. The most vulnerable group of students may also lack the necessary resources for online learning. According to the survey by the EEF, 61% of the sampled poor and extremely-poor students report that they are not ready for online learning, citing 'lack of access to digital devices or the internet' and 'unfamiliarity with online learning platforms' as the key reasons for their concern.



Beyond the classroom, teachers need to invest time and effort to ensure continuity of education for their students. In an attempt to ensure access to education for students without access to online classes, teachers needed to provide 'on-hand' learning materials

Roles of teachers in promoting welfare and well-being during the Pandemic

During the stressful times of the pandemic, Teachers play an essential role in promoting student welfare and well-being. Teachers and schools had to work closer with public health authorities than ever before. In the early stage of the pandemic, teachers were instrumental in deploying preventive measures against COVID-19 in schools. Tasks can range from mechanical ones such as completing temperature checks, or setting up plastic partitions in classrooms, to very educational such as reminding students of good hygiene practices such as wearing face masks, proper handwashing, and the use of hand sanitizer. Many schools have turned their sports gyms or outdoor areas into field hospitals.

Teachers also play a significant role in community outreach by educating students and parents on the prevention of COVID-19 and its symptoms while monitoring for potential infected students. In the most recent wave of the outbreak, many teachers help manage food and medicine delivery to students or their families in home and community isolation. This out-of-classroom role may also expand to delivery of meals to disadvantaged students, as they face potential malnutrition, having missed on free school meals. EEF has allocated a budget of 300 million baht to support lunch for elementary students and teachers and communities take responsibility for managing and distribution.

There is also an increasing emphasis on promoting student **mental well-being**. Acknowledging that teachers may be one of the closest people to their students, teachers are now receiving psychological training. OBEC has developed a training program 'One school One psychologist' for classroom teachers.⁹ The capacity-building program aims to align understanding of the role and responsibility as well as a protocol on child protection and related support systems. During September last year, the initial training was organized and participated by 1,800 teachers and over 261 guidance centers were set up at each education district office to provide support and guidance teachers. The psychologists will provide consultation service to students by working with teachers, parents, experts to ensure a secured and supportive environment for student learning. Moreover, teachers are also trained to use the Health and Educational Reintegrating Operation (HERO Application) to monitor mental well-being of students. Teachers would conduct risk screening for any signs among nine symptoms which are hyperactive, inattentive, impulsive, irritable, lack of motivation or energy, decreased interest in school, bullied, bully behavior, difficulty with friends, and social setting. Appropriate assistance can be provided after early detection from screening by teachers and hand over the case to public health consultants in the area. In 2019, the HERO application was used and detected 7,045 from 62,213 students or 11.32% with risk signals of behavior, emotion, or social skills.¹⁰



Initiatives for Teacher Professional development during the Pandemic

Alongside training to help teachers better support students well-being during the pandemic, the Ministry of Education have also held frequent webinars, allowing teachers to share experience and tips in conducting successful online classes during the pandemic. The most notable of the series is the 'Education Empower' webinar, a 10-day long webinar with over 30 speakers. The MoE has also launched 'Kru-prorm' (Teacher Ready) website as a knowledge management platform for teachers to exchange and receive ideas to improve their classroom.

Beyond the ministries, many organizations have also provided opportunities and support to teachers. The Princess Maha Chakri Award Foundation (PMCA) had organized an online seminar on 'Learning during Covid-19 Pandemic: Create and Challenges' sharing best practices among awarded teachers. The EEF has developed a set of materials for schools and teachers to use in communicating with students and parents such as the 'back to school' guidebook on COVID-19. The Department of Health, Ministry of Public Health has also collaborated with the Ministry of Education to develop the "Sandbox Safety Zone in School (SSS)" guideline, laying out various measures for schools to implement before reopening on-site classrooms the upcoming semester.



Innovative Practices to be highlighted

Before the pandemic, insKru, a knowledge-sharing platform for teachers, had collaborated with the Office of the Education Council under the **“ED’s Possible”** initiative. The crowdsourcing initiative aims to scout for 1,000 ideas to transform and improve the learning experience of students. The initiative will also support creators in bringing their ideas to become a prototype. A notable example includes a group of teachers who revamped the concept of teacher evaluations to include feedback of their students. The group produced an easy-to-use feedback template that teachers easily contextualize and deploy. Apart from sharing teaching material and learning design, engagement in the online community gradually encourages teachers to try new ideas, express their views, and share ideas which is an important component for knowledge transfer.

During the pandemic, both the public and private sector have worked together to produce educational innovations to help alleviate the effects of learning loss, particularly for students who may not have access to internet or digital device, notable example includes:

Self-directed Learning Package: several organizations have developed self-directed learning packages during the pandemic such as the ‘Black box’ by Future Skill Foundation, ‘Learning Box’ by Starfish country home school foundation, and ‘Learning box’ by Teach For Thailand Teaching Fellows, among others. The learning packages are developed with the intention to provide access to learning, even when the students may not have access to digital devices. On top of bridging the digital divide, students will be able to take ownership of their learning and also strengthen their 21st century skills simultaneously. Innovative teachers had also developed some self-improvised learning kits as part of the ‘on-hand’ learning materials.



Learning Pods: Out of concerns for the disruption to their child's education, groups of parents have been seen to self-organize home-schools for their children. Children from around 4-5 families are pooled together to create in-person 'learning pods'. Parents of the children, who are working from home, will take turns running lessons and activities. Alternatively, Thai NGOs have also initiated a volunteering scheme where groups of students who do not have access to online learning can pair up with volunteers from the community. The small group of students will then study from the volunteer's house.

Donation of second hand smartphones for students in need: among other problems surface during online learning is students not having smartphones. There are many initiatives by various organizations from both the public and private sector to donate smartphones to schools or students in need. The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) also came to an agreement with the Ministry of Education to provide unlimited internet access for applications used for online classes such as Zoom, Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams etc.

Long COVID-19 Comprehensive Recovery Plan: A comprehensive approach which addresses both physical and mental well-being has been developed by the EEF and its partners. To ensure food security during the pandemic, a study on appropriate breakfast arrangements based on local context has been conducted, with a vision to showcase a model of systematic management to ensure food security for poor and extremely poor students. The project was piloted in 23 elementary schools and extension schools in four provinces of Phetchabun, Sakon NaKhon, Mae Hong Son, and Narathiwat.



To expand insight on learning loss phenomena and also develop tools for learning recovery, the EEF is collaborating with UNICEF, Starfish Country Home Foundation and the Research Institute for Policy Evaluation and Design, of the University of Thai Chamber of Commerce (UTCC) to pilot and measure the impact of a learning recovery programme. A learning loss measurement tool is to be developed as part of the study.

On mental well-being, EEF in collaboration with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Rajanagarindra Institute (CAMRI), GLOW, and psychologists from MASTERPEACE developed an online mental health survey, providing information on support centers. The target groups are stressful students from online learning, depression and children affected by COVID-19 (i.e. illness, orphans, school drop-outs etc.). Up to 100,000 children have responded to the survey. Information from the survey will be used to develop policies to support schools and students. Tools for mental health checks will be piloted in 100 schools along with capacity-building workshops on psychology for teachers.



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