



Ministry of Education

# TOWARDS A LEARNING SOCIETY IN THAILAND

An Introduction to Education in Thailand



## 1. THE THAI EDUCATION SYSTEM

Formal Education  
Non-formal Education  
Informal Education

## 2. ADMINISTRATIVE AND ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES

The Ministry of Education  
Administration in Educational Service Areas  
Office of the Basic Education Commission  
Office of the Permanent Secretary  
Office of the Education Council  
Office of the Vocational Education Commission  
The Commission on Higher Education

## 3. EDUCATION POLICY

The Tenth National Economic and Social  
Development Plan  
Education Policy  
Teaching and Learning Reforms in Thailand  
Recent Projects  
The Ministry of Education ICT Masterplan  
(2007 - 2011)

# THE THAI EDUCATION SYSTEM

There are over 37,000 Educational Institutions and nearly 20 million students in the Thai education system.

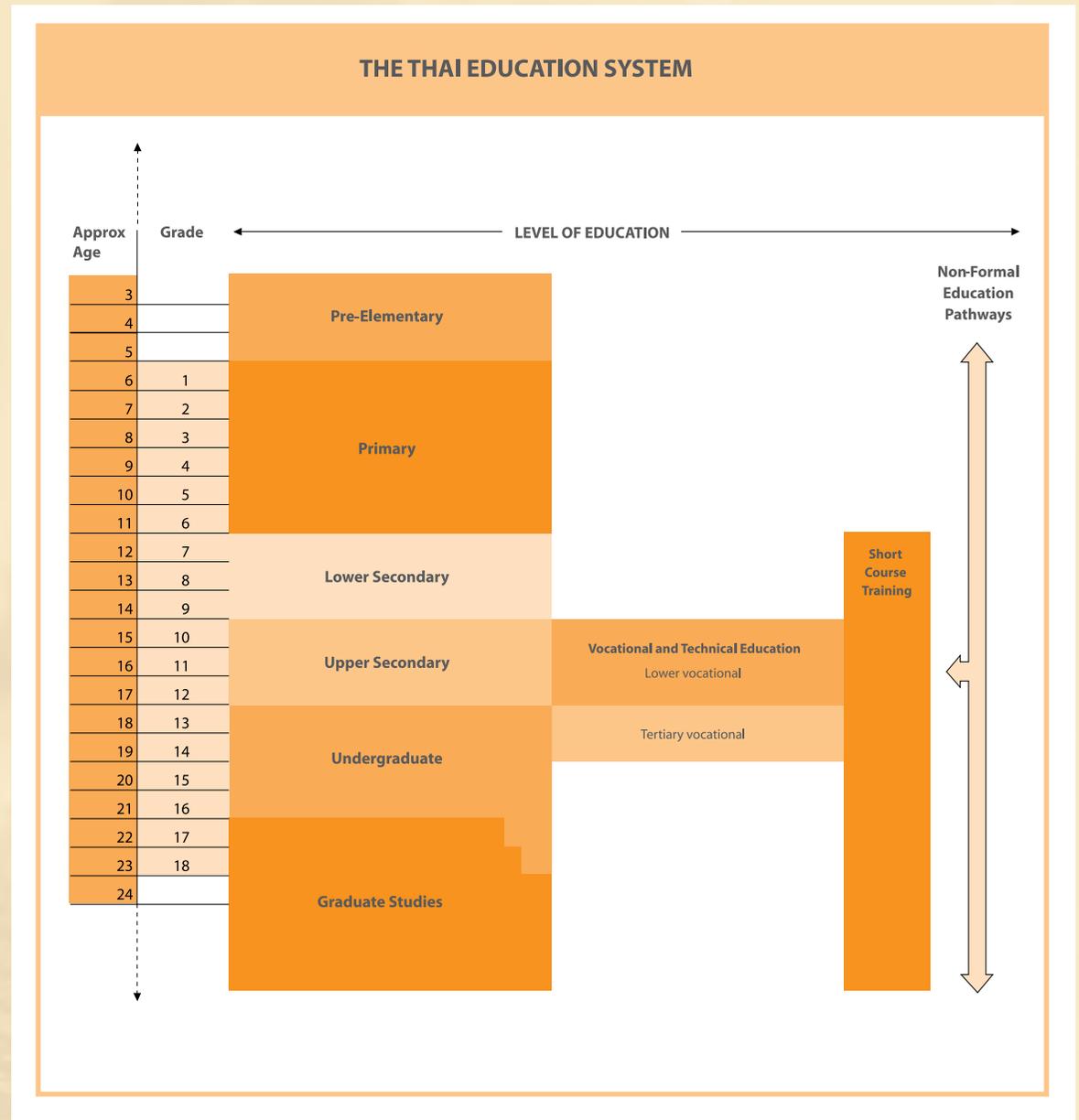
The Thai Education system consists of 12 year free basic education: 6 years of “Prathom” (primary education, P1 to P6) and 6 years of “Mattayom” (secondary education, M1 to M6). Enrolment in the basic education system begins at the age of 6.

The current Thai Education system stems from the reforms set by the 1999 National Education Act which implemented new organisational structures, promoted the decentralisation of administration and called for innovative learner-centred teaching practices. The Thai education system (Figure 1) provides 9 years of compulsory education, with 12 years of free basic education guaranteed by the Constitution.

## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS:

- AY: Academic Year
- CHE: The Commission on Higher Education
- Early Years Education: Kindergarten or Pre-Elementary
- ESA: Educational Service Area
- FY: Fiscal Year
- GPA: Grade Point Average
- ICT: Information and Communication Technology
- Mattayom M1 to M6: Secondary Years (7 to 12)
- MOE: Ministry of Education
- OBEC: The Office of the Basic Education Commission
- Prathom P1 to P6: Primary Years 1 to 6
- TVQ: Thai Vocational Qualification

Figure 1: The Thai Education System



Source: The Thai Education System, Towards a Learning Society, MOE 2007.



## Formal Education

Formal education services are divided into Early Year Education, Basic Education, Vocational and Technical Education and Higher Education.

### Early Year Education

Over 74% of children, aged 3 to 5 receive early childhood education. While the majority of Early Year Education is provided by government primary schools, the Ministry of Education has actively encouraged private schools and local government to take a more significant role at this level. As a result, there has been a marked expansion in the provision of Early Year Education by the private sector. This is particularly evident in Bangkok Metropolitan where the private sector provides 59% of total Early Year Education, compared with the national average of 28%.

### Basic Education

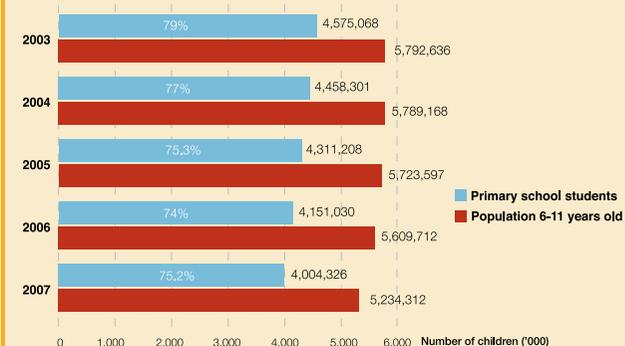
Basic education in Thailand is divided into 6 years of primary schooling, (Prathom 1 to 6) followed by 3 years of lower secondary (Mattayom 1 to 3) and 3 years of upper secondary schooling (Mattayom 4 to 6). In 2003, compulsory education was extended to 9 years, with all students expected to complete Mattayom 6.

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.

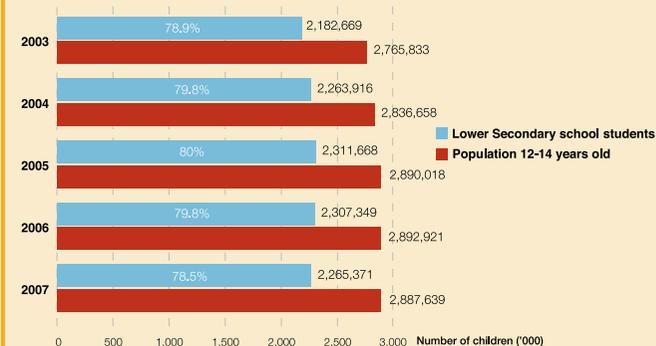
Gross enrolment rates for students in basic education were stable from 2003 to 2007, see figure 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3.



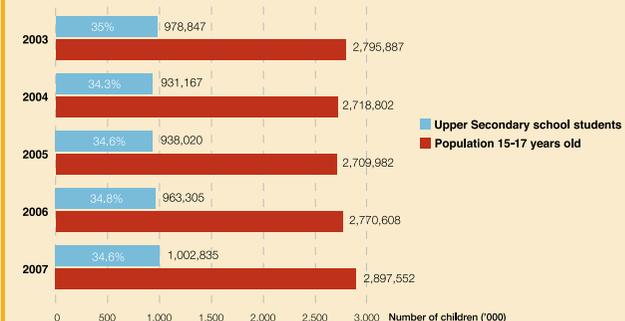
**Figure 2.1: Enrolment at the primary level, Academic Years 2003 - 2007**



**Figure 2.2: Enrolment at the Lower Secondary level, Academic Years 2003 - 2007**



**Figure 2.3: Enrolment at the Upper Secondary level, Academic Years 2003 - 2007**



## Vocational and Technical Education

Formal vocational and technical education is conducted at three levels: upper secondary (leading to the Lower Certificate of Vocational Education), post secondary (leading to a Diploma or Vocational Associate Degree) and university level (leading to a Degree). There are currently over 1 million students enrolled in the various vocational study pathways. Eight fields of study are undertaken as majors: trade and industry, agriculture, home economics, fisheries, business and tourism, arts and crafts, textiles and commerce.

The move toward lifelong learning and a learning society has been embodied in a credit transfer system to facilitate mobility between institutions; in the recognition of different types of qualifications from various institutions offering vocational training; and the evaluation of prior learning and work experience from within the formal, non-formal and informal sectors. Reforms are currently being implemented to remodel the system towards a Thai Vocational Qualification (TVQ) based upon industrial practices and needs.

## Higher Education

The means for student admission to the higher education sector is the **High School Entrance Examination** taken at the end of Mattayom 6 (Grade 12). Recent reforms have increased the importance placed on Grade Point Averages (GPA) for final university entry.

Higher education is predominantly provided at universities and colleges. The two distinct levels of educational attainment

are the diploma level and graduate degrees. Over 2.2 million students are currently enrolled in the higher education sector and participation rates of university age students has increased significantly over the last few years from an average of 26% to the current average of 40%. In recent years, there has been a significant increase in higher education opportunities with 78 public universities and 89 private higher education institutions.



## Non-formal Education

### Lifelong Learning

Thailand has long given priority to adult and non-formal education as a means of providing lifelong learning opportunities to the out-of-school population. Initially aimed at literacy and primary levels, non-formal education services have expanded significantly into secondary and vocational levels. Strategies include: developing a range of life skills through distance learning, establishing workplace and community learning centres and promoting the joint sharing of resources with the formal school sector.

In order to support the promotion of a lifelong learning culture in the non-formal education sector, internet connections have been made increasingly accessible in rural areas and system improvements have been implemented to provide recognition of prior learning and facilitate credit transfer.

## Informal Education

The vision of developing a learning society includes a clear need to promote the idea that learning can also take place outside the formal space of the classroom. Support for informal learning is reinforced by a network of over 800 libraries, at district and provincial levels, together with a network of 15 science museums. Educational television and radio programmes providing direct teaching as well as enrichment activities are broadcast nationwide through seven satellite transmitted channels from the Royal Sponsored Project and the Ministry of Education. In addition, every school is connected to the internet, with the aim of serving their local communities, and computer to student ratios are targeted to fall from 1:46 to 1:20.



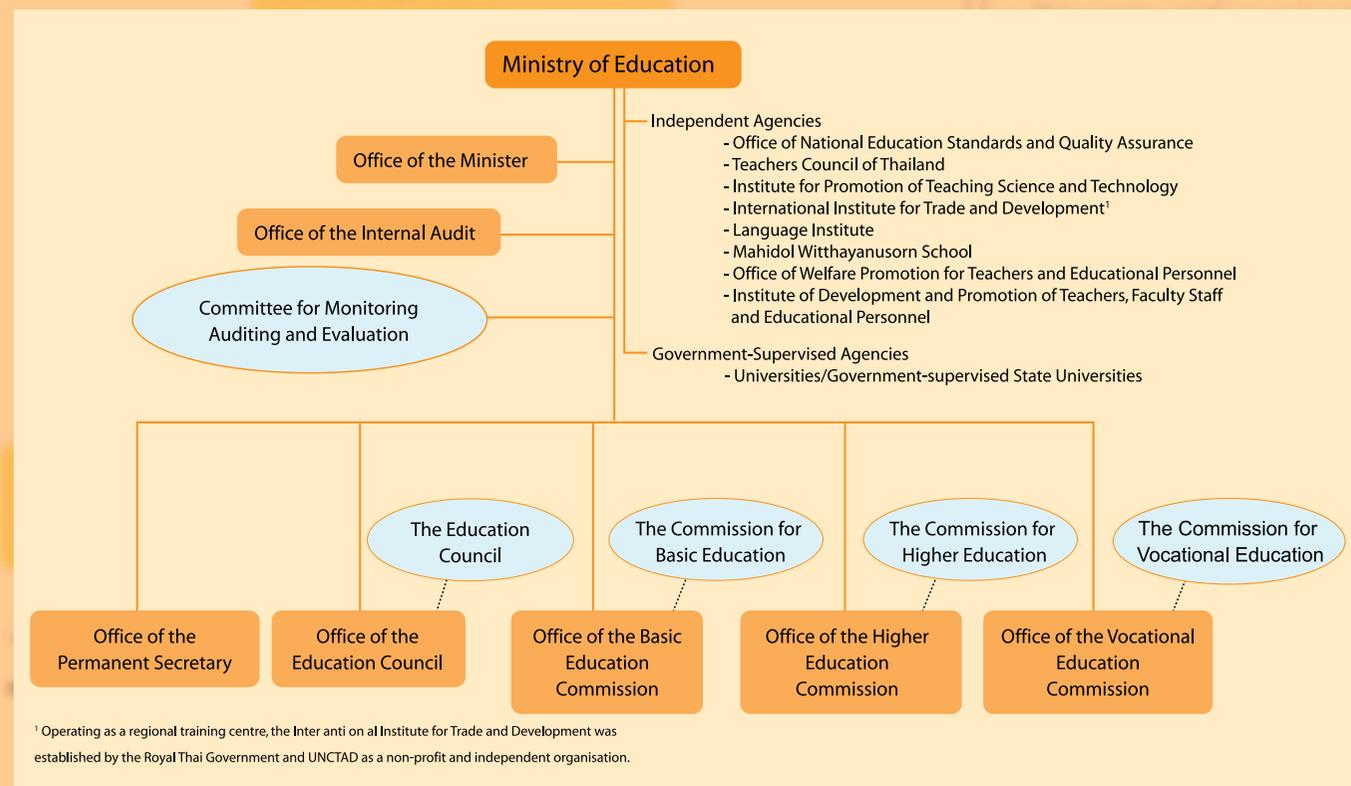
## Administrative and Organisational Structures of the Thai Education System

The 1999 National Education Act initiated an overall reformation of the Thai Education System. Considerable changes in the structure of management and administration have taken place in order to support the key teaching and learning changes

stipulated by the 1999 National Education Act. Emphasis is on the decentralisation of administrative responsibilities to local level with the consolidation of education planning at the central level. The reformation process of the Thai Education System led to the establishment of 175 Education Service Areas (ESA) in 2003, this number has increased to 185, in 2008.

A new structure for the organisation of the Ministry of Education at Central Level (Figure 3) has been implemented since 2002.

**Figure 3: The Administrative Structure of Education in Thailand**



Source: Education in Thailand 2007, Office of the Education Council, 2007.

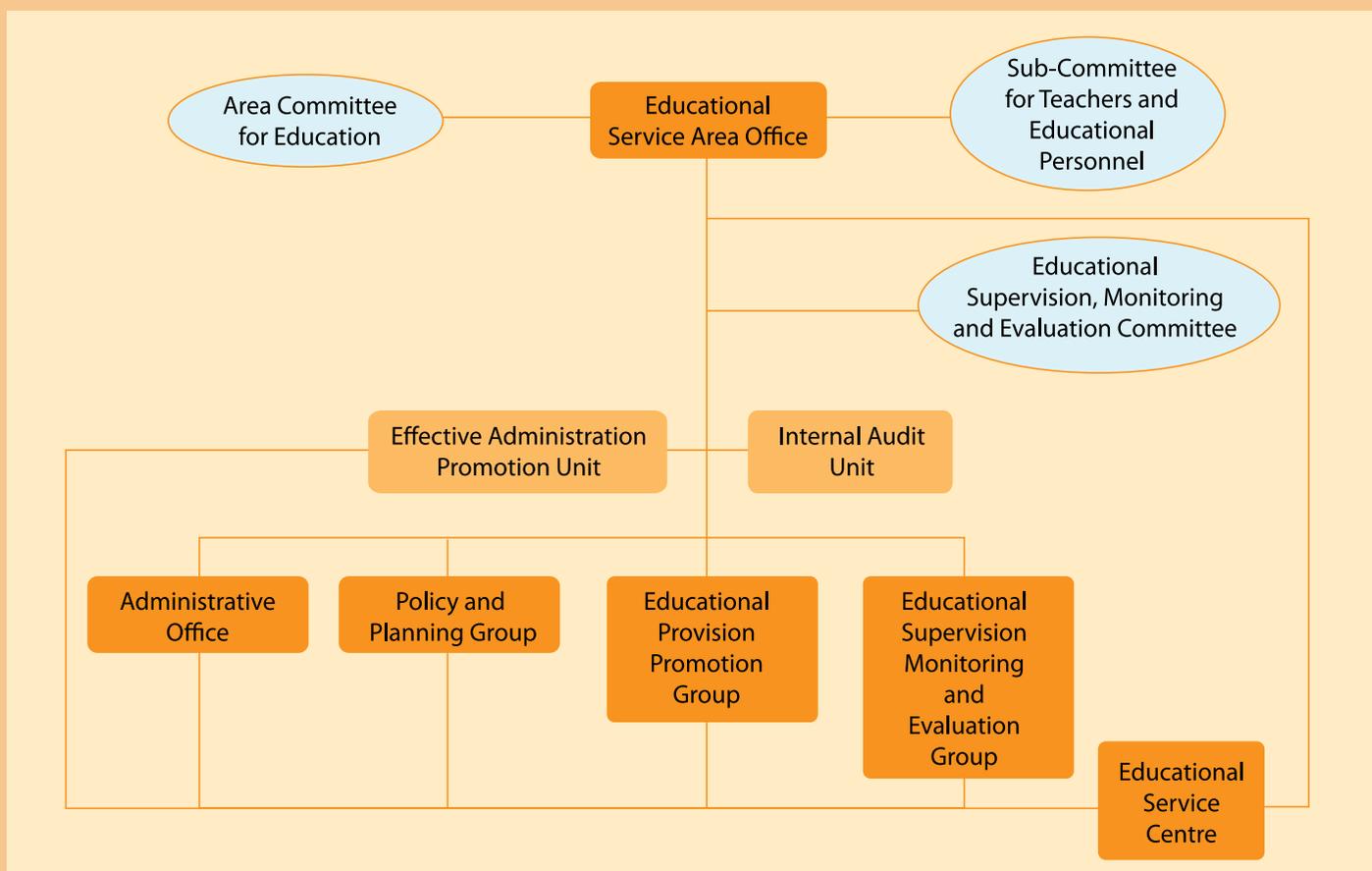


## Administration in Educational Service Areas

Educational Service Areas (ESA's) were established in order to decentralise educational administration. There are currently 185 Educational Service Areas in Thailand: 182 in the provinces and the remaining 3 in Bangkok.

Each ESA comprises of an Area Committee, which is responsible for approximately 200 educational institutions and a population of 300,000 to 500,000 students. This structure is illustrated in figure 4 below.

**Figure 4: Organisation of Administration in Educational Service Areas**



Source: Education in Thailand 2007, Office of the Education Council, 2007.

## Office of the Basic Education Commission

OBEC coordinates the continuity of activities to achieve government policy for social development and also implements the policies of the Ministry of Education. OBEC assesses the results of activities implemented by all Educational Service Areas, which then leads to improvements in policy-based tasks.

### Mandate:

- Promote and manage basic education for all learning age groups.
- Provide all learners with equal access to basic education and equip them with moral-led knowledge, integrated with the philosophy of a sufficiency economy.
- Improve the standard and quality of basic education; and decentralise administrative authority.
- Develop new innovations in education and manage the education for students with special needs and those who are gifted.



## Office of the Permanent Secretary

The Office of the Permanent Secretary for Education is the main organisation responsible for building students capabilities to play a role in developing the nation for sustainability.

### Mandate:

- Provide the Education Minister with information to initiate and implement policies which aid and manage a budget plan and include the evaluation of the Ministry of Education's operation performance.
- Coordinate the administrative and management systems and services in the MOE.
- Represent and act as the public face of the MOE; to present projects to students, teachers, educational personnel, parents and the public.
- Act as a coordinating unit for administration and cooperation among ministries and government offices; cooperate with the national committee (as stated by law or government policy) and promote international coordination in education.
- Promote private education and non-formal education; improve the development of educational law; accelerate professional development.
- Develop Management Information System.

## Office of the Education Council

OEC is the main policy development organisation for planning and setting national education standards. OEC is also responsible for education research and assessment.

### Mandate:

- Propose the National Scheme of Education which integrates religion, arts, culture, and sports into all levels of education.
- Propose educational policies, plans and standards for implementation in accordance with the National Scheme of Education.
- Propose policies and plans for the mobilisation of resources for education.
- Evaluate the provision of education in accordance with the National Scheme of Education.
- Provide opinions or advice on various laws and ministerial regulations.
- Support education research and set up network in learning and national wisdom.

## Office of The Vocational Education Commission

OVEC is responsible for vocational and professional life long learning. The provision of technical and vocational education and training is offered through the formal school system, in both the basic and vocational education streams, as well as through non-formal education opportunities. Technology-related education is offered at primary school level as an elective, compulsory, or free elective course to provide students with practical experience and basic knowledge.

### Mandate:

- Provide the general public with access to technical and vocational education.
- Assess the demands of the labour markets and promote self-employment in accordance with social and economic development of the country.
- Produce and develop a vocational workforce in all professional levels.
- Implement and standardise quality vocational education management and administration.
- Promote research, innovation and technology development for a competitive market.

## The Commission on Higher Education

The Commission on Higher Education (CHE) is responsible for education at both undergraduate and graduate levels. The CHE has the authority to strategise, manage and promote higher education with respect to the academic freedom and excellence of degree-granting institutions.

### Mandate:

- Formulate policy recommendations, elevate education standards, and carry out international cooperation in higher education.
- Propose policies and strategies in higher education to develop Thai identity, culture and wisdom.
- Devise criteria and guidelines for resource allocation and propose framework for resource development.
- Establish higher education institutions and community colleges and provide financial support.
- Coordinate human resources development; improve student capacity, include students with special needs.
- Provide recommendations for establishing, amalgamating, upgrading and closing down of higher education institutions.
- Establish and implement monitoring, assessment and evaluation systems for the management of higher education.
- Promote research and development planning; compile data and information on higher education.
- Coordinate strategies to increase standards of education to align with high quality international levels.



## The Tenth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2007-2011)

This is a five year strategic plan, based on a collective vision of Thai society as a “Green and Happy Society,” where Thai people are endowed with morality-based knowledge and resilience against the adverse impacts of globalisation.

The main emphasis of The National Development Plan is to increase capacity for the improvement of quality of life of our people. In this regard, the Tenth Plan sets specific targets for education:

1. Increase the average period of education provided to 10 years.
2. Improve test scores (higher than 55%) in core subjects, at all levels.
3. Raise the percentage of mid-level workforce to 60% of the national labour force.
4. Increase the ratio of research personnel to population by 10:10000.

### Education Policy

**1. Invest in raising the quality of the entire educational system**, to address the development of teachers, curricula, instructional media and information technology; improve the quality and knowledge of students in accordance with educational plans, available resources and surrounding factors; create a system of life-long learning for Thai people; and establish Thailand as a regional educational hub.

**2. Ensure that every Thai citizen has access to no fewer than 12 years of basic education**, free of charge, with attention focused on reaching the disadvantaged, the disabled and those living in difficult circumstance; increase access to further education through student loan schemes, linked to policy concerning the production of knowledgeable and capable graduates; and provide supplementary scholarships for both domestic and overseas education.

**3. Adjust teacher training and development to ensure quality and high moral standards among teachers**, while guaranteeing teachers appropriate remuneration and welfare for a good quality of life; develop and modernize curricula and instructional media in line with global changes; promote studies in Thai language and history to instill a sense of Thainess; expand the role of creative learning systems through organizations such as the Office of Knowledge Management and Development, the development of a modern library system, and the establishment of new learning environments including knowledge parks, a National Discovery Museum Institute, the Thailand Creative and Design Centre, a centre for the development of sports, music and arts, and a centre for the treatment and development of autistic persons, children with attention deficit disorder and other disadvantaged individuals.

**4. Promote the intensive use of information technology to enhance learning efficiency**; ensure access to the necessary infrastructure, technologies and software to complement learning; give particular attention to the development of foreign language learning.

**5. Develop the quality and standard of higher education institutions** to guarantee a high level of academic and professional services, to achieve excellence in research and innovation, and produce and develop a workforce that corresponds to structural changes within the manufacturing and services sector; accelerate the development of high quality workforce with clear career paths to enhance the country’s competitiveness in various sectors such as petrochemicals, software, food, textiles, health, tourism and logistics management; provide occupational and professional competence certification; and continue the expansion of the role of the Fix It Centre at the community level.

**6. Promote and adjust regulations** to support the decentralisation of educational administration and management to district education offices and academic institutions; encourage the involvement of private sector in educational management; build the capacity of local administrations to prepare them for the transfer of responsibility and to ensure the required quality standards are met.

**7. Coordinate all aspects of educational management through the different stages of the planning cycle**, including identification, planning, supervision, monitoring and evaluation, making effective use of evaluation outcomes to review and adjust existing strategies, and to develop appropriate, new strategies.

## Teaching and Learning Reforms in Thailand

The implementation of the 1999 National Education Act, has prompted a major re-think in the education sector in terms of both teaching and learning methods, as well as in learning environments. This process of transformation is focused on: identifying learning outcomes within the 12 year basic education system; improving provision and practices in Early Years Education and the implementation of a vocational and technical training system.

The Ministry of Education is leading the transformation of the education system with a strategy based upon enhancing moral and ethical values together with a core programme for improving quality in education. This strategy is underpinned by His Majesty's philosophy of Sufficiency Economy which promotes moderation and harmony among local communities in order to meet their needs in a sustainable manner. Key programmes include:

- **Moral Education through the Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy.** 132 Moral oriented projects have been initiated, reaching 1.3 million students.
- **Professional Development.** New standards of professional competence for teachers to improve and transform: subject knowledge, the introduction of new methods in teaching practices, classroom management and professional development.

- **Laboratory School Project.** The focused development of one school, as a model, in each of the 921 districts. Facilitating innovation through investments in ICT and bring about whole-school improvements by mobilising resources from the local community.
- **Embracing Diversity.** Efforts at integrating local wisdom and culture into the national curriculum have been underpinned by policies to use mother tongue languages at kindergarten level.
- **International Partners for Reform.** International and multinational private sector cooperation programs with UNICEF, UNESCO, SEAMEO, Microsoft, Oracle and Intel. Funding is also raised through foreign loans or international funds from various countries and organisations.
- **Transforming Language Learning.** Transforming and developing the teaching and learning of languages, using authentic materials and learning situations; including the English Programme (EP) aimed at providing full or partial Thai national curriculum subjects in English.
- **Supporting Small Rural Schools.** The development of small rural schools has been a key tool in improving the quality of education across the country.

## Recent Projects

- **12 Year Free Education Scheme** - the MOE has agreed in principle to cover all costs under the 12-year free education scheme, and to extend free schooling to two years of kindergarten. A full free-education subsidy would

amount to THB 1,700 per student at kindergarten level. The annual subsidy for primary school students would be raised from THB 1,499 to THB 1,900; for lower secondary school students from THB 2,649 to THB 3,500 and for upper secondary students from THB 3,249 to THB 3,800.

- **Educational Loan Fund** - provides funds for students who come from low-income families and are continuing non-formal education in lower secondary and for students at high school level through to undergraduate school (for both mainstream and vocational curriculum). Students must pay back the loan with 1% interest per year after graduating. The Student Loans Foundation was established on 28 March 1995 and is managed by 3 institutions: the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Education and the Commission for Higher Education.
- **Interactive e-Learning Project** - aims to provide distance learning through an educational satellite link. Teaching is broadcast on the MOE Channel 1, in real time with instructors and experts to address student queries. The intention is to bridge the gap between rural and city schools and also to give students in rural areas the chance to interact with experienced teachers.
- **Learn@Work Catch Your Dream Project** - was initiated by the MOE in order to promote the productive use of free time of students aged 15 and above. The MOE, together with other private sector businesses, provides work positions that suit individual student needs. The cost of student hiring would amount to THB 102 million. The pilot study, implemented in April 2008, involves 250 students to work for 18 days and receive compensation of THB 200 a day or THB 3,600 a month.

- **Fix-It Centre** - operates under the slogan of “We fix, to build.” is run by the Office of Vocational Education Commission and the Ministry of Education, in cooperation with: the Organisation of Knowledge Management and Development, the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, the Department of Community Development (Ministry of Interior), the Department of Skills Development (Ministry of Labour), and the Bureau of the Budget. The project was a response to Government measures to stabilise the economy in the 2007 fiscal year. One of the aims was to augment income by creating economic activities, and to encourage the reduction of expenditure. It would also accelerate the disbursement of the small, medium, and large funds for communities.
- **One District One Scholarship Program** - The government has provided scholarships for students from low income families, both in basic and vocational level, to study undergraduate level at leading universities nationally and abroad. Students will be selected from 927 districts nationally for secondary education and 76 provinces nationally for vocational education level. The selected students will have to gain more than 60 percent in all exams and will receive 8-12 months language training before attending courses.
- **One Laptop Per Child Project (OLPC)** - is focused on increasing the number of computers available throughout the education system in order to bridge the learning gap for students in rural areas. Considerable efforts have focused on increasing the ratio of computers to students in primary and secondary schools from 1:46 to 1:20. The project is currently running in pilot schools. The ministry has further plans to distribute 1 million laptop computers to students around the country.

## The Ministry of Education ICT Masterplan (2007 - 2011)

The Ministry of Education’s ICT Masterplan seeks to support Thailand’s learning society aspirations by enabling all Thai citizens to experience the benefits of ICT.

### Targets and Strategies for the Ministry Of Education, 2007-2011

#### Targets

- All levels of education to utilise ICT in managing teaching and learning.
- Educational Service Centres to provide distance learning opportunities to all areas of the country.
- 80% of education organisations to manage their offices through ICT.
- 80% of teachers and educational personnel to have sound ICT knowledge.
- 80% of graduates, to gain appropriate ICT knowledge and 50% of ICT graduates to meet recognised international standards.
- 50% of all graduates to be Science and Technology graduates.
- 90% of the population in remote areas to receive ICT enabled information.
- 70% of working age people to use ICT to support their professional development.

#### ICT strategies and priority themes

- Creating opportunities to enhance access to, and improve the standards of e-learning media through collaborative initiatives to develop information (e-contents) through different learning media and the promotion of the use of ICT to support personalised learning in line with different learning needs.
- Developing ICT tools and infrastructure to establish and enhance effective educational management and services (e-management) through government back-office management system developments for e-offices to support electronic-based services (e-services).
- Increasing and developing the number of ICT personnel (e-manpower) to become ICT professionals (e-professionals) and enhancing the ICT skills and potential of basic personnel in society to support the development of electronically enabled and empowered knowledge and learning societies.

## Quick Facts

- There are approximately 63 million people in Thailand. In the capital, Bangkok, there are 5.6 million people.
- There are nearly 20 million students in Thailand enrolled from early years to higher education encompassing both formal and non-formal education.
- In 2006, GNP per capita was THB 115,097, rising from THB 104,250 in 2005. The budget set aside for Thai education constitutes about 3.9% of GDP and in actual terms 24% of the national budget in 2004.
- 82% of education institutions spanning all sectors are public and 18% are private. In Bangkok, this figure is 70% public and 30% private.
- There are 2.2 million students in the higher education sector, an enrolment ratio of 56% amongst the university age cohort. 91% of students are undertaking undergraduate programmes. The public sector dominates overall provision, with 87% of national and 83% of Bangkok higher education from the public sector.
- In 2006, the national average year of schooling for a citizen aged 15 to 39 is 10.1 years and aged 15 - 59 is 8.7 years.
- There are 185 Education Service Areas (ESA) in 76 Provinces. Each is responsible for approximately 200 schools covering between 300,000 - 500,000 students in any one ESA.
- Vocational education is notable for its high percentage of private sector provision. Private sector provision is 37% of secondary vocational and 33% of tertiary vocational institutions. In Bangkok, private provision is 71% in the secondary vocational and 56% in the tertiary vocational sector.

## Educational Statistics

### Formal School System

	Number
Students	13,538,982
Teachers	651,897
Schools	36,712

### Non - Formal Education

	Number
Students	2,798,062
Teachers	14,820
Non-Formal Education Centres	964

### Vocational Education

	Number
Students	1,106,124
Teachers	44,816
Educational Institutions	821

### Community Colleges

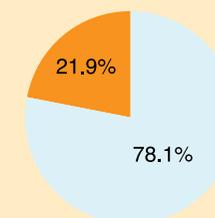
	Number
Students	16,536
Faculty members	183
Community colleges	18

### Universities

	Number
Students	2,032,638
Faculty members	64,115
Universities	145

### Educational Budget for fiscal year 2008

	Million Baht
National Budget	1,660,000
Educational Budget	363,164



- National Budget
- Educational Budget

Source: 2007 Educational Statistics in Brief, Ministry of Education

## Further Information

### Ministry of Education

<http://www.moe.go.th>

### Office of the Permanent Secretary

[http://www.moe.go.th/OPS\\_Page/](http://www.moe.go.th/OPS_Page/)

### Office of the Basic Education Commission

<http://www.obec.go.th>

### Office of the Vocational Education Commission

<http://www.vec.go.th/>

### Office of the Education Council

<http://www.onec.go.th>

### Office of the Private Education Commission

<http://www.opec.go.th>

### The Commission on Higher Education

<http://www.mua.go.th>

### Office of the Non-formal and Informal Education

<http://www.nfe.go.th>

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