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Principles and general objectives of education

During the past decades, as the society and economy have begun to change and become more complex, there have been some changes in the principles and concepts, including policy and objectives, of Thai education. An evolution in principles and concepts of education was reflected in the National Scheme of Education and the National Education Development Plan. In the 1990s, Thai education has been provided in accordance with the 1992 National Scheme of Education and the Eighth National Education Development Plan (1997-2001).

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

- The flourishing of individual wisdom, thinking, mind and morality is a necessary and essential goal towards creating balanced development between spirituality and material and economic growth.
- Human beings must realize the importance of judicious utilization and conservation of natural resources without causing detrimental effects to the environment.
- Thai language and culture must be promoted in order to optimize the use of modern knowledge relevant to the local context and needs.
- The proper balance between dependency and self-reliance is an essential basis for cooperation at individual, community and national levels for the promotion of sustainable development.

According to the National Education Act of 1999, amended in 2002, educational provision shall be based on the following principles: (i) lifelong education for all; (ii) all segments of the society to participate in the provision of education; and (iii) continuous development of the learning process.

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

As mandated by Section 33 of the 1999 National Education Act, a 15-year National Education Plan (2002–2016) was prepared in place of the former National Scheme of Education. The National Education Plan focuses on the integration of all

aspects of the quality of life. It emphasizes human-centred development and an integrated and holistic scheme of education, religion, art and culture. The Plan stipulates three objectives and eleven policy guidelines for implementation as follows:

- All-round and balanced human development (Developing all people to have access to learning; Learning reform for the benefit of learners; Inculcating and strengthening morality, integrity, ethics, and desirable values and characteristics; Manpower development in science and technology for self-reliance and enhanced competitiveness capacity).
- Building a society of morality, wisdom and learning (Developing a learning society to create knowledge, cognition, the good behaviour and integrity of the people; Promotion of research and development to increase the knowledge and learning of Thai people and Thai society; Creation, application and dissemination of knowledge and learning).
- Development of social environment (Promotion and creation of social and cultural capital limitation; Limitation, decrease and elimination of structural problems for social justice; Development of technologies for education; Systematization of resources and investment for education, religion, art and culture). (OEC, 2004).

The main objectives of the Eleventh National Economic and Social Development Plan (2012-2016), issued in October 2010, are to promote a peaceful society with good governance, to promote sustainable development through restructuring the economy, society and politics, and nurturing natural resources and environment, as well as to prepare the people and the community to be resilient to changes. To achieve these objectives, six development strategies have been set forth, including: promoting the just society; developing human resources to promote lifelong learning society; balancing food and energy security; creating the knowledge-based economy and enabling economic environment; strengthening economic and security cooperation in the region; and managing natural resources and environment towards sustainability. (UNESCO Bangkok, 2011).

Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

The basic guidelines and concepts of education in the country are contained in the **Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand** promulgated in October 1997. The According to Section 43, every person shall enjoy the equal right to receive basic education for the duration of not less than twelve years; such education shall be of quality and shall be provided free of charge (see also Section 48 of the Constitution of 2007). Every person shall have both the duty and the right to receive education and training (Sections 30 and 69; see also Section 72 of the 2007 Constitution). In providing education, maximal public benefit in national communication resources (Section 40) as well as the conservation and restoration of local wisdom (Section 46) will be taken into account. The Constitution also emphasizes the role of the private sector in providing education at all levels (Section 43; see also Section 79 of the 2007 Constituion). In addition, it ensures the right of local organizations to participate in the provision of education which will facilitate the decentralization of educational management. As far as education is concerned, the guidelines contained in the

Constitution are to be implemented through the enactment of a national education law, as stated in Section 81.

In accordance with the **National Education Act B.E. 2542** enacted on August 1999 and amended in 2002, Thai people have equal right to receive basic education of quality and free of charge for the duration of at least twelve years. The Act represents an unprecedented and long over-due break from traditional Thai educational norms such as lecturing and rote learning, as it sets the foundation for a more creative, questioning approach to studying. The Act also sets out to decentralize finance and administration, giving individual teachers and institutions more freedom to set curricula and mobilize resources, which in turn will tend to increase accountability and ensure that funds are targeted in the right areas. In order to operationalize the National Education Act, the Office of Educational Reform was established in 2000 for an initial duration of three years.

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

According to Section 17 of the Act, compulsory education shall be for nine years, requiring children aged 6 to enrol in basic education institutions until the age of 15 with the exception of those who have already completed grade 9. The **Compulsory Education Act**, which has been effective since 1 January 2003, requires that all children aged 6-15 years be enrolled in basic education institutions except for those who have already completed grade 9.

In October 2002, a 12-year free basic education scheme covering six years of primary and six years of secondary education was granted to students throughout the country for the first time in history. As of May 2004, free basic education was extended to fourteen years, including two years of pre-primary schooling.

According to the **Promotion of Non-Formal and Informal Education Act** of 19 February 2008, non-formal and informal education shall be provided to persons extensively and in accordance with the standards under the law on national education. A person, whether or not having received basic education, shall have the right to receive education in the form of non-formal or informal education, as the case may be, in accordance with the process and proceedings as provided in the Act. (Section 5). Section 14 stipulates there shall be an Office of the Non-Formal and Informal Education within the Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, abbreviated as "ONIE", with the Secretary-General of the Office of the Non-Formal and Informal Education, abbreviated as "Secretary-General of the ONIE", holding the

status of Director-General. There shall be a Provincial Committee for the Promotion of Non-Formal and Informal Education in every province. (Section 15).

According to the **Vocational Education Act** of 2008, vocational education provision must be in line with National Economic and Social Development Plan and National Education Plan in order to produce and develop vocational manpower at levels of skilled, technical, and technological, to serve the demands of labour markets, by integrating international theoretical knowledge with Thai wisdom to equip students with practical capacity and competencies for their occupations. Vocational education is provided through: (a) formal education: provided in colleges or institutes with certain graduation conditions, namely: aims, methodologies, curricula, duration, and evaluation; (b) non-formal education: there is flexibility of graduation conditions (aims, formalities, methodologies, duration, and evaluation); the contents and curricula must be appropriate and compatible with the needs of each group and environment; and (c) dual system and apprenticeship: this results from agreements between vocational institutes and entrepreneurs, state enterprises or government agencies, on teaching-learning curricula and evaluation; students spend some time learning in colleges or institutes and practice in entrepreneurs, state enterprises or government agencies. (UNESCO Bangkok, 2011).

The Directive of the Ministry of Education **OBEC 293/2551** dated 11 July 2008 provides for the implementation of the Basic Education Core Curriculum 2008, replacing the 2001 curriculum. Model schools and those ready for such implementation, will follow the following timetable: for academic year 2009, the 2008 curriculum shall be applied in grades 1-6 and grades 7 and 10; for academic year 2010, it shall be applied in grades 1-6, and grades 7, 8, 10 and 11; and as of academic year 2011, the 2008 curriculum shall be applied in all grades. Schools in general are expected to apply the new curriculum in grades 1-6 and grades 7 and 10 in 2010; in grades 1-6, and grades 7, 8, 10 and 11 in 2011; and in all grades in 2012.

Administration and management of the education system

The educational administrative system in Thailand is parallel to all other sectors of public administration characterized by the three-level structure: the central or national level, the provincial level (there are 76 provinces in the country, each one made up of about ten or more districts), and the local level. Consequently, the administrative and planning system of education including educational personnel administration follows this structure. At the central level, policies and plans are formulated both at national and ministerial levels. At the provincial level, educational development plans—provincial five-year plans, annual plans and operational plans—are prepared and implemented by the agencies involved. The local authorities are also responsible for the formulation of local education policies and plans as well as the management of education in their locality where various types of education have also been provided by the central government.

The responsibility for educational management in Thailand is under the mandate of the Office of the Prime Minister, the **Ministry of Education** (MOE), and the **Ministry of the Interior**. Following the most recent administrative reform (2002), the Ministry of University Affairs and the Office of the National Education Commission were incorporated into the Ministry of Education. Some public agencies

under six other ministries (Defence, Public Health, Transport and Communications, Agriculture and Cooperatives, Justice, and Labour and Social Welfare) also take charge of the management of education in specialized fields or for specific purposes.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for the management of education at all levels from pre-primary to secondary, post-secondary and tertiary level education. It also provides non-formal education or out-of-school programmes and supervises private schools at all levels. Besides, the Ministry of Education takes charge of all matters relating to religion and culture. Until recent years, the administration and supervision of higher education in public universities was under the responsibility of the Ministry of University Affairs—now the **Office of the Higher Education Commission**, under the Ministry of Education. The **Office of the Private Education Commission** (OPEC) at the Ministry of Education supervises and is in charge of subsidizing private educational institutions.

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

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

The **Office of the Vocational Education Commission** (OVEC) is the main organization responsible for technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in the country. The Commission embraces administration and management of vocational education at two levels. At the national level, the Commission—jointly with representatives from the private sector as well as concerned agencies—is responsible for formulating long-term planning and other major policies relating to TVET. At the institutional level, over 400 colleges under the Commission have been merged into 28 multi-campus vocational institutes aiming at: developing a strong partnership with the private sector, remobilizing resources; developing demand-driven

programmes in line with local needs; identifying and strengthening areas of excellence in each institute; and developing multi-disciplinary programmes. Each institute absorbs between 10-15 colleges spanning two-three provinces. This reorganization is expected to increase institutional autonomy, accountability, and consistency in meeting educational standards.

The **Office of the Basic Education Commission** (OBEC) is mandated to: propose policies, plans, and standards, and develop curricula for basic education; mobilize resources; develop administration systems; promote and coordinate information networks for teaching and learning; develop educational innovations; supervise the monitoring, inspection, and evaluation of basic education provision. In 2008, OBEC supervised some 32,260 public schools across the country through 185 **Educational Service Areas** in the provinces and in Bangkok.

The **Institute for the Promotion of Teaching Science and Technology** is an agency under the Ministry of Education that has the following functions: (a) to initiate, promote, coordinate and conduct studies and research on curriculum development, teaching-learning methodology and evaluation of science, mathematics and technology teaching and learning at all levels focusing on basic education; (b) to promote, coordinate and conduct personnel development by training teachers and students in teaching, learning and researching in the field of science, mathematics and technology; (c) to promote, coordinate and undertake studies and research to improve and produce lessons, exercises, academic documents and all kinds of materials and equipments for teaching and learning of science, mathematics and technology; (d) to promote benchmarking and quality assurance system development for formal science, mathematics and technology education; (e) to develop and nurture talents in science and technology among teachers and students alike; and (f) to advise ministries, departments, divisions, government or private agencies responsible for education on the above-mentioned issues.

The **Office of the Non-Formal and Informal Education** (ONIE), established in 2008 by changing the status of the Office of the Non-Formal Education Commission, has the following functions: (a) act as the central organization in promoting the support and coordination of non-formal and informal education as well as to undertake the secretarial work of the Coordinating Committee for Promotion and Support of Non-Formal and Informal Education; (b) make recommendations on non-formal and informal education policies, plans, strategies and standard in order to present to the Committee; (c) promote the support of quality development in terms of academic matter as well as research, curriculum, innovation, personnel, information system concerned with non-formal and informal education; (d) promote, support and undertake the transfer of equivalency educational results, knowledge and experience, as well as the equivalency determination of educational levels; (e) promote, support and collaborate among individuals, families, communities, communal societies, local administration organizations, private bodies, professional bodies, religious institutions, business operators and other bodies so as to build up network parties for promoting the strength in the implementation of non-formal and informal education; (f) prepare recommendations regarding the beneficial uses of information communication technology networks, educational radio and television stations, local radios, science centres, public libraries, museums, community learning centres and other learning resources in order to promote learning and improve quality of life of

the people continuously; (g) undertake the monitor, inspection and evaluation of the implementation outcomes of non-formal and informal education; and (h) undertake other missions under this Act or other laws that have been enacted as the functions of the Office or as assigned by the Minister of Education. There are other government departments and ministries which have been carrying out non-formal education activities, such as the **Ministry of Labour** through regional institutions and provincial skills training centers. Private voluntary agencies and various foundations have also been involved in the organization of non-formal education. Industrial factories have also organized non-formal education programmes for their employees.

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

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

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

Each public university has its own Act empowering the University Council to function as the governing body. The President of University is responsible for institutional administration (faculties, centres, institutes and interdisciplinary units). The President, as chief administrator, operates universities according to the policy laid down by the University Council which is composed of the Chairman, President, Deans, Directors of Institutes and other qualified persons. The Deans' Council and the Faculty Senate are two advisory bodies which may also take part in governing the universities.

The **Office for the National Education Standards and Quality Assessment** (ONESQA) was established in 2000 as an independent body with the objectives of enhancing the quality of education provision, enabling the educational institutions to provide quality education to learners, who will be endowed with virtue, competence and happiness. ONESQA is responsible for developing the criteria and methods of external quality assessment of educational institutions under the supervision of local administration organizations as well as submitting the report to local administration organizations. In its first round of assessments (2001-2005), ONESQA reviewed

around 30,000 basic education institutions, 670 vocational education institutions, and 300 higher education institutions. It employs an "amicable assessment model" to assist schools in improving their performance and standards. To encourage transparency, the results of its assessment are made available to the general public. A second round (2006-2010) of assessments was administered. (UNESCO Bangkok, 2011).

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

The local authorities responsible for the management of education in their own jurisdiction are the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration and the municipalities including Pattaya City, with financial support from, and under the supervision of the Ministry of the Interior.

Structure and organization of the education system

Thailand: structure of the education system (2008)
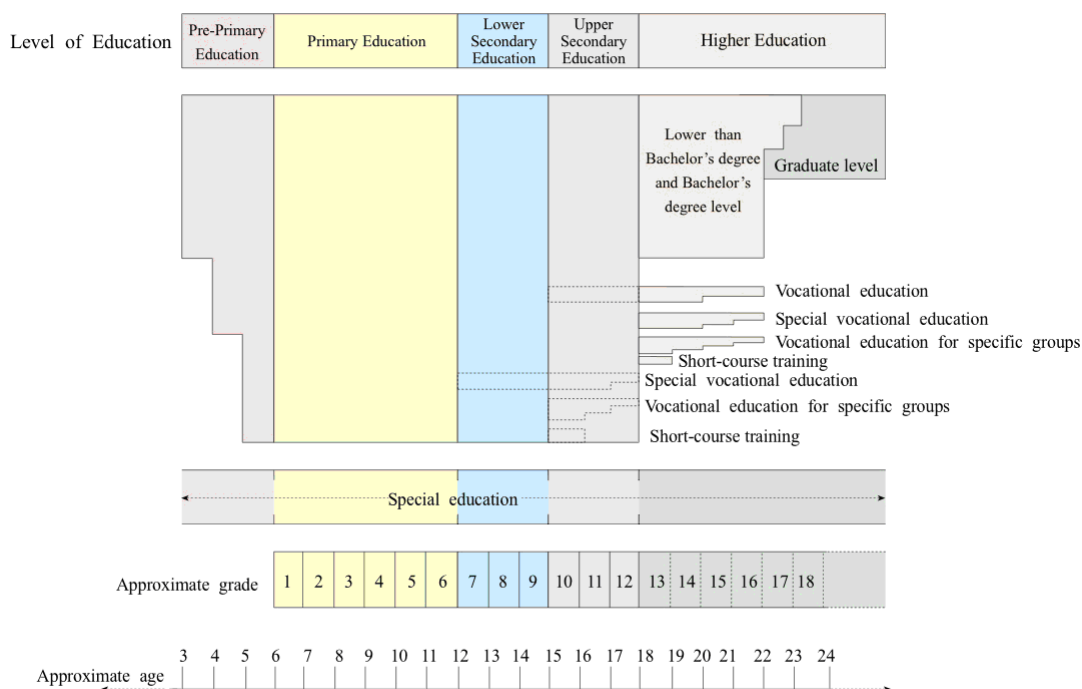
Source: Office of the Education Council, 2008.

Pre-school education

Depending on the local conditions, there are three types of pre-primary education available for children aged 3-5: preschool classes, kindergartens and childcare centres. Private schools usually offer a three-year kindergarten programme. There are two types of preschool education available in state schools: two-year kindergarten and one-year preschool classes attached to primary schools in rural areas. Preschool education is not compulsory. Under the 15-year free education policy launched in 2009, pre-primary education is to be provided free of charge.

Primary education

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

Secondary education

Secondary education is divided into two cycles: lower and upper secondary, each one lasting three years. The upper secondary system is divided into two parallel tracks: general or academic, and vocational (leading to the certificate of vocational education). Some upper secondary schools require students to take the entrance examination, especially for high-demand public schools or schools located in municipal areas. In some cases, school boards individually set special conditions to admit students to upper secondary. Formal vocational education at the postsecondary level (vocational colleges) generally lasts two years leading to a diploma. Students may continue their vocational education at the university level (degree level, two-year programme). Admission to higher education depends on a candidate successfully passing the entrance examination (through the Central University Admissions System launched in academic year 2006) after having obtained a secondary school or grade 12 certificate.

Higher education

Higher education is provided at universities, technical institutes, professional and technical colleges, and teachers' colleges. According to the National Education Act of 1999, higher education is divided into two levels: lower than degree level or associate degree/higher certificate of education or in vocational/technical education (two-year programmes mainly in the fields of technical, professional and teacher education offered by colleges and institutes under the Ministry of Education); and degree level. Holders of a diploma/certificate in vocational or technical education can enrol in a two-year programme leading to the higher diploma in technical education; programmes are provided by the former Rajamangala Institutes of Technology (35 campuses which now form nine regional universities) in agriculture, business administration, education, engineering technology, home economics, fine arts, music, drama and liberal arts. Programmes leading to the bachelor's degree normally last four years, equivalent to 120-150 credits (five years in the fields of architecture, painting, sculpture, graphic arts and pharmacy; six years in the case of medicine,

dentistry and veterinary). Bachelor's degree holders can enrol in a one-year programme (equivalent to 24 credits) leading to the award of a graduate diploma; this programme includes the option for further specialization and is offered in certain professional areas such as health care or auditing on completion of an accountancy programme. Postgraduate studies combined with a thesis leading to the award of a master's degree normally last two years. A doctoral degree requires an additional two to five years of study following a master's degree. A one-year programme (following the master's degree) leads to the award of the higher graduate (professional) diploma, mainly in the field of medical sciences. Postdoctoral studies and programmes leading to higher doctorates are also offered. (See also NUFFIC, 2011).

The average duration of the school year at the primary and secondary levels is forty weeks, divided into two semesters. The academic year extends from the end of May to the end of February; it is divided into two semesters.

The educational process

School curricula have often been modified and revised in order to be responsive to the changing socio-economic and technological conditions. The development of primary and secondary school curricula is mainly under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. The primary school curriculum was revised in 1990 and was first implemented in 1991 in grade 1, and fully went into effect in all grades of primary schools in 1996. The lower secondary curriculum of 1978 and the upper secondary curriculum of 1984 were revised in 1990 and were launched simultaneously in secondary school Form 1 and Form 4 in 1991. The revised curricula fully went into effect in 1993.

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

At the national level, the curriculum framework for basic education has been prescribed by the Ministry of Education with three components: (i) the curricular framework specifying its objectives, standards, as well as assessment and evaluation methods of teaching and learning; (ii) the framework for the national core curriculum to be organized consistently through four three-year key stages; and (iii) the framework for local curriculum providing schools with guidelines for adaptation of learning contents appropriate to their localities. The teaching subjects are classified into eight groups, namely: Thai language; mathematics; science; social studies, religion and culture; health and physical education; art, work education and technology; and foreign languages. The Basic Education Curriculum was approved in 2001 by the Committee for the Reform of Curriculum and Learning Process following several meetings held for comments and suggestions from all agencies concerned and target groups including the parents' network, students and the public.

At the institutional level, educational institutions have been encouraged to develop the local curriculum. For example, pilot projects on the preparation of local curriculum have been undertaken by several schools and training packages were

prepared for teachers. In preparing the school curriculum, each school was required to establish a School Curriculum Committee which is composed of teachers, administrators, scholars, and curriculum experts in each locality or in educational institutions. The responsibilities of the Committee are the planning, supporting, monitoring, evaluation and development of the school curriculum. Workshops were also organized for teachers to make an analysis of the school curriculum and prepare their teaching plans and teaching media as well as measurement and evaluation. Preparation has been made for 152 pilot schools nation-wide to implement the new Basic Education Curriculum.

The Basic Education Curriculum 2001 was piloted in network schools in 2002. The mandatory implementation in all schools providing basic education started in 2003. The curriculum prescribed goals and learning standards. It also provided a framework and orientation for enhancing quality of life of learners, who would attain virtue, wisdom, as well as capacity to maintain Thailand's competitive position in the world community. At the same time, the 2001 curriculum was duly adjusted for harmonization with the objectives of the National Education Act 1999 and amendments made in 2002. These laws have placed emphasis on decentralization of educational authority to local communities and schools, which are to play significant roles and actively participate in preparing curriculums suitable to actual situations and serving their real needs. The application has been found to facilitate decentralization of educational authority, enabling local communities and educational institutions to participate and make significant contributions to preparation of curricula that met their real needs. Clear concepts and principles for promoting learners' holistic development were quite apparent. Nonetheless, the outcomes of the studies carried out during 2003-2005 revealed several problems and issues of concern arising from shortcomings of the 2001 curriculum, including its provision, application process and results. Among the problems identified were: confusion and uncertainty faced by practitioners in educational institutions in preparing school curricula; the majority of schools were ambitious in prescribing learning contents and expected outcomes; and measurement and evaluation did not correlate with the standards set. Furthermore, issues of learners' quality resulting from acquisition of essential knowledge, skills, capacity and desirable characteristics and attributes were quite disconcerting.

In this context, the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC), under close supervision and guidance of the Basic Education Commission, took necessary measures to revise the 2001 curriculum and prepare the new Basic Education Core Curriculum 2008. In so doing, OBEC availed of the outcomes of the studies undertaken and benefited from the data and information provided in the Tenth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2007-2011), which emphasizes the need to shift the focus of human development. It has become imperative for the Thai people to be endowed with desirable moral values, intelligence and sagacity. The direction of such human capacity development would focus on providing children and youths with a firm foundation for attaining morality and public-mindedness, together with capacities, skills and basic knowledge essential to their future lives, leading to sustainability in national development. Emphasis has been placed on morality, preference for Thai-ness, skills in analytical and creative thinking, technological know-how, capacity for teamwork and ability to live in peace and harmony in the world community. Pertinent research results and projections led to greater clarity regarding the goals of improving learners' quality and curriculum application at

school and Educational Service Area levels. As mentioned, the Directive of the Ministry of Education dated 11 July 2008 stipulates that the Basic Education Core Curriculum 2008 will be applied as follows: in 2009, the new curriculum shall be applied in grades 1-6 and grades 7 and 10; in 2010, it shall be applied in grades 1-6, and grades 7, 8, 10 and 11; and as of 2011, the new curriculum shall be applied in all grades. Schools in general are expected to apply the new curriculum in grades 1-6 and grades 7 and 10 in 2010; in grades 1-6, and grades 7, 8, 10 and 11 in 2011; and in all grades in 2012.

The Basic Education Core Curriculum 2008 covers three educational levels: primary education (grades 1-6); lower secondary, or the last stage of compulsory education (grades 7-9); and upper secondary (grades 10-12). It is expected to provide local communities and schools with a framework and orientation for preparing school curricula. Teaching-learning activities organized for all children and youths at basic education level are aimed at enhancing learners' quality regarding essential knowledge and skills required for their lives in an ever-changing society. They will thus be empowered to seek further knowledge for continuous lifelong self-development. The learning standards and indicators prescribed in the Curriculum 2008 will enable agencies concerned at all levels to clearly visualize expected learning outcomes throughout the entire course of study. It will provide relevant local agencies and schools with confidence in their collaborative efforts to prepare school curriculums of higher quality and harmony. Learning measurement and evaluation will have greater clarity, thus eliminating the problem of inter-school transfer of learning outcomes. Therefore, curriculum development at all levels must exhibit the quality as prescribed in the learning standards and indicators. The core curriculum will provide a framework and direction for provision of education of all types, covering all target groups of learners receiving basic education.

The 2008 Curriculum is aimed at enhancing capacity of all learners, who constitute the major force of the country, so as to attain balanced development in all respects—physical strength, knowledge and morality. Learners will fully realize their commitment and responsibilities as Thai citizens as well as members of the world community. Adhering to a democratic form of government under constitutional monarchy, they will be endowed with basic knowledge and essential skills and favourable attitude towards further education, livelihood and lifelong learning. The learner-centred approach is therefore strongly advocated, based on the conviction that all are capable of learning and self-development to their highest potentiality. The principles underlying the Basic Education Core Curriculum are as follow: (i) the ultimate aim is attainment of national unity; learning standards and goals are therefore set with a view to enabling the children and youths to acquire knowledge, skills, attitude and morality to serve as a foundation for Thai-ness and universal values; (ii) the curriculum facilitates education for all, who have equal access to education of high quality; (iii) the curriculum facilitates decentralization of authority by allowing society to participate in educational provision, which suits prevailing situations and serves local needs; (iv) the structure of the curriculum enjoys flexibility regarding learning contents, time allotment and learning management; (v) the learner-centred approach is strongly advocated; and (vi) the curriculum is intended for education of all types—formal, non-formal and informal, covering all target groups and facilitating transfer of learning outcomes and experiences.

The following goals have been set for achievement upon completing basic education: (a) morality, ethics, desirable values, self-esteem, self-discipline, observance of Buddhist teachings or those of one's faith, and guiding principles of Sufficiency Economy; (b) knowledge and skills for communication, thinking, problem-solving, technological know-how, and life skills; (c) good physical and mental health, hygiene, and preference for physical exercise; (d) patriotism, awareness of responsibilities and commitment as Thai citizens and members of the world community, and adherence to a democratic way of life and form of government under constitutional monarchy; and (e) awareness of the need to preserve all aspects of Thai culture and Thai wisdom, protection and conservation of the environment, and public-mindedness with dedication to public service for peaceful and harmonious co-existence. The Basic Education Core Curriculum is aimed at inculcating among learners the following five key competencies: communication capacity; thinking capacity; problem-solving capacity; capacity for applying life skills; and capacity for technological application. 'Sufficiency Economy' refers to an approach to life and conduct which can be applied at every level of society, from the individual, to the family, community and even to the management and development of the nation. It has three overlapping components: moderation, wisdom and insight, and resilience or sustainability. It is through the conscious application of all three that Thailand seeks to encourage its people to follow a sustainable way of life, in harmony with existing domestic resources. (Ministry of Education, 2008).

The 2008 Curriculum focuses on learners' development for attainment of the following desirable characteristics, enabling learners to enjoy a life of harmony among others as Thai citizens and global citizens: love of nation, religion and king; honesty and integrity; self-discipline; avidity for learning; observance of principles of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy in one's way of life; dedication and commitment to work; cherishing Thai-ness; and public-mindedness. Eight core learning areas are prescribed: Thai language; mathematics; science; social studies, religion and culture; health and physical education; arts; occupations and technology; and foreign languages. For each learning area, the standards serve as the goals to be achieved in developing learners' quality. These standards prescribe what the learners should know and should be able to perform. They also indicate moral and ethical values as well as desirable characteristics upon completing basic education. Besides, the learning standards serve as essential mechanisms in advancing the whole education system, as they inform on the contents and teaching and evaluation methods. They also serve as instruments for quality assurance and are adopted for both internal quality assurance and external evaluation, practiced at both educational service area and national levels. Monitoring for internal quality assurance is essential, as it indicates the extent of success in achieving the quality as prescribed in the pertinent standards. Indicators specify what learners should know and be able to practice as well as their characteristics for each level. Indicators reflect the standard of learning. Being specific and concrete, they can be utilized for prescribing contents, determining learning units and organizing teaching-learning activities. They serve as essential criteria for evaluation in order to verify the learners' quality. Grade-level indicators specify the goals to be achieved in developing learners for each level of compulsory education (primary education grade 1, secondary education grade 3, i.e. grades 1-9). Key stage indicators specify the goals to be achieved for upper secondary education (secondary education grades 4-6, i.e. grades 10-12). The Basic Education Core Curriculum prescribes a total of 67 standards for the eight learning areas.

Learner development activities are aimed at allowing learners to develop themselves to their highest potentiality, thus becoming well-rounded and fully developed in all respects—physical, intellectual, emotional and social; inculcating of morality, ethics and self-discipline; creating and strengthening spirit of philanthropy for social benefits; ability for self-management and enjoying happy life among others. Learner development activities include: counselling activities; student activities (such as Boy Scout organization, girl guides, junior Red Cross, social service and territorial defence, activities of various clubs and societies); and activities for social and public interest (e.g. voluntary services in various fields and those for public interest and concerns).

The 2008 Curriculum prescribes a framework for minimal learning time structure for the eight learning areas and learner development activities. Educational institutions can increase the allotment of time, depending on their readiness and priorities, through adjustment to suit their contexts and learners' situations as follows: (a) at the primary education level (grades 1-6) learning time is allotted on annual basis, not exceeding five hours each day; (b) at the lower secondary education level (secondary education grades 1-3 or grades 7-9) learning time is allotted on semester basis, not exceeding six hours each day; the weight of a course is counted in credits and the criterion is that one credit is equivalent to 40 hours per semester; (c) at the upper secondary education level (upper secondary education grades 4-6 or grades 10-12) learning time is allotted on semester basis, not less than six hours each day; the weight of a course is counted in credits and the criterion is that one credit is equivalent to 40 hours per semester. Additional courses or learner development activities can be organized, with due consideration being given to the educational institutions' readiness and priorities as well as criteria and requirements for graduation. In grades 1-3, additional learning time can be included in the learning areas of Thai language and mathematics. Regarding the allocation of 120 hours each year for learner development activities in grades 1-9 and 360 hours per year in grades 10-12, such allotment is meant for counselling activities, student activities and activities for social and public interest. Concerning the last category of activities, educational institutions shall allot the time required as follows: 60 hours over grades 1-6; 45 hours over grades 7-9; and 60 hours over grades 10-12.

At the local level, offices of the Educational Service Areas and other parent agencies play important roles in improving quality of educational provision. They provide the linkage between the Basic Education Core Curriculum prescribed at the national level and the local situations and needs, leading to preparation of the educational institutions' curricula, the implementation and development of which will be strengthened to ensure success. Their main tasks are: setting the goals and points of emphasis for developing learners' quality at the local level, with due consideration given to national requirements; developing local learning contents; evaluating quality of education provided at the local level; increasing the quality of curriculum implementation through research and development, personnel development, support provision, promotion, evaluation monitoring, and analysis and reports on learners' quality. Educational institutions play an important role in developing their own curricula, planning for curriculum implementation, increasing quality of curriculum implementation through research and development, improving and further developing the curriculum, and preparing regulations for measurement and evaluation. In preparing their own curricula, educational institutions must attach prime importance

to attuning to the Basic Education Core Curriculum and other details provided by Educational Service Areas or other parent agencies at the local level. Respective educational institutions can also add various aspects of problems and concerns of the community and the society, local wisdom, and learners' needs, with participation and contribution of all sectors in the preparation of their curricula.

For learning management through the learner-centred approach, learners will depend on a variety of learning processes that serve as tools for enabling them to achieve the curriculum goals. Among the essential learning processes for learners are: integrated learning process; knowledge-creating process; thinking process; social process; heuristic learning process; learning process from actual experience; process of actual practice; management process; research process; self-learning process; and process of developing characteristics. Learners should be trained and receive further development for acquiring competence in these processes, which will facilitate their learning, enabling them to achieve the curriculum goals. For provision of leaning media, learners and teachers can produce and develop media themselves or make judicious choices from among the various media of quality around them, as well as improve the chosen media as appropriate. These media can be utilized in the learning process, enabling learners to learn through appropriate communication. Educational institutions should provide sufficient learning media to ensure proper learning by learners.

Learning assessment must be based on two fundamental principles, i.e. evaluation for the purpose of developing the learners' capacity and for appraising their achievements. With a view to succeeding in developing the learners' learning quality, learners must be strengthened and assessed by availing of the relevant indicators, so as to achieve the learning standards prescribed. Such evaluation also reflects the learners' major capacities and their desirable characteristics, which are the main goals of measuring and evaluating the learning outcomes at all levels, i.e. classroom level, educational institution level, Educational Service Area level, and national level. Learning assessment is a process of enhancing the learners' quality by using assessment results as data and information to show learners' developmental progress and accomplishment. The data will also be useful for strengthening the learners, thus enabling them to learn to their highest potentiality. Evaluation is conducted in order to assess learners' quality at national level, based on the learning standards prescribed in the Basic Education Core Curriculum. Educational institutions are required to arrange for assessment of all students in grades 3, 6, 9 and 12. The evaluation results will provide relevant data for comparing educational quality at different levels, which will be useful for planning in order to raise the quality of education provided. The data obtained will also support decision-making at national policy level. (Ministry of Education-OBEC, 2008).

Pre-primary education

Preschool education is considered to be an essential first step towards basic education for every child. The government's policy on preschool education has been revised and there is a definite move to expand and improve the provision of preschool education in state schools in rural areas on a nationwide scale so that economically disadvantaged children in rural areas will be given better educational opportunities to attend pre-schools. In the draft National Policy and Strategy for Early Childhood

Development (ECD), 2006-2008, it was proposed to set up the official body for overall coordination of ECD (i.e. a National Committee for ECD) composed of representative from government sector, private sector, business sector and specialists.

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

On 30 March 2004, the Child Protection Act of 2003 has been made effective and reinforced for the best interest of children. More systems shall be developed to provide appropriate care, protection and enhance development of children. The Ministry of Interior, through its Department of Local Administration (DOLA), provides support to the Sub-district Administrative Organizations to extend opportunities for all preschool children, between the age of 3 to 5, to receive quality ECD service both in rural and urban settings. It also mobilizes all parties to participate in promoting quality early childhood care and development. The major aims of DOLA are to extend early childhood to get quality ECD services and to promote participation of various parties (including people, family, community, private organization, professional organization and industry) in early childhood development. Its Community Development Department, on the other hand, contributes to enhance local community's capacities to organize quality ECD activities.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In Bangkok and other large cities, where there are more private kindergartens that cater to middle- and upper-income families who can afford to pay the tuition and other fees, children are usually enrolled for three years (starting at age 3). These private kindergartens are supervised by the office of the Private Education Commission. Statistics for the school year 2000/01 showed that children in private kindergartens represented 28% (or 547,411 children) of the total enrolment figure for pre-primary classes. The average class size in private preschools was 30 children for each class of 3-year-olds and 31 in each class of 4- and 5-year-olds.

The 2006-2015 Plan and Policy for Early Childhood Development was formulated by the Office of the Education Council in cooperation with relevant public and private agencies. As part of the decentralization process and according to the statistics of the Department of Local Administration, the number of child development centres established by Local Administration Organizations (LAOs) increased from 1,782 in 2006 to 2,774 in 2007. Around 14,300 child development centres were transferred under the authority of LAOs from other agencies including the Department of Community Development, the Department of Religious Affairs, and the Office of the Basic Education Commission.

In 2006, approximately 340,000 children in the age group 3-5 years were not attending any kind of preschool, reflecting a net enrolment ratio of 88%. The remaining 12% are largely those of lower socioeconomic background and/or from remote rural areas. An assessment of the quality of preschool education indicated that only 40% of 3- to 5-year-olds received adequate preparation for readiness in learning before attending primary school. In response to the data presented in the preschool sector analysis, the Ten-year Plan and Policy for Early Childhood Development was promulgated. This Plan provides a blueprint for achieving universal early childhood education for all children. The Plan and Policy gives priority to three main strategies: support early childhood development; support parents and other stakeholders; and promote an environment that facilitates early childhood development. The Plan and Policy focuses on the 0-5 age group and covers the period 2006-2015. Its objectives are to: formulate a common concept and guidelines for early childhood at the national level; prepare concrete operational plans for effective mobilisation, management, and resource utilisation; provide guidelines for data and information collection, research, follow-up, and evaluation; and incorporate early childhood development as an integral part of educational reform. (UNESCO Bangkok, 2011).

For 2007, the Ministry of Education reported 1,595,655 children enrolled in formal pre-elementary institutions under the Ministry (of whom 1,061,596 children under OBEC and 526,485 children under the Office of Private Education Commission). An additional 162,918 children were enrolled in institutions run by other organizations (mainly the Department of Local Administration and the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration), and a total of 822,322 children were enrolled in 17,917 learning childcare/development centres of the non-formal pre-elementary education system, mainly under the Department of Local Administration. In 2006, a total of 16,826 children with disabilities were enrolled in inclusive education schools at the pre-primary level. Children enrolled in formal pre-primary education represented 73.7% of the pre-primary school-age population (3-5 years) in 2007. (Ministry of Education, 2008).

Primary education

Primary education is compulsory, lasts six years (grades 1-6) and the entry age is 6. As mentioned, the Basic Education Core Curriculum 2008 covers three educational levels: primary (grades 1-6); lower secondary, or the last stage of compulsory education (grades 7-9); and upper secondary education (grades 10-12).

The following goals have been set for achievement upon completing basic education: (a) morality, ethics, desirable values, self-esteem, self-discipline, observance of Buddhist teachings or those of one's faith, and guiding principles of sufficiency economy; (b) knowledge and skills for communication, thinking, problem-solving, technological know-how, and life skills; (c) good physical and mental health, hygiene, and preference for physical exercise; (d) patriotism, awareness of responsibilities and commitment as Thai citizens and members of the world community, and adherence to a democratic way of life and form of government under constitutional monarchy; and (e) awareness of the need to preserve all aspects of Thai culture and Thai wisdom, protection and conservation of the environment, and public-mindedness with dedication to public service for peaceful and harmonious co-existence. The Basic Education Core Curriculum is aimed at inculcating among learners the following five key competencies: communication capacity; thinking capacity; problem-solving capacity; capacity for applying life skills; and capacity for technological application.

The 2008 Curriculum focuses on learners' development for attainment of the following desirable characteristics, enabling learners to enjoy a life of harmony among others as Thai citizens and global citizens: love of nation, religion and king; honesty and integrity; self-discipline; avidity for learning; observance of principles of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy in one's way of life; dedication and commitment to work; cherishing Thai-ness; and public-mindedness.

Eight core learning areas are prescribed: Thai language; mathematics; science; social studies, religion and culture; health and physical education; arts; occupations and technology; and foreign languages. For each learning area, the standards serve as the goals to be achieved in developing learners' quality. These standards prescribe what the learners should know and should be able to perform. Grade-level indicators specify the goals to be achieved in developing learners for each level of compulsory education (primary education grade 1, secondary education grade 3, i.e. grades 1-9).

Key stage indicators specify the goals to be achieved for upper secondary education (secondary education grades 4-6, i.e. grades 10-12). The Basic Education Core Curriculum prescribes a total of 67 standards for the eight learning areas.

The primary education (grades 1-6) learning time framework stipulated in the Basic Education Core Curriculum 2008 is shown in the table below:

Thailand. Primary education: learning time framework

Learning area	Number of hours per year in each grade					
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Thai language	200	200	200	160	160	160
Mathematics	200	200	200	160	160	160
Science	80	80	80	80	80	80
Social studies, religion & culture:	120	120	120	120	120	120
History	*40*	*40*	*40*	*40*	*40*	*40*
Religion, morality and ethics, civics, culture and living in society, economics, geography	*80*	*80*	*80*	*80*	*80*	*80*
Health and physical education	80	80	80	80	80	80
Arts	80	80	80	80	80	80
Occupations and technology	40	40	40	80	80	80
Foreign language	40	40	40	80	80	80
Total yearly hours (basic)	**840**	**840**	**840**	**840**	**840**	**840**
Learner development activities	120	120	120	120	120	120
Additional courses/activities provided by the school, depending on the local situation and priorities	40	40	40	40	40	40
Total learning time per year	**1,000**	**1,000**	**1,000**	**1,000**	**1,000**	**1,000**

Source: Ministry of Education-OBEC, 2008.

Over basic education (grades 1-12), Thai language provides a tool for seeking knowledge and experiences from various sources of data and information in order to acquire knowledge and engage in processes of analytical, critical and creative thinking, so as to be attuned to social change and scientific and technological progress. It also serves the useful purpose of occupational development for achieving economic security. Furthermore, it is the medium of expression of our ancestors' wisdom regarding culture, tradition and aesthetics, representing a treasure of the highest value, worthy of learning, conserving and transmitting to succeeding generations as a permanent feature of the Thai nation.

The learning area of mathematics enables a person to acquire skills in creativity, logic and systematic and methodical thinking, and allows one to carefully and thoroughly analyse various problems or situations, anticipate, plan, make decisions, solve problems and accurately and appropriately apply mathematics in daily life. Mathematics serves as a tool for learning science, technology and other

disciplines. It is therefore useful to one's life, enhances quality of life and enables a person to live in harmony with others. Mathematics covers the following: numbers and operations; measurement; algebra; geometry; data analysis and probability; mathematical skills and processes.

The learning area of science is aimed at enabling learners to learn this subject with emphasis on linking knowledge with processes, acquiring essential skills for investigation, building knowledge through investigative processes, seeking knowledge and solving various problems. Learners are allowed to participate in all stages of learning, with activities organized through diverse practical work suitable to their levels. The main content areas are prescribed as follows: living things and processes of life; life and the environment; substances and properties of substances; forces and motion; energy; change process of the earth; astronomy and space; nature of science and technology.

The learning area of social studies, religion and culture enables learners to acquire knowledge and understand the lives of human beings as both individuals and as coexisting members of a society. The area addresses self-adjustment in accord with exigencies of environmental situations and management of limited resources. Learners acquire understanding of development and change in accord with exigencies of various periods, times and factors, leading to understanding of oneself and others. Learners also acquire patience, forbearance and acceptance of differences. They are endowed with morality and the ability to adjust knowledge gained for application in leading their lives as good citizens of the country and desirable members of the world community. The area includes: religion, morality and ethics; civics, culture and living; economics; history; geography.

Health and physical education includes: human growth and development; life and family; movement, physical exercises, games, Thai and international sports; strengthening of health, capacity and disease prevention; and self-protection from various risk behaviours.

The learning area of arts helps to develop creativity in learners, who will have artistic imagination, appreciate beauty, have aesthetics and worthiness, which affect the quality of human lives. Artistic activities help to develop learners in various respects— physical, mental, intellectual, emotional and social, as well as lead to environmental development. Artistic activities strengthen self-confidence in learners, thus providing a foundation for future education or livelihood. It includes: visual arts; music; and dramatic arts.

The learning area of occupations and technology contributes to development of learners in acquiring knowledge and understanding basic skills essential to their lives. Learners will thus be alert to changes and able to apply knowledge about living, occupations and technology to their work with creativity and competitiveness in Thai society and the world community. Learners will be able to see prospects for their future careers, love working and have a favourable attitude towards work, as well as lead a happy life in society, based on the principles of sufficiency. It includes: life and family; design and technology; Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs); and occupations (e.g. skills essential to learners' occupations; recognition of the importance of morality, ethics and favourable attitude towards occupations; ability

to use technologies appropriately; appreciation of value of honest occupations; and ability to see prospects for future careers).

The foreign language constituting basic learning content that is prescribed for the entire basic education core curriculum is English, while for other foreign languages, e.g. French, German, Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Pali and languages of neighbouring countries, it is left to the discretion of educational institutions to prepare courses and provide learning management as appropriate. (Ministry of Education-OBEC, 2008).

As regards pupils' assessment at the primary level, the Basic Education Core Curriculum 2008 stipulates the following: (a) learners must have an attendance record of not less than 80% of the total learning time requirement; (b) learners must be assessed on all indicators and must pass the criteria prescribed by the educational institutions; (c) learners must be judged on the learning outcomes of each course; and (d) learners must be evaluated and must pass all the criteria prescribed by the educational institutions regarding reading, analytical thinking and writing, desirable characteristics and learner development activities. For assessment of reading, analytical thinking and writing, and desirable characteristics, the grading levels are: Excellent, Good Pass and Fail. For assessment of learner development activities, consideration must be given to the amount of time devoted, and the participation and achievement of learners in accord with the criteria prescribed by the educational institutions. The outcomes of the participation are graded as: Pass and Fail. Graduation criteria are the following: (a) learners have completed basic courses and supplementary courses/activities in accord with the learning time structure as prescribed in the Basic Education Core Curriculum; (b) learners' assessment outcomes for each basic course must meet the criteria prescribed by the respective educational institutions; (c) learners' assessment outcomes regarding reading, analytical thinking, and writing must meet the criteria prescribed by the respective educational institutions; (d) learners' assessment outcomes regarding desirable characteristics must meet the criteria prescribed by the respective educational institutions; and (e) learners have participated in learner development activities and the assessment outcomes of their participation meet the criteria set by the respective educational institutions. (*Ibid.*).

The majority of the population in the age group 6-11 years has access to primary education. Public primary schools are situated in nearly all sub-districts, including rural remote areas and border areas. The total enrolment decreased from about 6.9 million in 1990 to 5.95 million in 1999, mainly as a result of the reduced birth rate and dropping-out of students migrating with their parents. The ratio of students completing primary education who proceed to lower secondary level remarkably increased from 53.7% of the total graduates in 1990 to 92.5% in 2003, due to the efforts to extend basic education from six to nine years to cover lower secondary education. However, there are still a number of the disadvantaged, such as primary school graduates in remote rural areas and children of poor families, who have no access to secondary education. The gross enrolment rates (GER) in primary education have been higher than 100% since 1998 as a result of repetition rates as well as the underage and over-age population of pupils; the GER was estimated at 104.4% in 2003. In 2003, the retention rate in primary education was estimated at 89.5%. In the same year, the pupil/teacher ratio was 19:1.

For 2007, the Ministry of Education reported 5,021,329 pupils enrolled in formal primary education under the Ministry (of whom 4,004,326 pupils under OBEC and 1,001,969 pupils under the Office of Private Education Commission). An additional 543,295 pupils were enrolled in institutions run by other organizations (mainly the Department of Local Administration and the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration), and a total of 360,899 pupils were enrolled in non-formal primary education. In 2006, a total of 155,938 pupils with disabilities were enrolled in inclusive education schools at the primary level. Pupils enrolled in formal primary education represented 104.5% of the primary school-age population (6-11 years) in 2007. The overall dropout rate (grades 1-6) was estimated at 0.88% (1.01% in grade 1) in schools under OBEC. (Ministry of Education, 2008).

Secondary education

As mentioned, secondary education is divided into two cycles: lower and upper secondary, each one lasting three years. The upper secondary system is divided into two parallel tracks: general or academic, and vocational (leading to the certificate of vocational education). Admission to higher education depends on a candidate successfully passing the entrance examination (through the Central University Admissions System launched in academic year 2006) after having obtained a secondary school or grade 12 certificate.

General secondary education is provided in four types of schools: those covering pre-primary or primary to upper secondary levels; those offering grades 7-12 (lower-upper secondary levels); those offering only grades 7-9; and those offering only upper secondary education. Formal general secondary education (both lower and upper secondary) is mainly under the responsibility of the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC). In addition, upper secondary education is also provided in both general and vocational streams by other ministries. Public vocational education is under the supervision of the Office of the Vocational Education Commission. In accordance with the 2008 Vocational Education Act, vocational education is provided through: (a) formal education: provided in colleges or institutes with certain graduation conditions, namely: aims, methodologies, curricula, duration, and evaluation; (b) non-formal education: there is flexibility of graduation conditions (aims, formalities, methodologies, duration, and evaluation); the contents and curricula must be appropriate and compatible with the needs of each group and environment; and (c) dual system and apprenticeship: this results from agreements between vocational institutes and entrepreneurs, state enterprises or government agencies, on teaching-learning curricula and evaluation; students spend some time learning in colleges or institutes and practice in entrepreneurs, state enterprises or government agencies. Three levels of vocational education are offered: the certificate in vocational education which is taken during the upper secondary period; the technical diploma, taken after the certificate, and the higher diploma on which admission to university for a bachelor's degree programme may be granted. (UNESCO Bangkok, 2011).

Secondary education has become more diversified and comprehensive since the curriculum reform and change of the school system in 1977/78. The Ministry of Education initiated a drastic change of the upper secondary school curriculum in 1975. The credit or unit system was introduced, whereby course-work could be given

credit and accomplished in one semester. Such a credit system was intended to give more flexibility and efficiency to learning. Another drastic change was the abolition of the terminal grade examination centrally administered by the Ministry of Education. These initial changes led to another subsequent change in 1978, whereby the curriculum became more diversified, and partially vocationalized.

As mentioned, the new Basic Education Core Curriculum 2008 also covers lower secondary, or the last stage of compulsory education (grades 7-9), and upper secondary (grades 10-12). The eight core learning areas are the same as in primary education (see above). Lower secondary education focuses on allowing learners to explore their aptitudes and interests, promoting development of individual personality, skills for critical and creative thinking, problem-solving, life skills and skills required to apply technologies as learning tools, social responsibility, proper balance in regard to knowledge, virtue and pride in Thai-ness, which together provide a foundation for future livelihood or further education. Upper secondary education focuses on increasing specific knowledge and skills in line with capacities, aptitudes and interests of individual learners in regard to academic and technological application, skills for high-level thinking process, ability to apply knowledge for further education and livelihood, and self-development and national progress in accordance with students' respective roles, as well as ability to lead and offer community services in various respects. (Ministry of Education-OBEC, 2008). The learning time framework stipulated in the Basic Education Core Curriculum 2008 for lower and upper general secondary education is shown in the tables below:

Thailand. Lower general secondary education: learning time framework

Learning area	Number of hours per year in each grade		
	7	8	9
Thai language	120	120	120
Mathematics	120	120	120
Science	120	120	120
Social studies, religion & culture:	160	160	160
History	*40*	*40*	*40*
Religion, morality and ethics, civics, culture and living in society, economics, geography	*120*	*120*	*120*
Health and physical education	80	80	80
Arts	80	80	80
Occupations and technology	80	80	80
Foreign language	120	120	120
Total yearly hours (basic)	**880**	**880**	**880**
Learner development activities	120	120	120
Additional courses/activities provided by the school, depending on the local situation and priorities	200	200	200
Total learning time per year	**1,200**	**1,200**	**1,200**

Source: Ministry of Education-OBEC, 2008. One credit is equivalent to 40 hours (normally per semester).

Thailand. Upper general secondary education: learning time framework

Learning area	Number of hours/credits in grades 10-12	
	Hours	**Credits**
Thai language	240	6
Mathematics	240	6
Science	240	6
Social studies, religion & culture:	320	8
History	*80*	*2*
Religion, morality and ethics, civics, culture and living in society, economics, geography	*240*	*6*
Health and physical education	120	3
Arts	120	3
Occupations and technology	120	3
Foreign language	240	6
Total hours/credits over three years, grades 10-12 (basic)	**1,640**	**41**
Learner development activities	360	
Additional courses/activities provided by the school, depending on the local situation and priorities	1,600	
Total learning time/credits over three years (grades 10-12)	**3,600**	

Source: Ministry of Education-OBEC, 2008. One credit is equivalent to 40 hours (normally per semester).

As regards students' assessment at the general secondary level, the 2008 Curriculum provides for the following: (a) teachers will judge the learning outcomes of all courses; learners must have an attendance record of not less than 80% of the total learning time required for the respective courses for each semester; (b) learners must be assessed on all indicators and must pass all the criteria prescribed by the educational institutions; (c) learners must be judged on the learning outcomes of each course; and (d) learners must be evaluated and must pass all the criteria prescribed by the educational institutions regarding reading, analytical thinking and writing, desirable characteristics and learner development activities. In judging for the purpose of grading learning outcomes of each course, eight numbers are applied to indicate the level of the learning outcomes. For assessment of reading, analytical thinking and writing, and desirable characteristics, the grading levels are: Excellent, Good, Pass and Fail. For assessment of learner development activities, consideration shall be given to the amount of time devoted, and the participation and achievement of learners in accord with the criteria prescribed by the educational institutions. The outcomes of the participation are graded as: Pass and Fail.

At the lower secondary level, the graduation criteria are as follows: (a) learners have attained no more than 81 credits for basic and supplementary courses,

with a distribution of 66 credits for basic courses and a number of credits for supplementary courses as prescribed by the respective educational institutions; (b) learners must have attained not less than 77 credits for the entire curriculum with a distribution of 66 credits for basic courses and not less than 11 credits for supplementary courses; (c) learners' assessment outcomes regarding reading and analytical thinking and writing must meet the criteria prescribed by the respective educational institutions; (d) learners' assessment outcomes regarding desirable characteristics must meet the criteria prescribed by the respective educational institutions; and (e) learners have participated in learner development activities and the assessment outcomes of their participation meet the criteria prescribed by the respective educational institutions.

At the upper secondary level, the graduation criteria are as follows: (a) learners have attained not less than 81 credits, with a distribution of 41 credits for basic courses and a number of credits for supplementary courses as prescribed by the respective educational institutions; (b) learners must have attained not less than 77 credits for the entire curriculum, with a distribution of 41 credits for basic courses and not less than 36 credits for supplementary courses; (c) learners' assessment outcomes regarding reading and analytical thinking and writing must meet the criteria prescribed by the respective educational institutions; (d) Learners' assessment outcomes regarding desirable characteristics must meet the criteria prescribed by the respective educational institutions; and (e) learners have participated in learner development activities and the assessment outcomes of their participation must meet the criteria prescribed by the respective educational institutions. (Ministry of Education-OBEC, 2008).

In 2003, there were 2,837 upper secondary schools in the general education stream (of which 171 in the private sector) and 889 schools in the vocational education stream (of which 349 in the private sector). The number of students graduating from lower secondary level who continue their studies at upper secondary level was estimated at 92.5% in 2003. The total number of students in vocational education was 571,267 students in 2003, of whom 392,246 at the certificate level. (OEC, 2004).

The transition rate of students graduating from upper secondary schools, both general and academic streams, to higher education institutions at diploma and undergraduate levels was estimated at 81% in 2003. The number of students per classroom at lower secondary and upper secondary school levels was quite high at about 37-39 students per classroom. In 2003, the student/teacher ratio was 21:1 at both the lower and upper secondary level, while in vocational upper secondary the ratio was 31:1.

For 2007, the Ministry of Education reported 2,623,476 students enrolled in formal lower secondary education under the Ministry (of whom 344,932 students under the Office of Private Education Commission). An additional 159,358 students were enrolled in institutions run by other organizations (mainly the Department of Local Administration and the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration), and a total of 719,780 students were enrolled in non-formal lower secondary education. Students enrolled in formal lower secondary education represented 96.3% of the lower secondary school-age population (12-14 years) in 2007. In the same year, a total of

1,137,626 students were enrolled in formal upper general secondary education under the Ministry and an additional 29,316 students were enrolled in institutions run by other organizations. Concerning formal upper vocational secondary education, the total enrolment was 768,361 students in institutions under the Ministry (of whom 477,767 students under the Office of Vocational Education Commission), and 10,626 students were enrolled in institutions run by other organizations. Students enrolled in formal upper secondary education (general and vocational) represented 67.1% of the upper secondary school-age population (15-17 years) in 2007. Furthermore, a total of 1,614,841 students were enrolled in non-formal secondary education, of whom 719,780 students at the lower secondary and 895,061 students at the upper secondary level. In 2006, the overall dropout rate at the formal lower secondary level (grades 7-9) was estimated at 2.25% (2.66% in grade 9), and at 2.33% in formal upper secondary education (3.04% in grade 10) in schools under OBEC.

In 2006, a total of 41,514 students with disabilities were enrolled in inclusive education schools at the lower secondary level and an additional 8,933 students at the upper secondary level. (Ministry of Education, 2008).

Assessing learning achievement nationwide

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

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

- All educational institutions should conduct internal quality assurance annually.
- The continuous process of internal quality assurance of all educational institutions consists of planning, evaluation and improvement of their performance. Each institution is required to: prepare its own education development plan in line with the objectives and principles of the National Education Act, the National Education Standards as well as the aims/philosophy/charter of the institution; clearly determine the time frame of its implementation; continuously follow-up and evaluate its own performance; and finally use the evaluation results to improve and develop the quality of education.
- At all stages of internal quality assurance, emphasis should be placed on the co-ordination and participation of all parties concerned, i.e. the

institution's personnel, the institution board, the parents, as well as the personnel of various agencies and organizations in the communities, educational service areas and the regions.

- Each educational institution is required to complete its internal quality assurance report before the beginning of the following academic year, presenting the evaluation results for educational quality as well as guidelines or programmes for improvement and development of educational quality in the following year. The report must be submitted to its parent organization, the agencies concerned, the OESE and be made available to the public.

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

In 1999, a national quality assessment of education at upper secondary level (grade 12) was conducted by the Department of Curriculum and Instruction Development focusing on three aspects: (i) student achievement; (ii) characteristics of learners; and (iii) standards of schools in terms of inputs and processes. The achievement of upper secondary students throughout the country was rather unfavorable. Among 11 subjects assessed, the highest average score was only 57% in Thai writing. The other two subjects with average scores higher than 50% were Thai language and vocational foundation. These results appeared to be lower than the actual capabilities of the students because they did not concentrate on the test which was not relevant to their graduation. However, the quality of education should be improved in all subjects, particularly those with average scores below 40%, i.e. physics, chemistry, mathematics and English writing.

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

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

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

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

In the 1999 TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) tests, Thai lower secondary students scored poorly in both math and science. Around 49% of the lack of success was attributed to the quality of teachers. More than 50% of the science teachers at that time had neither a science nor a science education degree. This was a reason for the special attention given to personnel issues in the Thai educational reform. (UNESCO Bangkok, 2011).

The Ministry of Education recently reported the results of the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment 2009 (PISA 2009), based on a report from the Institute for the Promotion of Teaching Science and Technology (IPST). The PISA 2009 assessment survey examined 15-year old students' performance in reading, mathematics and science. A total of 65 countries participated in the assessment. In reading Thailand ranked at 47th place, in mathematics at the 48th place, and in science at 47th place. The IPST analyzed the variables which impacted the PISA 2009 results. It was reported that related factors were the lack of teachers qualified in the particular fields of every subject. In addition, it was found that extra learning/classes outside school decreases students' analytical ability, it was also found that there was an improper use of ICT in education which has obstructed the educational achievement of students. Positive variables were educational resources, scientific laboratories, and having qualified teachers in specific fields, as well as independence in budgetary and administrative skills.

The learning achievements of Thai children of 15 years of age have either stagnated or declined in reading, mathematics and science in the course of the last decade. In addition, there is very high concentration of low-level learners, e.g. between 43% and 53% of children are reported to have achieved Level 1 or below out of six learning levels of PISA 2009 in all three subjects. ONESQA have systematically assessed the quality of all Thai schools. The results of the assessment carried out in 30,100 schools up to 2006 were disappointing. After a second round of assessments announced in 2008, some major improvements were noted. In the latest assessment, 52% of primary schools were rated as being of good quality. Also 68% of

secondary schools were rated to be of good quality. Among 22,465 schools at the primary and secondary levels, 19.2% were rated as excellent; 23.6% as good; 36.9% as meeting minimal standards, but not good; and 20.3% which did not pass the standard. Less than half (42.8%) met the good standard. (UNESCO Bangkok, 2011).

Teaching staff

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

In the 1990s, there were two main types of teacher training institutions: teacher colleges (Rajabhat Institutes) and faculties of education at universities. Rajabhat Institutes were teacher colleges under the Department of Teacher Education which, since 1995, changed its name to Office of Rajabhat Institutes Council, in accordance with the new Act of Rajabhat Institutes. In the framework of the teacher education reform, Rajabhat Institutes have been transformed into Rajabhat Universities. Initiated by the Office of Educational Reform, a curriculum for the training of new teachers at the bachelor's degree level was developed by the Ministry of Education. According to the new curriculum, four years are dedicated to coursework while the rest of the time is to be devoted to the teaching practice. In order to attract qualified students into the teaching profession, scholarships and job security were also emphasized. The Office of the Education Council has also introduced a new, effective and sustainable method of in-service teacher training that takes place in educational institutions, namely the school-based training (SBT) for in-service teacher development. (OEC, 2004).

Currently, teacher training is offered either in universities or in teacher training colleges. The university programmes are now commonly influenced by child-centred learning methods and several universities operate a *Satit,* e.g. a demonstration school staffed by lecturers and trainee teachers. The training of primary and lower secondary school teachers is provided by the 40 government Rajaphat Universities (formerly Rajaphat Institutes), the traditional teacher training colleges in most provinces. Rajabhat Universities are under jurisdiction of the Office of the Higher Education Commission. The Rajabhat University Act of 2004 stipulates coordination of the strengths of Rajabhat Universities in order to aid development of the regions. Programmes include courses in teaching methodology, school administration, special education, optional specialization, supervised practical teaching experience, and the general education subjects of language and communication, humanities, social science, mathematics, and technology. Completion of upper secondary education (grade 12) is required for access to basic teacher training programmes and primary and lower secondary school teachers are required to complete a two-year programme leading to the higher certificate of education, also known as the diploma in education or an associate degree.

As regards upper secondary school teachers, the minimum requirement has been a four-year bachelor of education degree through government programmes provided either at a teacher's training college or in a faculty of education. Students who have acquired the Higher Certificate of Education were eligible to continue their studies at a university or teachers training college for two additional years of full-time study for a Bachelor degree. Prospective teachers with a Bachelor degree in other disciplines must undergo an additional one year of full-time study to complete a Bachelor of Education degree. (UNESCO Bangkok, 2011).

The teacher and staff management system has been recently reformed in accordance with the Act on Administrative Procedures for Teachers and Educational Personnel. The new management system has been decentralized, with duties and authorities organized at three levels: (a) the Commission for Teachers and Educational Personnel is responsible for personnel management at the central level; (b) a sub-commission for Teachers and Educational Personnel is attached to each Education Service Area (ESA); and (c) Educational Institutions Committees are responsible for personnel management at the school level. Recruitment and deployment functions, in particular, are decentralized to the level of ESA. At the central level, the Teachers' Council of Thailand (under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education) and the Office for Welfare Promotion for Teachers and Educational Personnel (under the supervision of a committee chaired by the Permanent Secretary for Education) are responsible for: improving occupational standards for teachers; developing personnel management systems and career paths; and developing new salary schemes, allowances, and benefits for teachers.

In addition, the National Institute for Development of Teachers, Faculty Staff and Educational Personnel (NIDTEP) was established in 2006 to carry out tasks related to the development of teachers, including: (a) formulation of policies, plans and guidelines; (b) implementation of promotion and support activities; (c) development of systems and standards; (d) coordination and networking among relevant agencies; and (e) improvement of internal efficiency. The NIDTEP is responsible for rationalizing existing programmes of in-service training. It also looks at new ways to extend professional development nationally through new programmes. Courses and training programmes provided by the NIDTEP mobilize personnel from a variety of relevant organizations, including public and private universities and Rajabhat institutions. Although regular participation in the in-service training is not required of all teachers, the participation is considered an asset when the assessment for the renewal of teaching license is conducted.

The Teacher and Educational Personnel Reform 2004-2013 considers four key areas: training, development and promotion, professional standards control, and personnel management. In the framework of this reform, a number of organizations have been established to assume responsibility for the different aspects of the development and management of educational personnel, including the NIDTEP and its independent funds for the better coordination of responsibilities concerning teacher development; the Teachers' Council for setting professional standards, issuing and revocation of professional licenses as well as monitoring observation of professional standards and ethics; and the Office of Welfare and Security Promotion of Teachers and Educational Personnel to take charge of issues concerning welfare and professional security of educational personnel. Other reform areas include, among

others, the development of a five-year curriculum for pre-service training (replacing the previous four-year curriculum); the promotion of the School-based Training (SBT) for enhanced effectiveness and sustainability of in-service teacher training; the introduction of the rewarding system for the model administrators to recognize their importance as key agents for learning reforms; the development of professional standards and ethics for teachers; and reforms in the administrative procedures for teachers and educational personnel. (UNESCO Bangkok, 2008).

Primary and secondary school teachers do not enjoy the same long breaks as the students and are required to work through the vacations on administrative duties. Many of these tasks concern their familiarisation with the frequent improvements to the National Curriculum; indeed, changes often occur faster than authors and publishers can update the textbooks and the teachers must improvise without support material, and have to design their own tests and exams. (UNESCO Bangkok, 2011). According to the standard criteria, the total workload of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary school teachers is 35 hours per week which includes teaching load and other tasks. The result of the Research on the Efficiency of Teacher Utilization (ONEC, 1996) revealed that the workload of teachers on the average was below the standard criteria. It was found that teachers spent 17 to 21 hours per week on teaching, five to eight hours on work supporting teaching, and two to four hours on administration and other services.

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