

## Problem Private Educational Institution Administration in Thailand

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### Introduction

History of private education in Thailand the involvement of the private sector in education goes back to the times when formal education, in the modern sense of the term, was nonexistent. Education was chiefly provided by monastic schools belonging to Buddhist temples, where boys were taught by monks. The boys were taught Thai, Pali and other basic skills. King Ramkhamhaeng, the third monarch of Sukhothai, the first capital of Thailand, created the Thai alphabets in 1283. Ayutthaya was the second capital of Thailand. During the Ayutthaya period (1377-1767), boys were sent to live in Buddhist monasteries where monks would teach all that the young should know, including Thai and Pali. Those children of royal official that wanted to follow in their father's footsteps had to go through monkhood before they could be appointed officials. 'Schools' in those days were totally different from what they are nowadays. There were no school buildings as such. Nor was there a curriculum to speak of. Each monk determined himself the number of students he would be teaching, because he was also responsible for their subsistence and general welfare. These private schools were however closed down after the death of King Narai in 1688 (Watson, 1980).

Private education has played an important role in shaping the formal school system of Thailand and continues to be responsible for a considerable share of education delivery at all levels. During the last decade, private school enrolment rose from 13 percent in 1995 to 16 percent in 2004. In particular, at the secondary education level of the general stream, the ratios between private and public school enrolment at lower secondary and upper secondary increased from 7:93 and 5:95 in 1995 to 10:90 and 9:91 in 2004, respectively. Between 1995 and 2004 the number of private schools providing general education also rose from 2,645 to 3,330 schools; the total number of students grew from 1,433,649 to 1,820,958; among those, the number of secondary school students grew from 195,294 to 374,297, and the number of schools providing education up to secondary level in which those students were enrolled increased from 539 to 861. The Thai government says: "In its mission to develop the country's vast human resources, the education system has to be adapted to suit the changing times, which necessitates the addition of new knowledge and skills in the curriculum such as foreign languages and computer literacy. Presently, a large number of educational institutions in Thailand operate as international schools using English as the medium of instruction, with bilingual schools in operation at various levels, in response to the rising demand for foreign language skills in the world market. Source: Thailand Foreign Office, the Government Public Relations Department. The education system of Thailand consists of two levels: basic education and higher education. It is stipulated in the Constitution that everyone in Thailand has the right to receive basic education for no less than 12 years, which is to be provided by the state free of charge. Graduates of upper secondary level 6 are considered to have finished their basic education, while graduates of lower secondary level 3 have finished compulsory education. Special education in private school has increased in many parts of the world. It will become driven to corruption while France, Australia and Singapore ban teachers from receiving money from teaching. However, their legacy is a common practice in Bangladesh, Cambodia and other countries. Special education evolved into a form of corruption where teachers teach only half of the course during office hours and ask students to pay to learn in special education classes. It also may affect the lower grades for students who do not take special education classes. Teachers would be unaccepted the low salaries in many countries and the work environment may be undesirable, which may lead to contempt for teachers. These dimension need to be resolved. On the one hand, the policy changes in salaries should come together with measures provided to raise the social status of teachers (Bray, 2003).

### Categories of Private Schools

In accordance with Section 15 of the Private School Act of 1982, private schools have been grouped into the following three categories: 1. Private schools that offer formal education programmes as stipulated or approved by the Ministry of Education. They can be categorized as follows:

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1. General Education schools (1.1) Pre-primary (1.2) Primary (1.3) Secondary  
 2. Vocational Education schools (2.1) Secondary (up to certificate level) (2.2) Higher (up to diploma, higher technical or professional level) 2) Private schools that offer non-formal education programmes as stipulated or approved by the Ministry of Education. Those can be categorized as follows: (1) Schools that follow the national programmes (1.1) Non-formal education schools (1.2) Vocational education schools. 2. Schools that follow programmes/courses approved by the Ministry of Education: (2.1) Schools offering short or part-time programmes (2.2) Religious schools (2.3) Schools offering distance learning programmes (2.4) Schools providing tutoring in specific subjects in the Ministry of Education's regular programmes (2.5) Art schools (2.6) Vocational schools 3) Special education schools offering programmes suitable for people with special needs including physical or mental disabilities and/or intellectual impairment. Some schools are also specially intended for the poor and other educationally disadvantaged groups and offer so-called welfare education.

### **Early History of Education in Thailand**

Education took hold in Thailand in the Sukhothai period, with Buddhist temples as the main venues for the teaching and training of youths. All Thai men aged 20 were obliged to be temporarily ordained as Buddhist monks. While in the saffron robe and residing in the temple, they would learn reading and writing, as well as various crafts suitable for men, while women were trained in Thai customs, good manners, cookery, homemaking, and crafts at home or at the royal court. Later, as Thailand came into more contact with Western countries, education became institutionalized. The impetus for development picked up pace during the reign of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V), who undertook a major reform of the Thai education system, with the introduction of the first public schools and the expansion of education at all levels as part of his national reform. King Vajiravudh, his successor, carried on the reform process, establishing the first university and expanding public education. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, United States and British missionaries introduced formal European education, primarily in the palaces. Up to that time, scholarly pursuits had been confined largely to Buddhist temples, where monastic instruction, much of it entailing the memorization of scriptures, was provided to boys and young men. Like his father Mongkut, King Chulalongkorn (Rama V, 1868-1910) wanted to integrate monastic instruction with Western education. Unsuccessful in this effort, he appointed his half-brother, Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, to design a new system of education. Western teachers were engaged to provide assistance, and in 1921 a compulsory education law was enacted. In 1917 the first university in the country, Chulalongkorn University, was established. In 1921, the Compulsory Primary Education Act was proclaimed.

Emphasis on education grew after the 1932 coup as a result of the new constitutional requirement for a literate populace able to participate in electoral politics. Government efforts focused on primary education; private schools, concentrated in Bangkok and a few provincial centers, supported a major share of educational activity, especially at the secondary level. Despite ambitious planning, little was accomplished. Even after World War II, the educated segment of Thai society continued to consist mainly of a small elite in Bangkok.

### **Administration of the Education System**

Thailand is a constitutional monarchy in which King Vajiralongkorn, or Rama X (enthroned in 2016) functions as the head of state, while the government is presently run by a so-called "National Council of Peace and Order" under an appointed prime minister serving as the head of government. The country is divided into 76 administrative *changwats*, or provinces, the governors of which are appointed by the Interior Ministry in Bangkok. General education policy is under the purview of the national Ministry of Education (MOE), which oversees basic, vocational and higher education, with the majority of public (and private) education institutions falling under its remit. Specialized higher education institutions are the exception as they may be under the jurisdiction of other governmental departments, such as the Ministry of Public Health. A number of different government organizations under the MOE administer the different sectors of the education system: The "Office of the Basic Education Commission" (OBEC) oversees elementary and secondary education, (basic education), the "Office of the Vocational Education Commission" (OVEC) oversees vocational education and training, while higher education is under the purview of the "Office of the Higher Education Commission" (OHEC).

Reforms initiated in the late 1990s introduced greater decentralization of the – until then highly centralized – Thai education system, with local administrative units, the so-called Local Administration

Organizations (under the Ministry of Interior), being able to provide education at all levels of study according to local needs. Educational Service Areas (ESAs), too, were established to further the goal of decentralization. ESAs are administrative units responsible for hiring teachers and implementing policy at the local level. There were 185 ESAs in 2008, each of them responsible for approximately 200 education institutions and students. As a result of the various decentralization efforts, administration of education in Thailand can now be complex with a variety of actors and overlapping responsibilities. That said, the current government in 2016 implemented changes that seek the re-centralization of parts of the elementary and secondary education system.

#### **Later History of Education in Thailand**

Only 4 million children were enrolled in government schools in the 1960s, but by the late 1980s nearly 80 percent of the population above the age of 11 had some formal education. This dramatic change reflected government interest in accelerating the pace of social development through education, especially in less secure areas of the country, as a means of promoting political stability. By 1983 an estimated 99.4 percent of the children between the ages of 7 and 12 attended primary school. (Compulsory schooling lasted only until grade six.) The postwar years showed the influence of American education. By the mid-1980s, perhaps.

The government operated schools in all parts of the country, but there were many private schools as well, chiefly in Bangkok, sponsored principally by missionaries or Chinese communal organizations. Several universities ran what were effectively their own preparatory academies. In the late 1970s, the schools were reorganized into a six-three-three pattern that comprised six years of primary schooling, three years of lower secondary education, and three years at the upper secondary level. Students in the upper secondary program could choose either academic or vocational courses. A core curriculum was common to both tracks, but the academic program focused on preparation for university entrance, whereas the vocational program emphasized skilled trades and agriculture. Only a small percentage of students continued their education beyond secondary school. Some who would have chosen to do so failed to qualify for university acceptance. Secondary-school graduates often had difficulty finding suitable employment. Even vocational graduates in rural areas frequently found their industrial skills poorly fitted to the agro-economic job market. As many as 100,000 Thai students had studied in the United States, and tens of thousands had benefited from Peace Corps and other United States government educational assistance projects.

Access to education and the quality of education varied significantly by region. At the primary level, rural schools, administered since 1963 by the Ministry of Interior, tended to have the least qualified teachers and the most serious shortage of teaching materials. In an effort to increase the number of teachers, other ministries, including the Ministry of Defense, offered teacher-training programs. Although more students gained access to education, this arrangement led to a duplication of resources. Competition began to replace cooperation among some of the teachers' colleges and universities. Opportunities for secondary education were concentrated in major towns and in the Center. In the mid-1970s, Bangkok, with 10 percent of the country's population, had 45 percent of the secondary-school population, while the North and the Northeast combined, with 55 percent of the nation's population, had only 26 percent of these students. The government has since attempted to rectify these inequities by improving administrative structure, making education more relevant to socioeconomic development, and adding qualitative and quantitative support to both public and private systems. Nevertheless, in the late 1980s the underlying problem of inequitable distribution of funds between the Center and the outlying provinces remained.

In more recent days, education in Thailand has been systematized and extended greatly, especially since the promulgation of the National Education Act, 1999, which aims at giving all citizens equal rights and opportunities to receive education, with no limitations owing to sex, age, profession, educational background, economic status, or social standing, nor with regard to physical, mental, or intellectual disabilities. It also aims to inculcate the quest for knowledge among the Thai people. Education reform is meant to make the providing of education more efficient and effective and to further enhance the best qualities of the Thai people. (Source: Thailand Foreign Office, the Government Public Relations Department).

#### **Problems with Education in Thailand**

Thailand and Malaysia lag behind the Four Tigers—South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong—in education. In the 1990s, the education system in Thailand was regarded as particularly weak. At that

time the Thai government was accused of failing to invest in educational infrastructure. Critics claim Thai teachers lack basic teaching skills. The emphasis has traditionally been on rote learning. From an economic point of view it doesn't do enough to train people to work in a high tech era and it has failed to produce a skilled workforce that can compete with countries like Taiwan and South Korea. In 1997, only 17 percent of adult Thais had graduated from high school and Thailand had 260 engineers per 1 million compared to 2,500 per million South Korea.

According to one report: "Thailand remains a developing country. The mean duration of a child's education is just 7.8 years (Bangkok Post, 2004). Just over half of the Grade One cohort enter elementary school when they are supposed to, and only 85 percent get to enroll at any time during their elementary years (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2003). Only 80 percent of those completing primary education go into secondary schools (Government of Thailand, 1996). A massive 70 percent of the population have received only an elementary education, and only 18 percent have gone on to secondary or vocational (Government of Thailand, 1997). Seen in the context of these figures, we can see that our sample was a well-educated group.

In rural areas, it is not uncommon for teachers to arrive late at school, long after classes were supposed to have begun. In the meantime students are allowed to run free. Some teachers do not bother to show up at all. Some are out selling cosmetics or working at odd jobs, or doing private tutoring, to make ends meet because their salaries are so low. The teachers that advance to higher positions of responsibility often do so because they kiss the ass of their superiors and help them enrich themselves rather than on teaching skills.

### **Conclusion**

Private education has played an important role in the Thai education system since the Sukhothai period and was formally recognized in 1828, before the first public school was established by the state. It remains an important part of the current educational system and has provided alternative education to approximately two million students over recent years. Educational system Thailand educational system consists of three types of education: formal, non-formal, and informal education.

Formal education's aims, methods, curricula, duration, assessment, and evaluation are expressly and strictly defined. Formal education services are provided by both public and private bodies to those within the school system that is enrolled at childhood development institutions or schools. It is divided into basic education and higher education. Basic education covers pre-primary, primary (6 years), lower secondary (3 years), and upper secondary education (3 years). Upper secondary education is in turn divided into two types: general education and vocational education.

Basic education is provided by the following institutions: early childhood development institutions, i.e. childcare centers, child development centers, initial care centers for disabled children or those with special needs and early childhood development centers operated by religious institutions or by other agencies; schools such as state schools, private schools, and those under the jurisdiction of Buddhist or other religious institutions; learning centers, i.e. those organized by non-formal educational agencies, individuals, families, community organizations, local administration, private organizations, professional bodies, religious institutions, enterprises, hospitals, medical institutions, welfare institutions and other social institutions.

Private provision of education has played an important role in relieving demand on the government's finance resources for education, as most private schools/institutions are self-supported, especially for their capital/investment costs. At the level of basic education, the government distributes subsidies to students in both state and private schools. Still, many private schools charge additional fees; private degree-level institutions do not receive government subsidies and have to charge higher tuition fees than state degree-level institutions that are in receipt of government subsidies. To mobilize resources for education in line with the National Education Act, the following action was taken:

1) Two acts were drafted to amend the relevant laws so as to increase the tax rebates on donations for education, and the tax exemption on educational materials. Regarding the increase of tax rebates on donations for education that will come into effect shortly, a more simplified process for requesting such rebates has also been proposed.

2) A committee comprised of representatives from the MOE and the Ministry of Finance has considered several measures aimed at increasing the private provision of education. In April 2004, the Council of Ministers approved that the Ministry of Finance grant property tax exemption to private educational

institutions and that the MOE and concerned agencies modify the rules and regulations relative to private educational institutions, so as to enforce the principle of equal treatment of public and private educational institutions. It has also been suggested that a law authorizing the state and local administration organizations to levy educational taxes should be issued as specified in the National Education Act. Moreover, it was suggested that if the state were authorized to levy inheritance tax, such a tax should be used for educational purposes. Because there is not enough information on the appropriateness of educational taxes or the use of such taxes for educational purposes, no concrete action has been taken regarding the levy of educational taxes as yet.

### **Recommendation**

Reform of curriculum a core curriculum for basic education has been developed, aimed at preserving Thai identity and Pre-school education aims to encourage harmonious social, physical, emotional and intellectual development in young children between the ages of three and six to prepare them for their formal schooling. State schools provide two types of pre-school education: two-year kindergarten and one-year pre-school classes in rural primary school, while private schools provide three-year kindergarten. Another problem with a more immediate impact on the education system is Thailand's brisk demographic decline. Thailand's population is aging rapidly – a trend that causes the student population to shrink and threatens the existence of large numbers of Thai higher education institutions, particularly in the private sector. Some Thai education experts warned in 2017 that declining demand for education, combined with increased competition from foreign universities, could lead to the closure of as many as three quarters of higher education institutions over the coming decade.

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