

## **Schools Libraries in Thailand**

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The First Thailand Education Congress on the Occasion of World Teachers' Day was organised during November 1-3, 2005, and in honour of the 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday Anniversary of HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn. The congress concluded with study visits to learning sources and model schools. Delegates to the congress prepared a Declaration focusing on the need for Thai Teachers to recognise education as a tool that will develop the quality of life and address the problems of environmental degradation, national disasters and violent conflicts in the world. There for, teachers must devote themselves to continuous self-development to improve the quality of students and the society.

Formal education is divided into basic education and higher education. Basic education is provided by early childhood development institutions, schools, and learning centres, and covers pre-primary education, 6 years of primary, 3 years of lower secondary, and 3 years of upper secondary education. The current compulsory education requirement covers 6 years of primary and 3 years of lower secondary education. Children are expected to be enrolled in basic education institutions from age 7 through the age of 16, except for those who have already completed Grade 9. (Office of the Education council, 2006)

In 2001 Curriculum for Basic Education covers 12 years of basic education (Grades 1-12), and is divided into four three-year stages, consisting of 1,000 – 2,000 hours per year. In this curriculum, the knowledge and skills specified in section 23 of the National Education Act have been grouped into eight subject areas: Thai Language; Mathematics; Science; Social Studies; Religion and Culture; Health and Physical Education; Art; Career/ Technology-Related Education; and Foreign Language. Activities that focus on responding to the learner's specific interests are also included.

Accordance with the 1999 National Education Act and the 2002 Bureaucratic Reform Bill, the major reform of educational administration and management has been the merging of 3 agencies, consisting of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of University Affairs and the office of the National Education Commission, into a single Ministry of Education.

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Function literacy in Thailand (14-50 years old) in 2003 was 96.6 percent. Years in school, by average, in 2004 were 8.1 years. Compulsory education is 9 years (grade 1 to grade 9). At present, Thai government provided free education up to grade 9 to every Thai citizen. Free nursery is also available for those of ages of 3-5 years old.

Thai government has extended educational opportunities at every level. Educational Services of both formal and informal education systems have been extended to cover every target group and areas. As the government extended basic education to 12 years, this effort resulted in the increase of years in school of Thai citizens from 7.8 years in 2003 to 8.1 years in 2004. In overall Population of ages 3-21 years, students per population increased from 65.1 percent in 1997 to 73.5 percent in 2004. Citizen educated by informal system increased from 3.3 million persons in 2002 to 4.1 million persons in 2004. In addition, 170,000 disable and underprivileged children had accessed to informal education system in 2004.

Quantitatively, students' access to education system had expanded continuously. Paradoxically quality development is urgently needed. This is because, GAT test results administered to grade 6, grade 9 and grade 12 student in 2003 were very poor. In addition, SAT of the grade 12 indicated that most of students in Thailand are very poor in language, mathematical and analytical skills.

Educational service areas were established in conformity with the requirement to decentralise authority for educational administration. In 2008, there are 185 educational service areas in 76 provinces, with 182 areas in the provinces and the remaining 3 in Bangkok.

### **National Education Standards**

As specified in the 1999 National Education Act and the 2002 Bureaucratic Reform Bill, The office of the Education Council is responsible for proposing national education standards. Consequently, sets of standards were formulated by the office in cooperation with the offices responsible for basic, vocational, and higher education as well as the office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment. With approval from the Council of Ministers on October 26, 2004, agencies providing education at all levels are expected to abide by the national education standards, which are comprised of three categories

#### **1 Characteristics of the Thai People**

Desirable characteristics of the Thai people, as both citizens of the country and members of the world community, consist of 5 indicators

- 1.1 sound physical and mental health;
- 1.2 required knowledge and skills sufficient for leading a meaningful life and social development;
- 1.3 skills in learning and self-adjustment;
- 1.4 social skills; and
- 1.5 high moral, public-mindedness, and consciousness of their citizenship of Thailand and the world.

## 2 Guidelines for learning and management

Guidelines for educational provision consist of 3 indicators:

- 2.1. development of a diversified curricula and ambiance enabling learners to development themselves in line with their natural inclinations and to the best of their potential; and
- 2.2 systematic and effective development of administrators, teachers, faculty staff and education personnel; and
- 2.3 practice of school-based management.

## 3. Guidelines for learning society/knowledge society

Guidelines for creating a learning society/ knowledge society consist of 3 indicators:

- 3.1 provision of academic services and establishment of cooperation between educational institutions and community so as to transform educational institutions into a learning society/ knowledge society;
- 3.2 research and study, promotion of and support for learning sources and mechanisms; and
- 3.3 generation and management of knowledge for the benefit of all levels and components of the society.

The National education stands also serve as the basis for setting assessment standards of internal and external quality assurance mechanisms. At the moment, all agencies concerned have developed relevant educational standards (office of the Education council, 2008)

## **Maintaining Professional Standards**

### 1 Institutional Development

Two organisations under the supervision of the Ministry of Education focus on teacher professionalism. The office for Welfare and Security Promotion of Teachers and Education Personnel oversees welfare and security of teachers and education personnel. The Teachers Council is to take on the added responsibilities of setting professional standards, issuing and revoking professional licenses, as well as monitoring adherence to professional standards and ethics.

## 2 Development of Standards and a code of Ethics for Educational Professionals

The Teachers' Council has established a set of standards and a code of ethics for educational professionals, in line with the 2003 Teachers and Education Personnel Council Act, which specifies that professional standards be comprised of professional knowledge and experience, of performance, and of conduct

### **Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)**

Information and Communication Technologies enables learners, both inside and outside schools, to access a wide variety of information that goes beyond the traditional classroom setting. Students and workers, for instance, can search for cutting-edge knowledge from the Internet to expand their learning horizons as well as to develop the thinking skills and creativity needed for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

ICT and Effective Management at Schools and Educational Agencies: The Ministry aims to equip schools and field offices nationwide with modern-day technologies, including high-speed internet, new administrative software, as well as the very best-performing networks. The new digital technologies can not only link up data among all educational sites but also make educational information electronically available to the public.(Office of the Education Council, 2007)

In the information education stream, the e-learning service and e-school projects are examples of the education and lifelong learning opportunities made possible by H.M.King Bhumibol. The e-school project, targeting Thai citizens living in the U.S. is implemented in collaboration with Distance Learning Centres in Wat Padhammachat, in Los Angeles, and the Royal Thai Consulate in Chicago. (Office of the Education Council, 2006) Sister Schools Project Seminar of ASPnet. The sister school project was created according to the intention of Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Siridhorn.

### **Six strategies for Development of Education Quality**

Office of the Education Council propose strategies for educational quality development, the task forces organized 30 meetings including the National Conference on the Quality of Education in which more than 3,000 educators, teachers, parents, news reporters, and concerned people attended. The whole process and the conference yielded the proposal of the six following strategies for educational quality development:

- 1) Quality Development of Learners

- 2) Development of Teachers, Faculty and Education Personnel
- 3) Development of Information Technology for Education
- 4) Development of a Support System for Enhancing Educational Quality
- 5) Strengthening Quality Development of Educational Institutions
- 6) Promotion of Educational Partnership from All Social Sectors

The proposed draft of the “Strategies for the Educational Quality Development: The National Agenda 2008-2012 “was submitted to the Council of Ministers and was approved on January 22, 2008 for effective implementation.

### **Improvement of Teaching and Learning Quality**

The “One District, One Lab School” project was launched in October 2003 to create at least one high-quality school in every district through the improvement of school facilities and administration, as well as teaching approaches and techniques, students’ analytical thinking skills, and the application of ICT for learning.

Between 2004 and 2006, the government approved a large budget for the project, with each Lab School receiving Bht. 5 million for developing its library, laboratories, computers, and learning materials for use in teaching and learning.

A number of campaigns have been organized to encourage the proper use of the Thai language and good reading habits. Radio and television programs have been produced and contests organised in essay-writing, public speaking, reading, and creative writing in Thai. The Annual Book Fair, held in cooperation with publishing houses since 1972, has attracted increased public attention and interest. (Office of the Education Council, 2006)

### **Internal Quality Assurance**

In 2003, The Ministry of Education announced relevant ministerial regulations for the system, criteria, and methods for internal quality assurance of basic education. To serve as a basic for external quality assessment, all educational institutions follow guidelines for internal quality assurance standards developed by their supervision agency. Educational institutions are also required to implement an internal quality assurance system comprised of control, audit, and assessment. In support of these efforts, a number of activities have been carried out, including: developing personnel; implementing pilot projects; providing financial support; conducting, monitoring, and advisory; and disseminating documents, media and equipment. (Office of the Education Council, 2008)

## **External Quality Assessment**

External quality assessment of all education institutions is conducted at least once every five years, with outcomes submitted to the relevant agency and made available to the general public.

The Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) oversees external quality assessments of both basic and higher education institutions following standards relating to educational achievement (output/ outcome); input/ process; and efficiency in administration and leadership.

According to the research about the standard of basic education school library, all libraries are below standard in every areas. There is also no position for school librarian. Moreover within the first round of external quality assessment(2001-2005) around ONESQA has conducted external evaluation basic education institution of 26,584 schools nationwide. The result is 66% schools are below standard in term of administrators, teachers and students. Most of them are small schools in rural area.

## **School library**

A school library serves as an educational supporting both directly and indirectly to develop students' empirical thinking and problem solving skills by keeping them up-to-date with immediate information.

The schools libraries are of central importance to the Schools. It is an organic combination of staff, information resources, and building, whose purpose is to assist users in the process of transforming information into knowledge. The schools libraries must take an active role in the development of these policies.

The initial "Standards for primary schools libraries and secondary schools libraries were adopted by Thai Library Association under the Royal Patronage of H.R.H. Princess Mahachakri Sirindhorn. (T.L.A.) in 1990. These standards are intended to help members of the schools libraries and school administration responsible for determining priorities and evaluating performance to optimize the performance of the schools library in terms of the mission of the school. While standards are needed, they cannot be stated as absolutes equally applicable to all schools libraries and be useful.

The schools libraries should receive budgetary support and sources. The library represents a major capital investment. As such, it requires ongoing and annual investment to retain its value in the long-term.

## **School Libraries in Transformation**

A library serves as an educational unit supporting both directly and indirectly to the development of students' impartial thinking and problem solving skills by keeping them up-to-date with immediate information. Schools should be able to provide information literacy as parts of the basic curriculum through students' development activities and integrated into different subject areas as well. During this transitional period, the libraries should serve as a significant knowledge banks and efficiently serve every students in the learning and adjusting to the new knowledge. They should be tools for teachers' and students' development in establishing reading habit for life long learning. Executives, librarians and those involved should transform the libraries to serve the needs of the school, the community and the society. Teachers and students are encouraged to learn independently and freely. Students develop their learning processes appropriately according to their ages. They learn to accept rules, share resources and preserve their environments. Most important of all, librarian should be identified as professional as teachers and executives. The school library should be developed to be a key learning and servicing resource center as it is an essential mean in the processes of teaching and learning, self-directing education, and non-formal education.

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