

Chapter 7

Access and Participation

Since education is seen as a mechanism for instilling democratic values, as well as the means for developing the productive and social capacity of the people, an increase in access to and participation in all types of educational activities has been a major goal of the Thai Government for the past four decades. Despite achievements in expanding educational opportunities at all levels, *Thailand* is facing major challenges in terms of access to and participation in education, particularly the issue of equity.

7.1 Access to Formal Education

During the past several decades, greater access to education at all levels has been provided to the school – age population. The efforts of all agencies in the expansion of educational services in *Thailand* have resulted in a higher level of educational attainment of the people. It was found that the average years of educational attainment of Thai people aged 15 years and over rose from 6.6 years in 1996 to 7 years in 1998 (Table 7.1).

Table 7.1 Average Educational Attainment of the Thai Population, 1996 – 1998

Age – Group	1996	1997	1998
15 and over	6.6	6.8	7.0
15 – 21	8.8	9.0	9.3
15 – 59	7.2	7.4	7.6
60 and over	3.2	3.3	3.4

Unit : Year

Source : Educational Information Centre, ONEC.

However, the total student enrolment in formal education faced a slight decrease from 13.8 million in 1997 to 13.7 million in 1998, resulting from a decline in student intake from 4.9 million in 1997 to 4.7 million in 1998 due to the impact of the economic crisis. In 1999, the total number of students participating in formal schooling was about 14.1 million, with an increase from 13.7 million in 1998 (Table 7.2).

Table 7.2 Number and Increasing / Decreasing Rate of Students by Level of Education : Academic Year 1998 – 1999

Level of Education	1998	1999	Increasing/ Decreasing Rate
Pre-primary	2,745,139	2,801,457	2.1
Primary	5,936,174	6,027,721	1.5
Secondary	4,103,879	4,207,201	2.5
● Lower Secondary	2,426,905	2,388,561	- 1.6
● Upper Secondary	1,676,974	1,818,640	8.4
- General Education	963,299	1,035,919	7.5
- Vocational Education	713,675	782,721	9.7
Higher Education	961,420	1,151,934	19.8
Total	13,746,612	14,188,313	3.2

Note The number of students in this table does not include those participating in non-formal basic education, education provided by other ministries and agencies for specific purposes, education for ecclesiastics, and higher education above bachelor's degree level.

Source : Educational Information Centre, ONEC.

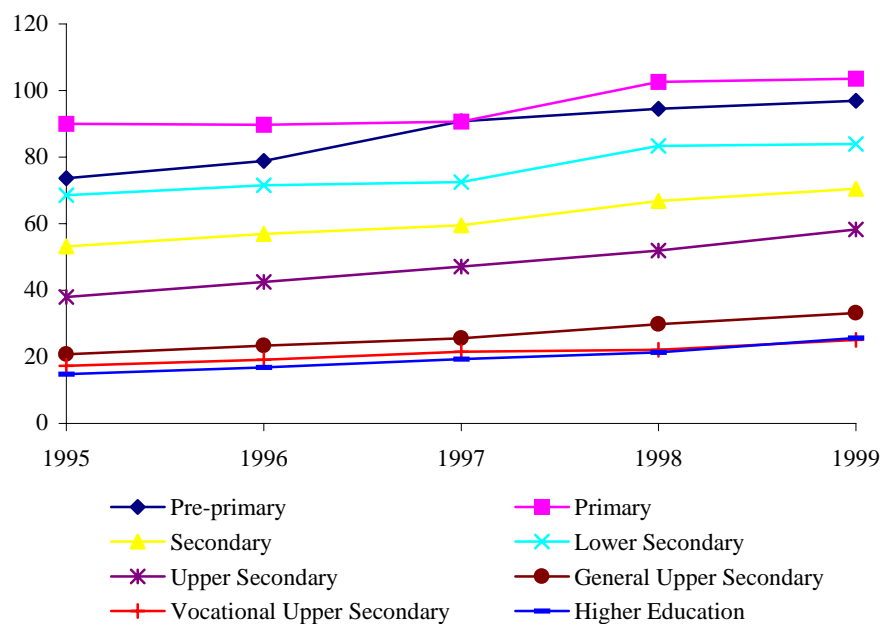
The number of students at lower secondary level in 1999 was less than the previous year due to the decrease in student enrolment under the responsibility of the *Department of General Education*. At upper secondary level, less students participated in the general stream while there was a significant increase in the number of students having access to the vocational stream.

In 1999, the **Thailand Population Projection, 1998 - 2016** was conducted by a committee comprising representatives from the *Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Public Health, ONESDB, National Statistical Office*, and the *Institute of Population Studies of Chulalongkorn University*, with the *Institute for Population and Social Research of Mahidol University* acting as coordinating unit and responsible for the projection. The number of population in 1998 was adjusted and used as the baseline data for the projection. As a result, since the year 1998, educational indicators in *Thailand* relating to population data have been based on the adjusted number of population in 1998 and the projection in 1999.

Pre-Primary Education

In *Thailand*, children are normally enrolled in one type of pre-primary programme at 3 years of age. The proportion of the 3-5 years age group in pre-schooling increased continuously from 73.7 percent in 1995 to 90.8 percent in 1997. Based on a new set of population data, the pre-primary enrolment ratio was 94.5 percent in 1998 and rose to 96.9 percent in 1999 (Figure 7.1).

**Figure 7.1 Enrolment Ratio by Level of Education :
Academic Year 1995 – 1999**



Source : Educational Information Centre, ONEC.

Primary Education

The enrolment rate in six-year primary education for the 6-11 years age group was 102.6 percent in 1998 and increased to 103.6 percent in 1999. The enrolment ratio at primary level is more than 100 percent as a result of repetition rate as well as the under – age and over

– age population of students. However, there are still a lot of children who are not in primary school, particularly those who live in remote areas or who are handicapped. Therefore, greater efforts would be made to draw these children to school in order to achieve universal primary education.

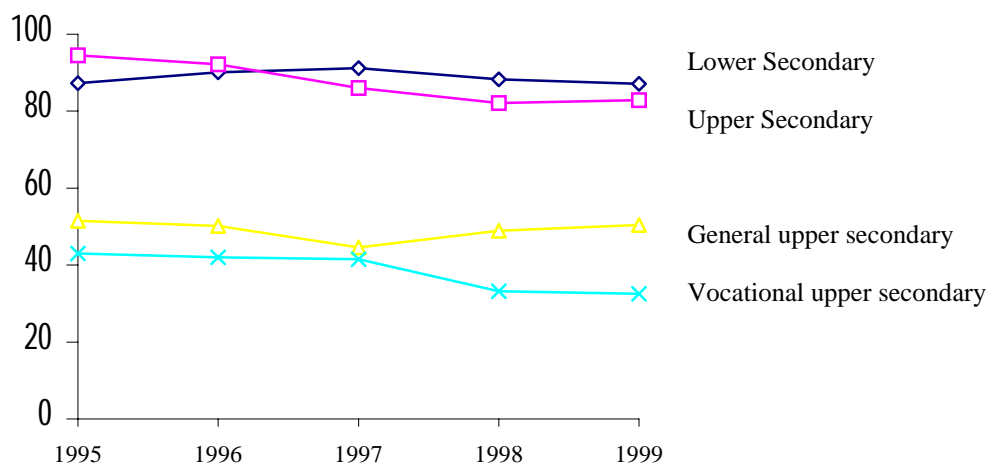
Secondary Education

The enrolment in secondary education has gradually risen from 53.2 percent in 1995 to 70.5 percent in 1999 as a result of the expansion of educational opportunities in rural areas. However, there remains 30 percent of 12-17 year olds who have no chance to participate in secondary education.

Although greater efforts have been made to extend participation in secondary education, there was only a slight increase in the transition rate of students completing primary education who proceeded to lower secondary education, from 87.3 percent in 1995 to 88.3 percent in 1998 and this fell to 87.1 in 1999.

At upper secondary level, only 58.3 percent of the age-group participated in formal education in 1999 while about 1.3 million had no access to education at this level. It is noticeable that there was a decline in the transition rate from lower secondary to upper secondary level from 94.5 percent in 1995 to 82.9 percent in 1999 due to the increasing number of lower secondary students resulting from the expansion of educational opportunities at this level, while nearly half of the school-age population still had no access to upper secondary education. In the vocational stream, in particular, there was a significant decrease of the transition rate from 43.0 percent in 1995 to 32.5 percent in 1999 as a result of the economic crisis.

**Figure 7.2 Transition Rate by Level of Education :
Academic Year 1995 - 1999**



Source : Educational Information Centre, ONEC.

Higher Education

In 1998, around 82 percent of secondary school graduates had access to higher education, with only 21.3 percent of the 18 – 21 year – age – group participating in formal education. However, this did not include the number of students in open universities. The enrolment ratio in higher education showed a slight increase to 25.7 percent in 1999, with about 3.3 million of the age – group having no access to higher education.

7.2 Participation in Non – Formal Education

Non – formal education has increasingly provided a second chance to a large number of the out – of – school population in *Thailand*. Starting with the first national campaign in 1938, it has now become a diversified further education programme encompassing general and vocational education. With the current literacy rate around 95 percent, the *Department of Non – Formal Education* was awarded the 1998 Escap Human Resources Development Award for its efforts to combat illiteracy in *Thailand*, its success in promoting non – formal education at the grass – roots level and its efforts in incorporating learner – centred changes in adult education.

However, In 1999, the total number of participants in non – formal education faced a decline of 20.8 percent from the year 1996. The decreasing number of participants were under the responsibility of the *Department of Non – Formal Education* and the *Department of Vocational Education*. There was an increase in the number of participants only in the *Office of the Private Education Commission*, the *Bureau of Community Development* and the *Department of Skill Development*. *DNFE* and *OPEC* offer both general education programmes equivalent to primary and secondary school certificate and vocational training courses. Other departments provide only short – course skill training services to the out – of – school population.

Table 7.3 Number and Increasing Rate of Participants in Non – Formal Education by Department, 1996 and 1999

	1996	1999	Increasing Rate (1996/1999)
Ministry of Education			
● DNFE	3,592,264	2,379,249	-33.8
● DOVE	246,631	204,065	-17.3
● OPEC	807,880	1,044,410	29.3
Ministry of Interior			
● Bureau of Community Development	34,369	37,273	8.4
Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare			
● Dept. of Skill Development	135,409	148,680	9.8
Total	4,816,553	3,813,677	-20.8

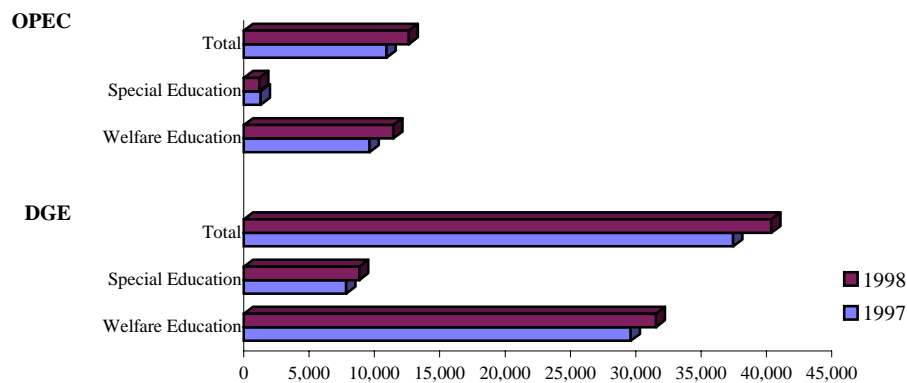
Source : Educational Information Centre, ONEC.

7.3 Access to Special and Welfare Education

Both public and private sectors have made greater efforts to expand educational opportunities and services to the handicapped and the disadvantaged such as the poor and those living in remote rural areas, in slums or in the streets as well as children without a birth certificate.

In 1998, more children had access to special and welfare education provided by the *Department of General Education* and the *Office of the Private Education Commission*. Nevertheless, there was a decline in the number of students in special schools under the *OPEC* from 1,301 in 1997 to 1,190 in 1998 (Figure 7.3).

Figure 7.3 Number of Students in Special and Welfare Education : Academic Years 1997 and 1998



Source : Department of General Education, MOE.

7.4 Participation in Education for Ecclesiastics and Laymen

The disadvantaged, especially boys from poor families in rural areas, have benefitted greatly from education provided for ecclesiastics by going into the monkhood. Formal general education for monks and novices is organized at lower and upper secondary levels. The number of monk and novice students at both levels increased from 55,528 in 1995 to 78,555 in 1999; an increase of 41.5 percent. Apart from the study of Buddhism on Dharma and Pali provided for monks and novices, the teaching of Dharma was also offered to an increasing number of laymen.

At higher education level, the number of monk students at bachelor's and master's degree levels increased sharply from 4,669 in 1995 to 9,786 in 1999, an increase of over 100 percent. The highest increase rate was at master's degree level at approximately 600 percent.

Table 7.4 Number of Participants in Education for Ecclesiastics and Teaching of Dharma for Laymen, 1995 and 1999.

	1995	1999	Increasing Rate (1995/1999)
General Education	55,528	78,555	41.5
Lower Secondary	41,220	56,097	36.1
Upper Secondary	14,308	22,458	57.0
Study of Buddhism	453,566	590,492	30.2
Dharma	169,646	207,483	22.3
Pali	36,575	32,029	-12.4
Teaching of Dharma*	247,345	350,980	41.9
Higher Education	4,669	9,786	110.0
Bachelor's degree	4,620	9,435	104.2
Master's degree	49	351	616.3
Total	513,763	678,833	32.1

*Provided for laymen.

Source :Educational Information Centre, ONEC.

7.5 Equity of Access to Education

In terms of quantitative development, there have been considerable achievements at all levels of education. Efforts have been made to provide greater educational opportunities for all people. However, there are still disparities and inequalities, particularly in access of the provincial and low – income population to educational services and infrastructure. Inequities have been found among different types of schools. The extension of lower secondary education in primary schools in rural areas has been essential to increasing access. However, rural schools in remote areas are less well equipped and have fewer well qualified teachers than urban schools. Graduates of rural schools are more likely to enter the vocational stream at the upper secondary level and less likely to proceed to higher education. Urban children have access to better quality schools with more opportunities to continue to post – secondary education.

There are also inequalities in higher education among different types of institutions. Public universities are fairly well funded and largely free to those who gain admittance. Tuition fees at university level amount to less than 3 percent of unit expenditure, while secondary school student tuition is more than 7 percent of the cost of education. Moreover, access to closed universities remains highly inequitable, with a high proportion of students coming from relatively advantaged families.

In an attempt to provide equal educational opportunities for all people, more educational institutions have been established at all levels, except primary schools. However, the majority of educational institutions are situated in urban areas, particularly at higher levels. Pre-primary, primary, and lower – secondary schools are distributed both in Bangkok and other provinces. At upper and post – secondary levels, the greater number of educational institutions are in Bangkok, and those in other provinces are usually in urban areas (Table 7.5).

Enrolment rates at all levels of education reflect disparities in access to educational services. In 1997 there were greater differences between the regions with highest and lowest enrolment rates at all levels of education, except in vocational upper secondary education (Table 7.6). The lowest rates were usually in the northeast, the poorest region, particularly at higher level.

Table 7.5 Number and Percentage of Educational Institutions in Bangkok and other Provinces by Level of Education : Academic Year 1997

Level of Education	Total		Bangkok		Other Provinces	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
• Pre – primary	44,903	100.0	1,393	3.0	43,510	97.0
• Primary	34,002	100.0	890	2.6	33,112	97.4
• Lower secondary	9,678	100.0	332	3.4	9,346	96.6
• Upper Secondary	3,017	100.0	290	9.6	2,727	90.4
General	2,286	100.0	160	7.0	2,126	93.0
Vocational	731	100.0	130	17.8	601	82.2
• Higher	780	100.0	116	14.8	571	73.2
Diploma	557	100.0	112	20.1	445	79.9
Bachelor's	149	100.0	48	32.2	101	67.8
Degree	41	100.0	22	53.7	19	46.3
Master's degree						
Doctorate	17	100.0	11	64.7	6	35.3

Source : Educational Information Centre, ONEC.

Table 7.6 Enrolment Ratio by Region and Level of Education : Academic Year 1996 – 1997

Region	Pre-primary		Primary		Lower Secondary		Upper Secondary				Higher	
							General		Vocational			
	1996	1997	1996	1997	1996	1997	1996	1997	1996	1997	1996	1997
National Average	78.7	90.0	90.0	90.8	72.5	74.2	23.8	25.9	18.7	21.5	16.4	19.4
Central	73.7	81.4	90.0	92.0	75.7	74.4	24.9	25.8	31.3	32.3	39.1	45.1
Eastern	89.3	101.0	106.7	108.6	80.7	83.9	21.8	22.1	22.8	27.2	12.1	15.0
Northeastern	75.6	92.0	83.3	83.6	69.2	71.7	23.5	27.0	9.9	11.9	7.5	9.4
Northern	91.6	105.7	93.3	95.0	74.5	75.0	25.2	26.7	18.2	22.0	14.5	17.1
Western	79.9	88.6	99.3	100.3	74.7	77.0	20.8	21.5	20.5	24.7	9.6	10.4
Southern	72.9	79.8	92.0	91.3	70.1	73.9	23.9	25.6	23.2	27.4	12.7	15.7
Differences between regions with highest and lowest rates	18.7	25.9	16.7	25.0	11.5	12.2	4.4	5.5	21.4	20.4	31.6	35.7

Source : Educational Information Centre, ONEC.

As regards the transition from primary to lower secondary level, the disparities between the central region and others in 1997 were less than in 1996, but the transition rate in the central area was still higher than other regions. In 1997, a higher number of students had access to upper secondary education in all regions; however, disparities among regions still

existed, as in 1996, with the highest transition rate in the central region and the lowest in the northeastern area (Table 7.7).

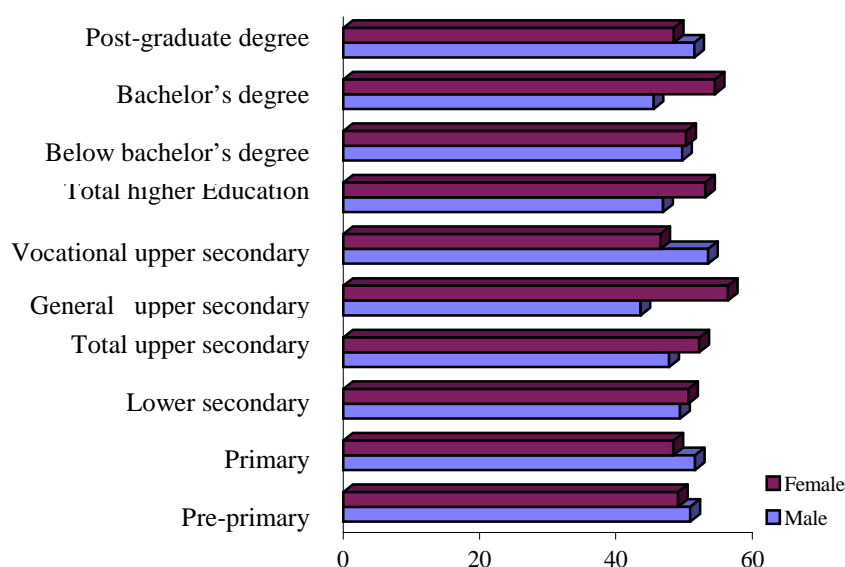
Table 7.7 Transition Rate by Level of Education and Region : Academic Year 1996 – 1997

Region	Lower Secondary		Upper Secondary					
			General		Vocational		Total	
	1996	1997	1996	1997	1996	1997	1996	1997
Whole Kingdom	91.4	92.8	46.9	44.4	37.1	40.9	84.0	85.3
Central	124.6	98.0	44.2	43.1	53.5	55.3	97.8	98.4
Eastern	89.3	93.7	39.5	35.3	42.7	50.0	82.1	85.3
Northeastern	86.0	91.7	51.9	49.4	22.3	25.6	74.2	75.0
Northern	87.9	91.3	48.1	43.5	36.1	42.6	85.4	86.1
Western	85.0	90.0	42.3	38.4	43.0	49.6	85.4	88.0
Southern	85.0	92.5	43.0	42.2	44.4	49.1	88.6	91.3

Source : Educational Information Centre, ONEC.

Although there is an inherent gender bias in *Thailand*, girls and women have had greater access to education at all levels. In 1998, the proportion of male and female students in formal education was almost equal (50.1 : 49.9). The numbers of female students were less than those of males only at pre-primary, primary and vocational upper secondary levels. The participation of female students was significantly higher than males at general upper secondary and bachelor's degree levels.

Figure 7.4 Proportion of Male and Female Students by Level of Education : 1998



Source : Educational Information Centre, ONEC.

Despite the impressive achievements in expanding access to education in the past decades, Thailand is still facing major challenges in the attempt to gain higher participation in educational services and to support the less privileged in gaining equal benefits from the educational system.