

Chapter 9

Current Efforts and Initiatives

Realizing that the development of education in Thailand needs radical changes to meet both the quantitative and qualitative challenges in human resources development, there have been strong efforts to push through educational reforms by both the public and private sectors since the beginning of the past decade. The Eighth National Education Development Plan (1997-2001), in particular, has initiated the reform of education of the entire educational system and on specific issues such as teacher education, higher education, and teaching and learning systems. Although the economic crisis has affected the proposed educational reform initiatives, all agencies concerned have put greater efforts to improve the provision of educational services to all people.

9.1 Universalization of Basic Education

Following the *World Declaration on Education for All : Meeting Basic Learning Needs*, continuous efforts have been made by several agencies in Thailand to achieve the universalization of basic education. The policy to expand basic education to secondary level was reflected in the 1992 National Scheme of Education, the Seventh National Education Development Plan (1992-1996), and the Eighth National Education Development Plan (1997-2001). First priority has been given to the efforts to universalize basic education to secondary level. The greatest success has been in Section 43 of the 1997 Constitution which stipulates that :

" Individuals shall enjoy the equal right to receive basic education for the duration of at least twelve years. Such education, provided for all, shall be of quality and free of charge. "

The enactment of the National Education Act 1999 as required by the Constitution will lead to the actual implementation of 12-year basic education in the near future. Existing compulsory laws and regulations are being drafted and amended. However, major activities to promote the universalization of basic education have been undertaken by all agencies involved.

1) Provision of Education for Promoting Literacy

Educational services for the attainment of literacy have been provided to enable illiterates to acquire functional literacy, forming a basis for learning other skills later in life. Extensive policies for expanding basic education services have been created to provide target groups with basic functional adult education. The statistics show that the literacy rate in the population increased over the age of 15 from 93.3 percent in 1994 to 94.7 percent in 1997.

2) Development of Early Childhood Education

The Eighth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1997-2001) has stipulated key guidelines for the development of pre-school children as follows:

- Encourage an increased understanding of the responsibilities of family life and raising children among young people, newly married couples and parents, through coordination of the work of relevant social agencies.
- Encourage all forms of readiness preparation for pre-school children, e.g., in child development centres and workplace nurseries as well as within the family through coordination of the public sector, the private sector, communities and family activities.

- Enable all children to have full access to sufficient good-quality nutrition.

As regards the Eighth National Education Development Plan (1997-2001), the following targets have been included in Major Programme 1 : Promotion of Basic Education for All :

- All pre-school children will be provided with a minimum of a one-year school readiness programme before 2001.
- Not less than 90 percent of the children aged 3-5 years will have access to pre-primary education in the year 2001.

In addition, the policy statement of the Council of Ministers delivered to parliament on 20 November 1997 confirms the government's intention to " Educate parents and families on providing the basic foundations of life and preparing children at the pre-primary school level while promoting pre-school education. "

Although educational services are currently provided to pre-school children by around 14 public and private agencies, full coverage has not been achieved, particularly the qualitative aspect. There is thus an initiative to formulate a specific policy and plan for early childhood (0-5 years old). The plan is being drafted, based on research findings, by the National Institute for Early Childhood Education established under ONEC. According to the drafted plan, all people concerned e.g. parents, families, communities and society will be involved in the development of early childhood education.

3) Provision of Education for Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances

Despite the effort to extensively expand primary and lower secondary education to cover the target groups, there remains a large number of children who have no access to basic education. Major groups of these children are the poor living in remote rural areas, in the streets or slums, including the children of construction workers, child labour, children without nationality, and young girls at risk with the threat of exploitative commercial sex.

In order to reach these groups, special attention and efforts are required. There have been many innovative actions in education for children in especially difficult circumstances, for example, educational provision for street children and young girls at risk as well as students affected by the crisis.

- **Education Provision for Street Children**

Apart from providing social welfare, concerned agencies, both public and private, have provided educational services and occupational training programmes for street children :

Public Sector The Department of Public Welfare has established Reception Homes as temporary residences for street children who will be given educational opportunities corresponding to their age. The educational services for these children are provided through a non-school-based approach focusing mainly on short occupational courses.

In addition, the Child and Youth Welfare Promotion Institutions under the Department of Public Welfare have set up schools offering general basic education courses as well as non-formal and vocational programmes to meet the children's needs. In other words, school-age children are given access to primary and secondary education, while non-formal courses equivalent to primary and secondary education are offered to those above school-age group.

Private Sector NGO's staff and volunteer teachers will be given orientations on psychology, counselling, teaching methodology, game and activity organization. Upon encountering street children, field staff or volunteer teachers will try to gain familiarity with them by means of playful and recreational activities, talks and role playing. The staff are usually supplied with tool kits comprising writing and painting materials, textbooks, basic musical instruments, sports equipment, stacks of games and first aid.

Besides this, a number of foundations and NGOs have organized " Open Houses " or " Childrens' Homes " for street children, for instance, House for Children of the Foundation for Better Life of Children, House of Shared-love of the Komol Keemthong Foundation, and House Fabricated with Love of the Catholic Youth Council of Thailand. These houses offer educational services to prepare children to return to normal life and a school environment. Some children receive coaching in the morning to supplement and reinforce their studies. For afternoon sessions, children undertake other activities based on their interests.

Some houses try to help place the children back into the school system. Young children will be supported to return to the formal system while older children will be encouraged to take non-formal education. In order to establish a bridge to transfer children back to school and to link the centre-based approach adopted by the houses and the institution-based technique practised by the formal school system, the house teachers work in partnership with their counterparts, i.e., those in schools in order that the school staff understand these children. Schools accepting these children include those under ONPEC, OPEC and DGE as well as BMA and the Department of Local Administration.

- **Sema Life Development Project**

The Sema Life Development Project has been initiated by the MOE to expand educational opportunities at secondary education level to girls at risk from the threat of exploitative commercial sex. Scholarships for 3 year-study at lower secondary education level have been given to two target groups :

(1) Young girls at high risk who have completed primary education are selected to study in special boarding welfare schools, with a scholarship given directly to each school for 12,000 baht per year, which includes meals, clothes, textbooks and stationery. These girls are from very poor or broken families, or whose father and/or mother are dead, handicapped, drug addicts, or in prison. Other children in especially difficult circumstances such as street children and those from families with HIV/AIDS are also included.

(2) The girls in the lesser risk group are sent to regular schools with a scholarship for 3,000 Baht per year. The scholarships for this group of children are widely expanded to cover all provinces including Bangkok. In 1999, about 24,000 girls nationwide were given those types of scholarships to continue their studies at lower secondary level.

- **A Scholarship Programme for Students Affected by the Crisis**

Due to the economic crisis, more Thais lose their jobs and are less able to send their children to school resulting in a large number of school dropouts. The MOE has thus launched a scholarship programme since mid – 1998 to prevent primary and lower secondary school children from dropping from school if their unemployed parents are unable to send them.

The scholarships are part of a one billion Baht programme of the Thai government which is being assisted by the Social Sector Programme Loan financed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). In the academic year 1999, the ADB loan for the amount of 520 million Baht has been approved for the scholarship programme.

The target students are classified into 4 groups :

- 1) All students who have dropped out and come back to school in the academic year 1998,
- 2) All students who have dropped out and come back to school in the academic year 1999,
- 3) All novices in General Schools for Ecclesiastics at lower secondary level, and
- 4) Students whose parents are badly affected by the crisis.

A total of 140,000 students have been selected from all provinces for the scholarship provided as follows :

- 4,000 Baht per year for each of 60,000 primary school students,
- 5,000 Baht per year for each of 40,000 lower secondary school students,
- 2,000 Baht per year for each of 40,000 novices.

These efforts to provide education for children in especially difficult circumstances enable many children to remain at school. With fewer jobs available in the informal sector, more children or child labourers are returning to the streets to survive. NGOs reported a significant rise in the number of street children after the crisis. Since there is a danger these children may be lured into exploitative commercial sex and illegal activities, different measures to provide 12 – year basic education for all children will keep them in school longer.

4) Development of Curriculum Framework for Basic Education

A new school curriculum for 12 – year basic education has been designed by the Department of Curriculum and Instruction Development of the *MOE*. The new curriculum, which will be implemented in the year 2001, emphasizes student – centred learning and new teaching techniques which will bring about a major reform in classrooms. It revolves around the concept of participatory learning, in which students are encouraged to create their own world of understanding through imagination in relation with the environment. This will result in an individual's complete self – development. Students will decide what they want to study and how they should be evaluated. Of course, teachers still have a central role by giving guidance and advice to students.

The foundation framework for the 12 - year curriculum will cover eight subjects: art, music and dance; foreign languages; mathematics; physical education; science and technology; social studies; Thai language and literature; and vocational skills. The new curriculum will be broken into four levels: grades 1 – 3, 4 – 6, 7 – 9 and 10 – 12.

The curriculum framework for basic education has been developed in accordance with the guidelines stipulated in the National Education Act 1999. The central curriculum office in Bangkok will set the core curriculum for each subject while the provincial offices will prepare supplementary lessons reflecting issues important to each province as part of the decentralization in educational administration and curriculum planning. Such flexibility is a departure from the past. By focusing on local issues in a student – centred classroom, students are expected to learn things important to their lives and take greater interest in their studies.

School administrators must concern themselves with the efficient management of the schools while maintaining their educational standards. Teachers and parents must take a more active role, overseeing educational standards and efficient management.

5) Formulation of Action Plan for the Provision of 12 Year Basic Education

In order to meet the requirements of the 1997 Constitution regarding the provision of 12-year basic education by the year 2002, the ONEC and the MOE have cooperated in formulating policies, guidelines and measures for the implementation of this provision which is also stipulated in the National Education Act 1999. The policy paper was approved by the Council of Ministers in March 1999 with the following clearer guidelines :

- Basic education will be provided for 12 years covering primary education (6 years), lower secondary education (3 years), and upper secondary education in both general and vocational streams (3 years).
- Compulsory education will be extended from 6 to 9 years.
- Government budget will be allocated for the implementation of 12 -year basic education.
- The ONEC and the MOE are the central units responsible for the formulation of the implementation action plan for providing 12-year basic education covering early childhood development.

Consequently, a committee was established in June 1999 comprising representatives from all agencies concerned and distinguished scholars, in order to formulate the implementation plan for the policies endorsed by the Council of Ministers and make preparations for the implementation of the National Education Act 1999 in relation to the provision of 12-year basic education.

9.2 Challenging Initiatives in Higher Education

9.2.1 Implementing Higher Education Policies

Under the Eighth National Higher Education Plan (1997 – 2001), the following six policies have been implemented by the Ministry of University Affairs to ensure that educational provision in public and private universities will be of a higher quality that meets international standards and produces qualified graduates to meet market demands.

1) Quality and Excellence

The MUA strives to encourage universities to offer an international standard of education, bearing in mind that quality is the key to produce qualified students who are capable of competing in the job market and to function fruitfully in an era of globalization. The MUA, accordingly, has launched both short and long-term strategies to upgrade the quality of instruction, an academic pursuit of all the public and private higher education institutions to meet the minimum standard set. Along with these efforts is the role of the MUA in strengthening the academic excellence of universities/colleges in teaching, research and community services.

2) Access and Equity

The MUA has implemented the access and equity policy to provide mass higher education for Thai people of diverse social, economic and geographical characteristics. This policy, moreover, is aimed particularly toward providing high school graduates with greater access to universities. Subsequently, new universities both public and

private have been established in the regional areas. Information technologies have also been employed.

3) Efficiency and Accountability

In promoting efficiency and accountability, the MUA enhances higher education cost-effectiveness and management flexibility by undertaking management reforms emphasizing institutional autonomy and self governance with appropriate accountability measures. The MUA will then be able to take up its role as supervisory and supporting body for educational development in line with the National Plan. All state universities are scheduled to be independent from bureaucracy and become self-administering organizations by 2002.

4) Relevance and Delivery

Under this policy, the MUA aims to produce graduates in fields with high demands, along with some specialized areas of study that are important to industrial growth. The MUA also conducted research studies to determine manpower needs of the country utilizing either a manpower requirement approach or quality approach to suit each particular area of study.

Fields that are currently identified as shortage areas include Sciences, Mathematics, Engineering, Computer Science, Medical Science, Dentistry, Pharmaceutical Science, Allied Health Science, Nursing, Veterinary Science, Agricultural Industry, Industrial Education, Architecture, Accounting, Language and Gems and Jewelry.

5) Internationalization and Regionalization

With the rapid movement of globalization, international collaborative relationships among nations are highly valued. As a result, the MUA has launched internationalization and regionalization projects to meet the expected demand. The underlying strategies are to promote international education programmes and enact staff and student exchange programmes with foreign institutions.

Additionally, the MUA, under this plan, hopes to connect closer to regional and international universities. The MUA also promotes additional links with other regions by means of Memorandums of Understanding, linkage programmes and other specially designed projects.

6) Privatization and Corporatization

Under the privatization and corporatization plan, the Ministry plans to promote the establishment of private universities and integrate corporate management strategies into university administration. This policy, furthermore is aimed to encourage an increased role for the private sector in collaborating with higher education institutions for improved quality of higher education provision.

The inclusion of corporate management strategies, in the same way, is expected to relieve the management burden of the public sector.

9.2.2 Action Plan for Higher Education Improvement

The MUA plays a major role in setting up direction and an action plan for higher education improvement in line with the World Declaration on Higher Education and in coping with changes in the twenty – first century. A workshop on “National Brainstorming on Thailand’s Action Plan to Follow-up on the World Declaration on Higher Education” was

held on 24 – 25 June 1999. Senior administrators from both public and private higher education institutions and education authorities, as well as international organizations like *UNESCO* and *SEAMEO RIHED* participated in the event. The outcome of the World Conference on Higher Education organized by *UNESCO* in Paris in October 1998 was reported on, followed by a discussion on directions and action plans for higher education improvement.

The meeting emphasized that quality assurance systems and relevance are important factors for higher education renewal. Other issues which need to be in focus are as follows : 1) higher education institutions' role in the whole education system, 2) educational opportunities for the community, 3) balance between internationalization and national identity, and 4) cooperation and achievement between higher education institutions and business/industrial sectors.

Results of the meeting will be taken up further by a task force to be set up to ensure that the priorities selected will be put into concrete projects and implemented.

9.2.3 Efforts Towards Higher Education Reform

Since 5 October 1998, a Committee for the Formulation of Higher Education Reform Guidelines has been appointed by *ONEC* to take the responsibility of making proposals for higher education reform. Major tasks undertaken by the Committees are as follows :

- 1) Analysis of the 1997 Constitution and the draft National Education Act relating to higher education.
- 2) Studying achievements and problems of higher education development, and analysis of the present status of higher education. It was concluded that the formulation of higher education reform guidelines should focus on 6 important issues:
 - (1) Efficiency and quality of the higher education system,
 - (2) Mobilization of resources,
 - (3) Factors strengthening higher education including internationalization,
 - (4) Mechanisms for creating interaction between higher education and other social systems,
 - (5) Equity of access to and relevance of higher education
 - (6) The role of higher education in creating wisdom for the society.
- 3) Conducting documentary research on higher education reforms in the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Singapore, and Malaysia.
- 4) Conducting comparative research on higher education.
- 5) Preparing a concept paper on higher education reform guidelines.
- 6) Organizing academic seminars to welcome comments and recommendations on guidelines for higher education reform.
- 7) Synthesizing all documents and reports and preparing a proposal for higher education reform to be submitted to the *National Education Commission* and the *Council of Ministers*.

As regards the *Ministry of University Affairs*, its efforts towards the reform of higher education began with the formulation of the First Fifteen – Year Higher Education Development Plan (1990 – 2004). However, the reform initiatives of the *MUA* does not cover higher education under the responsibilities of other ministries. Major issues currently implemented by the *MUA* that also consist with the provisions in the National Education Act 1999 are as follows :

1) Development of administrative efficiency, i.e., delegation of authority in personnel administration from the University Civil Service Commission to the universities or institutions ; the delegation of authority in the approval of curriculum to each university / institution; improvement of management efficiency of private higher education institutions; and development of public universities towards autonomous institutions.

2) Development of higher education quality, i.e., development of quality assurance systems; curriculum development, and the improvement of university entrance systems.

3) Development of resource allocation system, i.e., the analysis of cost per head of students ; development of cost accounting systems; and development of budget allocation models for higher education.

In response to the National Education Act 1999, the *MUA* has made preparation for the implementation of higher education reform in two major aspects:

1) Project Administration

The Higher Education Reform Project has been administered through three levels of organizations :

● **Policy Level** The Ministry of University Affairs Steering Committee is the legal organization responsible for providing advice to the Minister with respect to policy issues as well as the control of quality and standards of both public and private higher education.

● **Administrative Level** The Sub – Committee for Preparation of Administrative System Reform of the Ministry of University Affairs takes charge of planning, coordination, and preparation of resources for the implementation.

● **Implementation Level** Seven working committees have been established to take responsibility for the following issues :

- 1) Reform of teaching and learning at higher education level;
- 2) Organization of administrative and management systems for public higher education;
- 3) Organization of administrative and management systems for private higher education;
- 4) Organization of standards and quality assurance systems for higher education;
- 5) Promotion and development of higher education personnel;
- 6) Organization of Resource and Investment Systems for higher education; and
- 7) Development of technology for higher education.

2) Preparation and Amendments of legislations

The *MUA* has made preparations for the implementation of the National Education Act 1999 through the organization of structure and system development. Major tasks of the Ministry have been divided into 7 groups. Besides this, a total of 36 laws relating to higher education will be prepared and amended.

9.3 Education for Persons with Special Education Needs

It is recognized that education for persons with special education needs should be increasingly expanded to provide educational access to those with physical, mental, intellectual, emotional, social, communication, and learning disabilities. Among current efforts and initiatives of various agencies for these groups are the Special Education Programme providing basic education and the establishment of Ratchasuda College of Higher Education and Research Centre for People with Disabilities which offers educational services at a higher level.

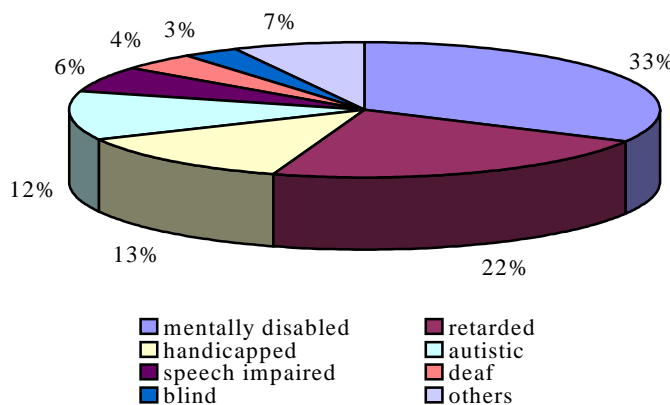
A. Special Education Programme

Based on a recent survey conducted by *ONPEC* , more than 600,000 disabled children in *Thailand* still have no chance of education in state – run schools. Among 678,103 disabled children nationwide, only 18,517 could enrol in public primary schools. These

children have joined regular classes managed by *ONPEC* in 3,157 primary schools through the Special Education Programme started in 1998.

To mark the Year of Education for the Disabled in 1999, the programme has guaranteed an opportunity to study. In one school in each *ONPEC* school district all over the country, disabled children are able to study in the same classroom as normal students. Approximately 4,221 schools are participating with around 66,292 disabled students now taking advantage of the programme. The total number of disabled students can be classified as shown in Figure 9.1.

Figure 9.1 Number of Special Students in Regular Classes Provided by *ONPEC* by Type of Disabilities, 1999.



ONPEC has held training for 4,000 teachers who will play a central role in teaching disabled students. Learning materials have been sent to all the school districts. A programme called “Friends Helping Friends” has also been implemented to bring disabled and normal students closer together.

The special education programme has been successful due to the clear policies of the *MOE*, including administrative and budgetary support, particularly from parents. However, some problems still exist, particularly the lack of qualified teachers and supplies such as Braille typewriters earphones and wheelchairs.

To expand educational opportunities for disabled children, *ONPEC* plans to open more schools, train more teachers and procure more special teaching instruments for them.

For the academic year 2000, education centres for disabled students will be built in five provinces including Bangkok under a project approved by the committee on education management for disabled students. The scheme was also planned for 8 other provinces. Once established, they will cooperate with other secondary schools to find suitable schools for disabled students. In addition, the *MOE* plans to ask the *Bangkok Mass Transit Authority* to provide special buses for disabled students.

B. Ratchasuda College : A College of Higher Education and Research Centre for People with Disabilities at Mahidol University

HRH Princess Mahachakri Sirindhorn has graciously consented to give HRH name and patronage to Ratchasuda Foundation established to assist in the building and the

operation of Ratchasuda College of Higher Education and Research Centre for People with Disabilities.

Goals and Objectives

The College goal is to provide a new way of perceiving of disabilities and the needs of people with disabilities.

The College aims to develop technological, counseling , and administrative services for people with disabilities that will assist them in gaining access to higher education. It is currently engaged in exciting research and cooperates with other institutes at international level in order to continue providing *Thailand* with the most up – to – date technology and techniques in services for people with disabilities, and to share experiences with the international community.

Curriculum Ratchasuda College offers an MA Degree in Rehabilitation Service for Persons with Disabilities, with specialization in Rehabilitation Counseling and Access Technology. The specialization in Rehabilitation Administration is scheduled to begin in 1999.

Since June 1998, the programme for the deaf has proposed an undergraduate programme in Thai Sign Language Instruction in cooperation with Gallaudet University in the United States. Additional academic programmes scheduled for future implementation include training programmes in Thai/Thai Sign Language interpretation; in Braille; and in Orientation and Mobility, and a Disability Studies Programme.

The College Academic Service Units provide an invaluable resource to disabled students all over *Thailand*. The Resource Centre provides computer – assisted educational aids to both its own students and to integrated disabled students. Ratchasuda College also supports several specialized courses in independent living skills for disabled people and intends to open an Educational Material Production Centre if funding can be obtained.

9.4 Improving the Quality of Education

In order to address the issues of educational quality, greater efforts have been made to improve the quality of teaching – learning process and teaching staff. Among current initiatives are changes in teaching – learning processes and recognition or the reward of outstanding teachers.

9.4.1 Changes in Teaching and Learning Process

Changing the teaching – learning process is central in enabling students develop their capacities for independent thinking and problem – solving. The government policy on the reform of teaching and learning has been stated in the *Eighth National Education Development Plan (1997-2001)*.

The *Office of the National Education Commission* thus established the *Centre for Teaching-Learning Development* with an aim to introduce educational innovations leading to reform of learning. The Centre, which has been developed to be the National Institute for the Development of Learning, has undertaken a project for teaching – learning development which began in 1997.

Following the implementation of the project, five learning models have been suggested : Happy Learning, Participatory Learning, Thinking Process, Aesthetic Value Development, and Moral Value Development. The principles and teaching – learning process

of these models have been disseminated through various approaches. Training for the administrator, supervisors and teachers has been organized to enable them to apply these learning models in the classroom.

Efforts of the *MOE* to improve the quality of teaching and learning have been reflected through the initiatives of *ONPEC*, *DGE* and the *Office of the Rajabhat Institutes Council* in undertaking the Secondary Education Quality Improvement Projects. With financial support from the government budget and education loans from the World Bank, these projects focus on the improvement of the teaching – learning of science, mathematics and English.

• **The ONPEC Secondary Education Improvement Project** will be implemented in the fiscal years 2000-2003 in primary schools providing lower secondary education for the expansion of educational opportunities to the disadvantaged. The first phase of the Project, which will be conducted in the fiscal year 2000-2001 starting from October 1999, aims at (1) training teachers of science, mathematics and English, (2) developing school networks, (3) providing computers to schools, and (4) developing computer assisted instruction materials.

• **The DGE Secondary Education Improvement Project** emphasizes the improvement of the teaching-learning of science, mathematics and English in upper secondary schools. The core activities of the Project to be implemented from 1999-2003 are:

(1) improving science laboratories and Student English Access Rooms (SEAR),

(2) providing educational equipment and media,

(3) improving teaching-learning programmes and modern media through development of learning packages and prototypes and the training of teachers in participating schools and those in the institutional network as well as other educational institutions involved, and

(4) developing teaching – learning innovations and technologies, e.g. Student English Access Rooms (SEAR), Instructional Technology (InTech) and Internet Service Provide (ISP).

• **The ORIC Secondary Quality Improvement Project** emphasizes the need to raise the quality of science education. The Project involves the raising of qualifications of teaching staff, modernizing facilities, and expanding the capacity of the *Rajabhat Institutes* to provide in-service training to teachers, as well as research and technical services to the community. The Project comprises the following components :

(1) Construction of new science laboratories and refurbishment of workshops at 17 *Rajabhat Institutes*.

(2) The provision of equipment to modernize laboratories and workshops in the core areas of teaching in physics, chemistry and biology, as well as recently introduced courses such as environmental science and biotechnology.

(3) An institutional development programme will ensure that both pre-service and in-service training for science and maths teachers is effectively carried out in 17 *Rajabhat Institutes*. The teaching staff of these subjects will be strengthened by raising their academic qualifications through local and overseas fellowships for 150 masters and 125 Ph.D. programmes for RI Staff.

(4) A research and technical service programme will finance 170 research projects in the areas of science and maths education, industrial technology, health environment and agriculture. Another group of 270 projects in similar fields will be financed to improve the capacity of the RI's to provide local technical advisory services. In addition, the existing RI curricula in science and technology will be reviewed for appropriate changes.

9.4.2 Recognition / Rewarding of Outstanding Teachers

Critical to improving the quality of education is the development of teachers and educational personnel. Current strategic programmes initiated to enhance the quality of teachers and teaching – learning process have been conducted through recognition and the reward of outstanding teachers.

(1) National Teacher Awards

In order to recognize the critical importance of attracting quality people to the teaching field and to reward outstanding teachers, a new system of national teacher awards was introduced by *ONEC* in 1998. The award is not just a prize, but a grant to foster innovations to improve the quality of education. There are three levels of awards, and awards consist of three components : 1) a significant salary supplement, 2) a project grant to accomplish proposed innovations, and 3) a grant to the teacher's school to facilitate integration of the teacher's innovation to the school as a whole. Such national teachers will become an important network promoting educational quality improvements. The awards will be renewable for up to three cycles of three years based on annual performance assessments.

Four secondary school teachers were selected in 1998 as national teachers in biology, physics, chemistry, and Thai language. All of them are now conducting research and development projects on teaching-learning development. The first phase of the implementation of each project has already been evaluated by distinguished scholars.

In 1999, 6 teachers were selected as national teachers in Thai language, English, mathematics, physics, general science, and physical science. In addition, through cooperation with all parties concerned, *TERO* has been undertaking a policy development project for the recognition of outstanding teachers in order to raise the teaching profession to a higher status.

(2) Master Teachers

The selection of Master or model teachers has also been initiated by *ONEC* since 1998 as a means to enhance the quality of teachers and teaching – learning.

In 1998, thirty master teachers were selected and duly recognized. Each master teacher is required to disseminate his/her teaching techniques to at least 10 of his/her colleagues for the duration of 4 months. The teaching – learning models of all master teachers have been compiled and published for dissemination as teachers' guidelines for the development of teaching – learning process.

Within 4 months of dissemination of teaching models, all master teachers selected in 1998 succeeded in expanding their networks to 340 of their colleagues from 270 schools in 26 provinces. These teachers, provided with guidelines by master teachers, have been encouraged to effectively improve their teaching quality and further disseminate the master teachers' teaching models. After the required supervision period, all master teachers have continued to be advisors in teaching – learning to their colleagues.

In 1999, there were 578 teachers in both public and private schools from pre-primary to upper – secondary levels applying as candidates to be selected as master teachers. The selection criteria is as follows :

- 1) Organizing the learning process in accordance with Chapter 4 of the National Education Act of 1999 focusing on :
 - (1) encouraging students to build a body of knowledge by themselves,
 - (2) developing knowledge about oneself, nature and environment,
 - (3) skills in pursuing one's career and leading a happy life,
 - (4) development of thinking processes and problem-solving,
 - (5) integration of knowledge, morality, values, and desirable characteristics,
 - (6) development of democracy,
 - (7) introduction of wisdom, art and culture to learning processes,
 - (8) research and development of learning processes,
 - (9) cooperation with families and communities, and
 - (10) performance assessment based on student-centred learning.
- 2) Providing learning activities in accordance with the following indicators:

Students' Indicators

- (1) Students have direct experience relating to the natural environment.
- (2) Students find their own aptitudes and methods from continuing practice.
- (3) Students perform activities of sharing with and learning from groups.
- (4) Students practice thinking diversely and imaginatively, as well as expressing themselves clearly and reasonably.
- (5) Students are encouraged to find solutions for problems both by themselves and by cooperation.
- (6) Students have an opportunity to practise searching for and the gathering of data as well as building up knowledge by themselves.
- (7) Students can happily perform learning activities according to their capabilities, aptitudes and interests.
- (8) Students are trained to be under discipline and responsible for their work.

- (9) Students are trained to conduct self-evaluation and self-improvement as well as listen to others and continuously search for knowledge.

Teaching Indicators of Teachers

- (1) Teachers prepare their teaching both in terms of content and method.
- (2) Teachers organize an encouraging environment and a climate which stimulates students to learn.
- (3) Teachers individually take care of each student.
- (4) Teachers organize learning activities and situations for students to think and express themselves creatively.
- (5) Teachers encourage students to practise thinking, doing, and improving themselves.
- (6) Teachers promote activities of sharing with and learning from groups as well as notice the strengths and improve the weaknesses of students.
- (7) Teachers use teaching media for the practice of thinking, problem-solving and searching for knowledge.
- (8) Teachers use various learning sources and link experiences to real life.
- (9) Teachers provide training of etiquette and discipline following Thai culture and way of life.
- (10) Teachers observe continuously and evaluate students' development.

Among 96 outstanding teachers selected as master teachers in 1999, 53 are from *ONPEC* schools, 34 are from secondary schools of the *DGE*, 8 are from municipal schools of the Bureau of Local Education administration, and the last one is from a primary school of *BMA*.

9.5 Promoting Educational Standards and Quality

Assurance

Although greater efforts have been made to raise the quality and standards of education, school performance and student achievement are still not satisfactory. Major persisting problems include a lack of understanding of evaluation processes, inadequate

resources, and ineffective utilization of evaluation results for improving the quality of education.

Consequently, the *ONEC* had proposed the policy for the promotion of educational standards and quality assurance which was approved by the *Council of Ministers* in November 1997. Accordingly, the *Office for National Education Standards* has been established as a temporary internal unit under *ONEC* to organize a national system for educational standards and quality assurance. In order to achieve its objectives, the *Office* has so far performed the following tasks.

1) Development of national standards for education

National standards for basic education have been developed through brainstorming of scholars, educators, and the persons involved, and through public hearings as well. The drafted national standards will be used as a framework for external evaluation and as guidelines for the agencies concerned and all educational institutions to develop the quality of education in the same direction. The drafted national standards are composed of 12 standards and 91 indicators which can be categorized into 3 groups as follows :

(1) **Standards of Learners**, consisting of 12 standards and 38 indicators, focus on the physical, spiritual, intellectual and social development in order that learners will be good, capable and happy people.

(2) **Standards of Process**, consisting of 6 standards and 29 indicators, emphasis on administrative and teaching – learning processes.

(3) **Standards of Inputs** specify the characteristics or readiness of administrators, teachers, curriculum, buildings and community, with 9 standards and 24 indicators.

2) Promotion of internal evaluation in educational institutions / agencies

Educational institutions / agencies have been encouraged to conduct internal evaluation to improve the quality of education. Research and development on internal evaluation has been undertaken for the preparation of guidebooks and an internal evaluation model. Guidelines for internal evaluation of educational institutions have been formulated and the trial of the drafted guidebooks for internal evaluation are being carried out in 30 pilot schools. The Office has provided training for school personnel and cooperated with the schools in developing internal evaluation of educational institutions, with cooperation of field researchers in providing supervision and following up the schools' internal evaluation.

3) Promotion of external evaluation

In order to promote external evaluation of educational institutions / agencies, a documentary research has been conducted for the formulation of an external evaluation framework. Guidebooks for school inspection, training curricula for external evaluators and the selection criteria for external evaluators have been prepared for trial before actual implementation.

4) Preparation of the Bill for the establishment of an independent body for the promotion of educational

standards and quality assurance.

As a preparation for the implementation of the National Education Act 1999, the bill for the establishment of the *Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assurance* as an autonomous body has been drafted and submitted to the *Council of Ministers* and the *Committee for Bureaucratic System Reform* for consideration. The main tasks and responsibilities of the Office are as follows :

- (1) Development of an external evaluation system.
- (2) Development of criteria for external evaluation.
- (3) Supervision of effective external quality assessment of educational institutions.
- (4) Development of external evaluators.
- (5) Preparation of an annual report on educational quality and standards in order to submit to the *Council of Ministers, Ministry of Education* and the *Budget Bureau*.

With respect to the implementing units responsible for the provision of education, policies and measures to raise the standards of education at all levels have been introduced by all agencies concerned i.e. the *MOE, MOI* and *MUA*.

● Ministry of Education and Ministry of Interior

To address the critical issue of educational quality, the *MOE* has developed assessment and evaluation processes in order to improve both the quality and efficiency of education. Its major activities can be classified into three areas : learning assessment and evaluation, educational quality assessment and educational quality assurance.

1) Learning Assessment and Evaluation

(1) Educational institutions are encouraged to assess learning outcomes through authentic assessment and portfolio. Authentic assessment has been introduced to escape the weakness of multiple – choice and paper-pencil tests. By this technique, learning outcomes are assessed through a set of performance tests in which students are required to perform certain tasks representing the learning objectives, for example, demonstrate the whole process of solving mathematics problems or complete the experimentation in science covering data gathering, data analysis, interpretation, and the findings.

The portfolio has been designed to collect students' learning products and records of achievement. Each product is supposed to be evaluated by students to determine a level of satisfaction.

(2) Assessment and evaluation are conducted through academic networks at regional, provincial and district levels focusing on primary and secondary school clusters. Key persons of secondary school clusters are trained to construct standard assessment tools for controlling educational quality of the school clusters.

2) Educational Quality Assessment

The national assessment programme has been undertaken on a 2 – year basis to assess the key learning outcomes of Grade 6, 9 and 12 students in some main subjects with a sample of schools. The *Department of Curriculum and Instruction Development* has reported the overall evaluation result by province, educational region and parent agencies of schools.

3) Educational Quality Assurance

The *Ministry of Education* has launched an initiative through the Department of Curriculum and Instruction Development and other departments to improve the quality of education through quality assurance. The processes of educational quality assurance are (1) education quality control, (2) inspection, intervention, and review of educational quality, and (3) quality assessment for accreditation of educational institutions. The activities to be undertaken from 1998 – 2002 are as follows :

- (1) Development of quality assurance processes :
 - To develop the quality assurance system of the *MOE*.
 - To develop the operation of quality assurance in educational institutions.
 - To prepare guidebooks for quality assurance of educational institutions.
 - To disseminate the concepts and operational guidelines to the key curriculum persons and pilot schools.
- (2) Development of quality levels of learners in accordance with the learning content.
- (3) Development of the systems for inspection, review and report of educational quality.
- (4) Development of an evaluation system for the accreditation of educational institutions.

At present, the *MOE* policies on quality assurance are being implemented by the departments concerned. The *Department of Education of BMA* and the *Bureau of Local Education Administration* under the *Department of Local Administration* in *MOI* have also developed their assessment and evaluation system following the *MOE* 's guidelines for curriculum assessment and evaluation as well as standards for education provision.

Most of the internal evaluation has been conducted by the educational institutions and their parent agencies through quality assurance by using process of input development towards educational standards. Other methods and strategies have also been used. For example, supervision processes have been totally used by *ONPEC* as the core activities of inspection by parent agencies. Other departments such as the *Department of Non-Formal Education*, the *Department of Vocational Education* and *Rajamangala Institute of Technology* are planning to introduce ISO 9000 to the quality control and auditing processes of educational institutions.

However, the operation of most agencies is in a stage of development and conducting pilot projects, or being implemented in master schools. The exceptions are the *Department of Education of BMA* and the *Bureau of Local Education Administration* which indicate that all of their schools have conducted self-evaluation and have been evaluated by parent agencies. In addition, the *Office of the Private Education Commission* has already inspected and evaluated a number of private schools for accreditation for five years.

● Ministry of University Affairs

As regards the *Ministry of University Affairs*, the *Eighth Higher Education Development Plan (1997-2001)* has been formulated which includes the policy directives for improving the quality of higher education as follows :

- development of educational quality and standards,
- introduction of educational quality assurance mechanisms,
- development of standard curricula, and
- development of management efficiency and inspection systems.

In response to the Eighth Plan, the policies, principles and guidelines for quality assurance and accreditation in higher education have been announced by the *MUA*. The model for quality assurance of higher education has 3 components:

- 1) Internal quality control to be undertaken by each higher institution by controlling the quality of factors affecting the quality of graduates.
- 2) Quality auditing, an external quality assurance mechanism for controlling the quality of education provided by higher education institutions in accordance with the principles and guidelines stipulated by the *MUA*.
- 3) Quality assessment, with emphasis on assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of quality control system of higher education institutions.

Since the policies and implementation guidelines on quality assurance at higher education level have been introduced, the quality assurance system has been designed and accreditation standards and procedures have been developed through the following activities :

- 1) Three documents for the development of quality assurance systems for higher education institutions have been prepared to be used as guidelines for the implementation of internal quality assurance systems : 1) performance indicators, 2) self-study report, and 3) Auditing and Assessment of Quality Assurance Mechanism Handbook.
- 2) Four academic seminars have been organized to ensure higher education institutions are aware of the importance of quality assurance at higher education level.
- 3) Two sub-committees on quality assurance at higher education level have been established :

- (1) Sub-committee on Accreditation of Higher Education
- (2) Sub-committee on Development of Quality Assurance of Higher Education

The policies and guidelines on quality assurance and accreditation issued by the *MUA* have been implemented by all public universities. The principles and guidelines of quality assurance have been disseminated to university staff. Most higher education institutions have a clear and effective system for the promotion and follow-up of research and academic administration, continuous promotion and development of staff. Buildings, libraries and learning resources are promoted to be fully utilized with follow up and an evaluation system. The first training for external evaluators was organized in August 1999. The quality assurance and accreditation system initiated by the *MUA* is expected to be fully implemented by the year 2000 and the performance indicators will be used for budget allocation.

9.6 The Student – Loans Scheme

The student loans scheme in *Thailand* was established by the *Council of Ministers* in 1995 and came into effect in the academic year 1996. The major objective of the scheme was to enhance the opportunities of children and youth from low – income families to continue their studies through the upper secondary and higher levels of education. The more immediate aim was to lighten the parental burden of financing education, thus encouraging greater participation of poor children and youth in non-compulsory education. Moreover, the scheme would achieve broader social objectives by leading to greater equality of educational opportunity, improving life chances for the poor and enhancing social and economic equality.

The student loans scheme has been operated under the Student Loans Scheme Act promulgated in March 1998. Central control of the scheme lies with the Student Loans Scheme Committee (SLSC) under the *Ministry of Finance*, while the *Krung Thai Bank (KTB)* is responsible for banking arrangements. The policy and general working of the scheme as well as its overall supervision and monitoring are under the responsibility of SLSC. The *Ministry of Education* and *Ministry of University Affairs* are responsible for loans distribution to students in each educational institution.

According to the proposed technical assistance accompanying the *Asian Development Bank* loan, the student loans scheme is seen as a central policy instrument for reducing the incidence of student dropout resulting from the current economic crisis. In December 1999, after the *Ministry of Finance* decided to reduce educational loans to vocational students because several students who had been given loans failed to repay them, students representatives from private vocational schools across the country submitted a petition to the Prime Minister, calling on the government to recognise that the loan scheme is essential. Finally, the Asian Development Bank loan for the amount of 100 million Baht was set aside as grants for vocational school dropouts to help them further their studies.

In its third academic year of operation, the implementation of the scheme was reviewed by a research team from UNESCO-Bangkok as part of the *Asian Development Bank Social Sector Programme Loan*. Major findings of the report on “The Student Loans Scheme in Thailand : A Review and Recommendations for Efficient and Equitable Functioning of the Scheme” are as follows :

1) Coverage The 300,000 borrowers target was exceeded in the second year of the scheme. It was planned originally to cover some 9 percent of enrolment at each level of education; the coverage of the scheme is far in excess of this. By 1998, overall coverage exceeded 20 percent of all enrolments, nearly 25 percent for secondary education and 15 percent at the higher level.

Coverage at *MOE* institutions is high compared with universities. The lowest level of coverage at *MOE* institutions is found at public general upper secondary schools, with the highest at Rajabhats. There is also a high level of coverage at private institutions, in comparison with coverage at parallel public institutions : about a third at private upper secondary schools and some 20 percent at private universities.

A central problem with the extensive coverage of the scheme is that growth in the number of borrowers has not been matched by increasing loans budgets. The loans budget for new borrowers is planned to remain fixed at six billion Baht, at least until the year 2001; this implies a declining level of total support in real terms. A fixed loans budget for new

borrowers, together with a growing demand for student loans, resulted in a drastic reduction in the loan size for new recipients in 1998.

2) Targeting The allocation of the loans budget by the Student Loans Scheme Committee (SLSC) to the *MUA* and the *MOE*, and the subsequent allocation of loans budgets down the line is largely arbitrary in terms of targeting needy students.

The *MOE* is stricter than the *MUA* in setting criteria for loans distribution, in terms of the upper limit put on applicants' household income, the maximum size of the loan and the purposes for which loans may be received. This leads to considerable inequalities in treatment, particularly of first degree students across the two ministries.

A Major strength of the present system lies in the successful targeting of the poor at educational institution level. However, the system lacks horizontal equity because of the lack of objective criteria in the allocation of loans budgets to institutions and the widely differing institutional loan distribution practices.

In terms of the reach of the scheme, about 35 percent of poor upper secondary school students were in receipt of loans in 1998; the vast majority of needy students (65 percent) were not. Of the total target population of poor children and youths, loans are received by only about a quarter of the ultimate target population.

As regards the effect on access and dropout prevention, about 30 percent of loan recipients said that they would drop out in the absence of a loan. It suggests that loans are effective in preventing discontinuation of studies among a significant proportion of current borrowers, though they represent a minority.

3) Finance It was found that current repayment conditions imply that the typical borrower will return only about 20 percent of the loan received. Moreover, the expected burden of repayment is extremely light for the typical student. Annual repayments out of annual income will be in the range of 2 – 3.5 percent only. These calculations point to an overly generous loans scheme reflecting the central objective of the scheme to provide educational opportunities to students from poor families.

4) Proposed Reform of the Student Loans Scheme

A dual recommendation of the research team is that at the upper secondary level, the loans scheme would be replaced by a system of targeted scholarships. In parallel, the loans scheme would be retained for students at higher level institutions, but it would be radically reformed in the direction of improved targeting, the unification of loans conditions across all higher level institutions and improving the financial viability of the scheme through a hardening of repayment conditions.

In Sum, there has been a growing demand for reform of education in Thailand to keep up with the pace of change in the globalization era since the beginning of this decade. Many reform proposals have been initiated by all agencies concerned in the Eighth National Education Development Plan (1997-2001). Although additional efforts have been made by the Government to improve the provision of education in all aspects, necessary educational changes that will facilitate economic and social development are still far from successful in the present education system which has been identified as an obstacle to the achievement of educational policies and programmes. There is, thus, a need for a radical comprehensive reform of education in Thailand.