

PART

BACKGROUND AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF EDUCATION

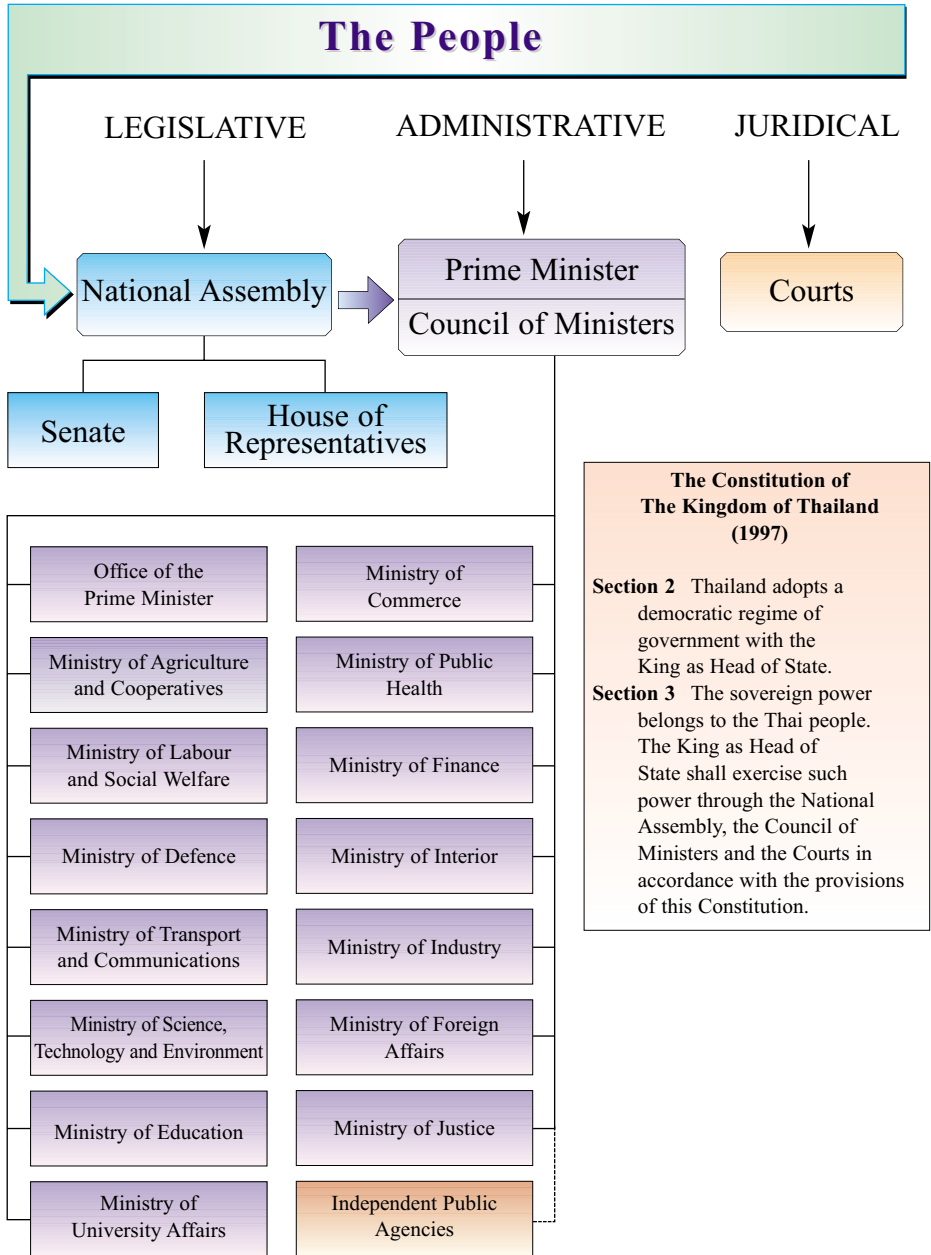
1. General Background

The general background of education in *Thailand* presented in this chapter includes the following aspects : government and administrative structure and society and the economy.

1.1 Government and Administrative Structure

The governmental structure of Thailand has undergone gradual and practical evolution in response to the changing environment.

Figure 1 Organization of the Royal Thai Government



Following the change from absolute to a constitutional monarchy, *His Majesty King Prajadhipok* signed *Thailand's* first constitution on 10 December 1932. Over half a century, the basic concepts of constitutional government and monarchy laid down in the 1932 constitution have remained unchanged.

The first and foremost concept is the status of the monarch as Head of State, Head of Armed Forces and Upholder of the Buddhist Religion and all other religions. The second concept concerns the legislative branch. A bicameral *National Assembly* has been created with two categories of members; *Members of Parliament* and *Senators*. The third concept concerns the executive branch. The Prime Minister is head of the government and chief executive. The *Council of Ministers* is responsible for the administration of 14 ministries, as well as the *Office of the Prime Minister*. Holding the portfolio of “Minister Attached to the Prime Minister’s Office” are a number of ministers who take charge of various responsibilities undertaken by this office which is largely concerned with formulating national policy. In addition, a number of cabinet committees, consisting of relevant ministers, have also been set up to coordinate major policies concerned.

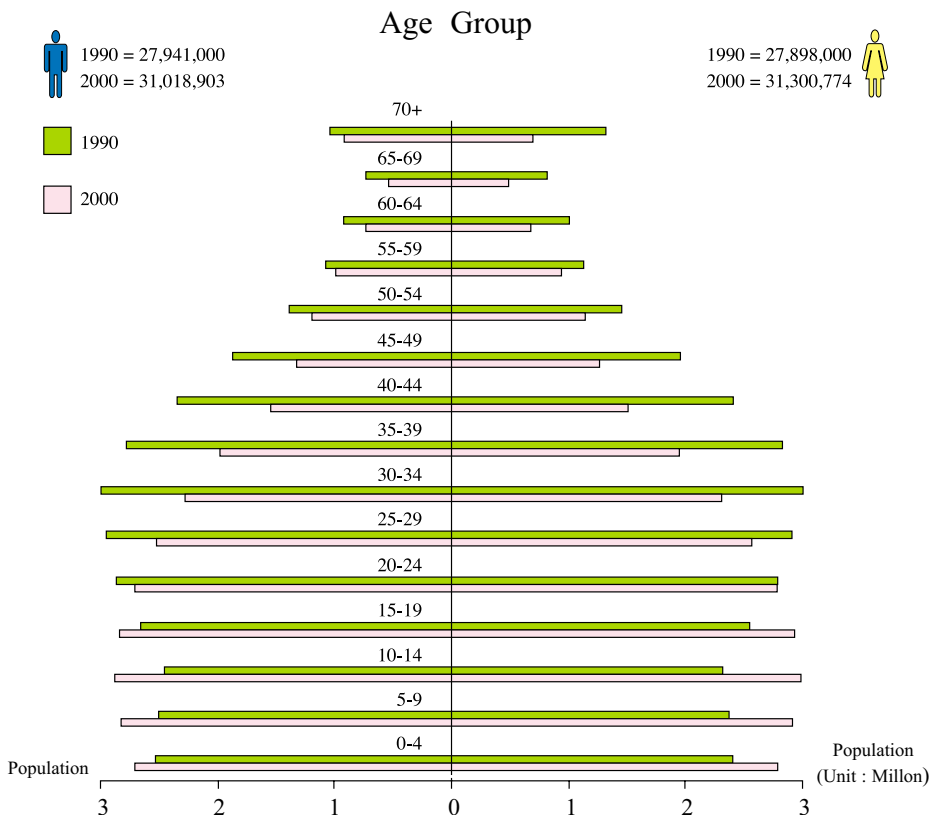
The country is divided into 75 provinces, excluding *Bangkok Metropolis*. Each province, which is administered by an appointed governor, is sub-divided into districts, sub-districts or tambons (groups of villages) and villages. Only the *Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA)*, which is divided into 50 districts, is administered by an elected governor.

1.2 Society and Economy

● Population and Employment

The total population of *Thailand* increased from 55.8 million in 1990 to 61.6 million in 1999 and it was estimated to be 62.3 million in 2000. The number of females is slightly higher than that of males (Figure 2).

Figure 2 Population Pyramid of Thailand : 1990 and 2000



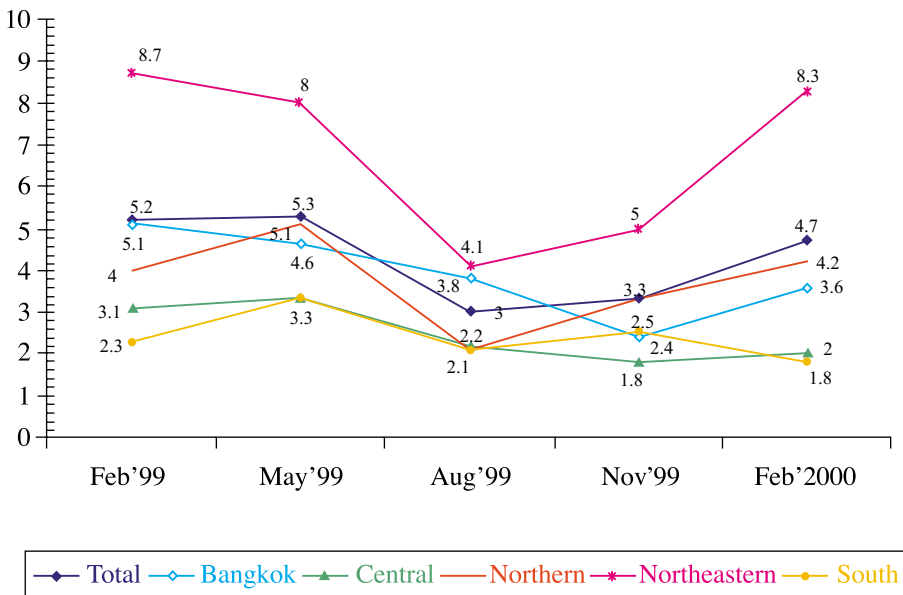
Source : 1990 : National Economic and Social Development Board
2000 : Thailand Population Projection, 1999-2016

In February 2000, 53.2 percent of the total population were in the labour force while about 24.8 percent were those over 13 years old but not in the labour force. The rest of the population or about 22 percent were still under 13 years old.

Among the total number of employed persons, about 45.9 percent were employees of which 4 in 5 were employed in the private sector where there was an increase. Those in the government sector also rose from 8.8 percent in 1999 to 9.2 percent in 2000.

The percentage of own-account workers and unpaid family workers, on the contrary, faced a decline. The unemployment rate decreased to 4.7 percent with about 1.54 million people unemployed, a decline of 0.5 percent from the same period in 1999. The highest jobless rate was found in the Northeast, followed by the North, Bangkok, Central Thailand and the South.

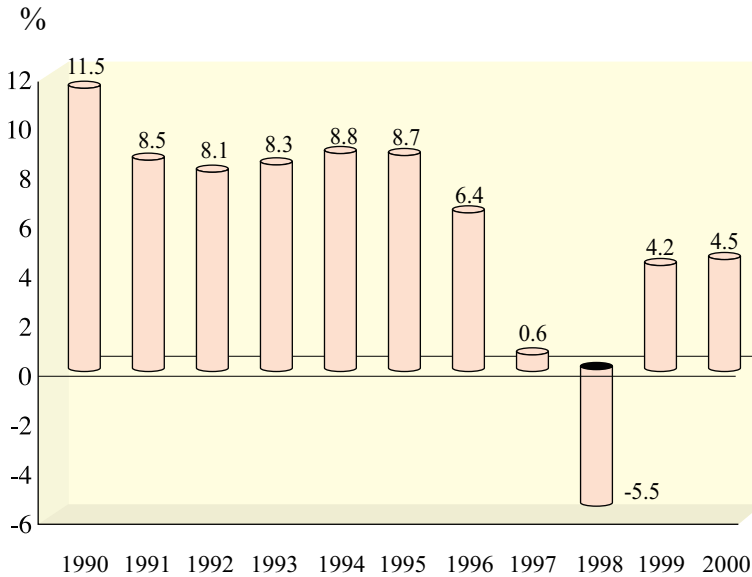
Figure 3 Unemployment Rate by Region



Source : National Statistical Office.

● Economic Performance

After the crisis of over two years, the Thai economy in the year 1999 expanded by 4.2 percent (Figure 4). Improvements were reflected in almost all sectors, both production and demand. Stability remained firm, with a low inflation rate of 0.3 percent and a surplus current account.

Figure 4 Real GDP Growth, 1990-2000

Source : *Bank of Thailand and National Economic and Social Development Board*

Compared with the same period in 1999, the economy during the first quarter of the year 2000 expanded by 5 percent with 30.4 percent growth in exports and 8.8 percent expansion in manufacturing production. Car production and sales grew by 62.1 and 97.3 percent accordingly while iron and steel production also expanded by 26.1 percent. Of particular concern was a narrow-based rebound in the economy which was reflected by a decrease of 0.4 percent in domestic bank credit due to a large number of problem loans. Production in several sectors, including beverage, petrochemicals and textiles fell by 30.8, 5.2 and 0.1 percent accordingly.

According to the Bank of Thailand, the overall annual growth rate for the year 2000 is projected at 4.5 percent. On the production front, contribution to growth stemmed from the manufacturing as well as the agricultural sectors. Stability should remain satisfactory, with a low inflation rate of 2.5-3.0 percent.