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Technical and Vocational Education and Training Reform in Thailand

by

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1. Introduction

During the past decades, TVET in Thailand has made many progress and accomplishments in producing semi-skilled, skilled, technician and technologist for the labor market. At present, there are more than 800 public and private institutions providing TVET to about one million students in formal program. There are also a large number of trainees and employees received training through short-course vocational programs as well as workplace and apprenticeship training. However, there are still several issues and problems that needed to be addressed and overcome as that of other kinds of education.

2. Education Reform

The constitution of 1997 and the National Education Act of 1999 established tremendous changes in Thailand educational system including TVET. Major issues concerned those changes included reorganizing, restructuring, and refinancing of the system. Compulsory education in Thailand will be raised from six to nine years of schooling with twelve years of education freely available to those who want it. Ministry of Education, Ministry of University Affairs and the Office of National Education Commission would be merged into one ministry. Major issues for education reform include

- Life long education for all
- Participation of all stakeholders
- Decentralization of authority
- Raising professional standard of teachers
- Setting education standards and implementation quality assurance system
- Mobilization of resources for education

The educational provision shall be based on (1) lifelong education for all, (2) all for education, and (3) continuous development of bodies of knowledge and learning process. All learners should capable of self-learning and self-development, and are regarding as being most important. The teaching and learning process should aim to enable learners to develop themselves at their own pace and to the best of their potentiality or Learner-Centered Approach. The key factor to achieve those aims is the quality of
Therefore, staff development as well as incentives for them to do their best have become major issues for education reform in Thailand.

Those issues concentrate on education in general, therefore, there is a need to develop for TVET Act as stipulated in the National Education Act of 1999. TVET Act would provide a national framework for policy strategy, certification, assessment and articulation arrangement for TVET system. Partnership with industries and all stakeholders would be strengthened.

3. **TVET Act**

According to National Education Act, the legislation on TVET needed to be developed because the law stated that "vocational education and occupational training shall be provided in the public or private institutions, enterprises, or those organized through co-operation of educational institutions and enterprises, in accordance with the Vocational Education Act and relevant act".

In order to develop TVET Reform Framework, several committee comprising of all stakeholders in TVET had been appointed to work on TVET research, problem analysis, manpower analysis, other countries' experiences in TVET reform, and etc. since 1999. The Reform Framework for TVET was identified in the year 2000 and put into the first drafted TVET Act. Public hearing had been organized throughout the country many times during the year of 2000-2001 to ensure that the drafted Act reflects the needs of all stakeholders. In late 2001, the revision of drafted Act was completed, and submitted to the Cabinet. Recently, the Cabinet and the House of Representatives approved the principle that Thailand needed to establish the National Office for TVET responsible for national policy and standards. This was an aspect of management reform in TVET.

The principle of TVET Act included the following issues:
- Unity of Policies and Variety of Implementation
- Demand-Driven Approach
- Decentralized System
- Partnerships
- Continuing and Lifelong Education
- Resource Mobilization

Missions of TVET in Thailand are required to carry out the following keywords
- Quality / Standard / Efficiency / Demand-Driven
- Opportunities / Continuation / Articulation / Variety
- Youths / Adults
4. **TVET Reform Issues**

The drafted TVET Act concentrated on six strategies on Reform Framework which include (1) management, (2) teaching / learning process, (3) teachers and administrators, (4) cooperation with private sector, (5) standard and quality assurance system, and (6) finance.

**4.1 Management** There is a need to establish a national committee for TVET because there are several public agencies (22 departments in 9 ministries) as well as private sector responsible for TVET. The lack of unity in policy and target resulting in duplication of programs, wastages of resources, and mismatching trained-manpower in the labor market. Therefore, a national committee comprising of all stakeholders at policy level would be established to coordinate and develop macro plan for TVET of the country. The similar committee would be also developed at institutional level as well. All public TVET institutes will be grouped and work together in order to share resources, exchange expertise, concentrate on areas of their excellence. The decentralized system of management in general administration, academic affairs, financing, and staffing will be implemented. All central authority will be delegated authority to the joint committee. New working culture will be established.

**4.2 Teaching/Learning** It is considered that practical experience or learning by doing of TVET students is very important. However some TVET institutions do not provide substantial practical experiences for students due to many reasons. Therefore, TVET teaching/learning process in Thailand will be redesigned and concentrated on competency based curriculum, and work-based learning. Multi-disciplinary of occupational subjects will be emphasized to ensure that TVET students' skills and knowledge are able to adjust to technological change. Open entry/open exist delivery system as well as validation of prime learning and experiences will be provided. TVET should be part of one's life and take place not only in institution but in the workplace and any other suitable environment. Furthermore, information and communication technology (ICT) has become an integral part of teaching/learning process. Therefore, there are national policies to expand/infrastructures for teaching/learning process as well as staff
development in ICT in TVET institutions. For example, all 413 TVET colleges under DOVE would access to internet by the year 2002. Staff development has been in progress.

Cooperative program or dual vocational education will be concentrated at every level. For example, DOVE cooperative program will be a joint venture of DOVE colleges and leading companies in Thailand. Companies will join DOVE to determine the objectives of the program, design the curricula, assess students' performance and monitor and evaluate results. Companies will also be involved in delivery of the course content: While DOVE colleges offer academic course-work, companies provide relevant work experience and learning opportunities in structured training programs. Academic work and in-company training will be closely coordinated to achieve superior results. Cooperation with industry will guarantee that courses will be work-related. Initially DOVE offers degree courses together with industry for these occupational profiles

- Mechatronics
- Information Technology
- Retailing
- Tourism and Hotel Management

4.3 Teachers and Administrators The National Act of 1999 aimed at reforming the teaching profession with a view to elevating it to a higher status, thus enabling teachers to become true professionals capable of providing learning of quality through the learner centred approach. The Office of the National Education Commission (ONEC), therefore conducted research to formulate a policy for teaching profession reform. Four themes have been completed, i.e. teacher production and development, teaching licence, professional licence for administrator, and honouring teachers with outstanding achievements.

For teacher production and development, policy recommendations are primarily aimed at turning out new teachers of quality in accord with teaching profession standards. These teachers will serve as a new driving force for the success of future learning reform through the selection of good and competent candidates for teacher training. Successful candidates will be provided with scholarships. They will then enrol in a 6-year education course, comprising 4 years for academic subjects, one year for pedagogy, and another year for teaching experience. Measure to achieve quality improvement of teachers is the establishment of an Institute for Development of Teachers and Administrators.
- To gain teaching licence, a teacher must obtain a bachelor's degree in pedagogy. If he obtains a bachelor's degree in other areas, he must study pedagogy for 24 credits. New pre-service teachers must work for two-year on probation, and will be awarded a standard teaching licence after a successful assessment, which is renewable every five years.

- To gain professional licence for administrator, he/she must have a teaching licence for at least five years; must obtain at least a master's degree in educational administration or must successfully attend administration training course recognised by professional organisations. This license is also renewable every five years.

- Regarding policy recommendations on honouring teachers with outstanding achievements, a Fund for Promotion of Teachers, Faculty Staff and Education Personnel will be set up, as well as a Centre for the Promotion of Honouring and Awarding Teachers, Faculty Staff and Educational Personnel. Standard criteria for selection of those who should be honoured and awarded have also been proposed.

For VTET teachers and administrators, the same principle will be adapted. VTET teachers needs to be on professional development program every year in order to keep pace with technology and labor market in their occupational areas. According to APEC-HRD seminar on Best Practices of Professional Development of TVET teachers in teaching competencies organized by DOVE in 2001, it found that industrial experiences or work-based training is the best practices for TVET professional development. Incentives would be provided to teachers as well as industries to promote workplace experiences of teachers. Furthermore, mechanism for promoting administrators and teachers to continue to develop themselves through lifelong learning, and self-study would be concentrated. Instructors, in the workplace or industries are needed to be trained and developed by the government as well to ensure good quality programs.

4.4 Cooperation with Private Sector

In an era of economic recovery and high competitiveness in global market, TVET must be based on demand-driven. Strong cooperation with private sector, professional association, cooperation groups and other related social groups would be strengthened. Partnerships with them through mutual benefit would be prevailed. It is expected that cooperation with private sector at policy level would help in identify national target and standard while implementation plan would be developed by cooperation at the institutional level. According to the TVET Reform Framework, participation of private sector at the national level and institutions would be formed by joint committee. Rules and regulations would also be developed to promote participation of private sector in providing quality TVET as well.
It is expected that industries will take an active role in developing human resources in the form of life-long education in industries. Experiences obtained from the workplace would be counted as vocational qualifications. Through this means, qualifications of our human resources will be improved, resulting in a wider career path and greater competitiveness in the global market. Other stakeholders in the community are expected to become involved in policy formulation as well as in the setting of vocational standards and qualifications so that the outputs of our graduates are more relevant to the labour market.

4.5 **TVET standards and quality control** TVET institutions are required to conduct self-assessment every year. In addition, external evaluation of each institution, external evaluation of each institution will be organized every-five years. This quality control system is required for basic and higher education as well. However, TVET standards must based on requirement of occupational standards, therefore, Thai Vocational Qualification (TVQ) which are qualification for work based training using outcomes and input based programmes, and incorporate continuous professional development process will be developed in Thailand. TVQs could be divided into several levels. This must be done through consultation and agreement with all participating partners. TVQs, as work-based training and continuous professional/personal development would consist of a collection of competencies that would also benefit the enterprise. The trainees would participate in projects of direct relevance and benefit to their work. **Project case works** could be introduced. Modules, training packages, can be utilized using self or individualized learning, distance learning methods or other multimedia. TVQ is input and outcome-based system. It would consist of training and development processes and systems designed to give trainees new skills and competencies. It would engage managers and supervisors in evaluating and assessing project works and thus having to consider the merits of proposal for change. It would consequently require organisations to adopt a “learning culture”. Therefore, quality control of TVET programs would also emphasize on the **relevance** to the needs of employment, **flexibility** provided and **access** to much broader cross section of the population.

4.6 **Finance** At present, TVET finance is highly centralized. The reform would allow each TVET institutions to work together at local level in planning and financing. Result-based budgeting system would be used. Mobilization of resources for TVET would be promoted. Further study on financing of TVET is in progress to answer questions of how much public, private, and individual should invest in TVET. And how the cost-effectiveness of TVET can be measured. However, TVET for disadvantages group must be financed by the state.
5. **Cooperation in the Region**

Many reform issues are new experiences for Thailand. It will take sometimes to accomplish all the goals set. However, some of our Asian country as Australia has gone through this process while other developing countries in Asia may have similar experiences of reform. It is believed that TVET situation in each country depends upon its cultural and socioeconomic context but there would be some aspect we can learn from each other. The development of UNESCO-UNEVOC Centre in Thailand is a good example of TVET networking for sharing academic work, research, curricula, and innovation. However, the operation of information technology still need to be expanded and made it realized by those who concern with TVET. The common challenges and issues for South Asia and South East Asia are as the followings:

- in concern with TVET management reform, what is the best practice for decentralization of TVET, what are the scopes of responsibility and accountability of the local level, what should be the new structures and working process of the central and local level and finally what should be competency profile of those responsible for TVET and how to train them.

- for teaching/learning reform, how develop competency-based curriculum, how to integrate ICT in teaching and learning process, how to make TVET become open learning for all those who need it, how to make TVET become continuing and lifelong education, and how to make multi-disciplinary TVET delivery and ensure flexible and adjustable of TVET skills and knowledge, and how to work at regional level in widening participation of TVET for disadvantaged group.

- in regard to TVET teachers and administrators, do we need to develop national and regional standards for TVET teachers and administrators, what are the best practices for professional development, how to work together at regional level for policy development and staff training, and how to promote ICT for these purposes.

- what would be the best incentives for private sector to involve in TVET, what should the roles of government in developing partnerships, what are the roles of the local level, how to make cooperation with private sector become mutual benefit, how TVET keep pace with demand-driven.
- do we need Asian/Regional standard on TVET, how do we assess and maintain, who should involve in establishment of TVET quality system, do we need vocational qualifications, and standards and how to work for it

- to what extent the state should finance TVET, who should pay for the cost of lifelong learning of employees, and recognition of prior learning, how TVET resources are mobilized, etc.