

## **A Comparison of Vocational Education Between Japan and Thailand**

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### **Abstract**

The views expressed in this research were to compare the orientation of vocational education between Japan and Thailand in the aspects of 1) national policies and aims 2) administration and management 3) curriculum 4) the present situation. These are in order to put together a comprehensive look at basic contexts which both directly and indirectly influenced the national education in the both countries. Research results found that as follows; in the aspect of policies and aims, both of the two countries gear to the fulfillment of semi - skilled working and professional outcomes for the furtherance of national economic development. In the administrative and management aspect, these are run by the Ministry of Education by means of centralization. For vocational education training, not only other educational institutions but also other agencies with like factors or companies have these responsibilities. Practically, it can be said that vocational education administration and management in the two countries have semi-centralization within each community. In the curriculum aspects, both Japan and Thailand have 3 types namely: vocational education, technical education and skilled training. Each of these is provided throughout the length of theory to practical period, in the collaboration with entrepreneur such as dual system, on-the-job-training. For the present situation, the number of graduates is strongly accepted for labor market. Japan and Thailand have scant differences in all aspects. The influential factors of these similarities are from basic contexts, such as social, cultural, political and global.

**Keywords:** 1) a comparison 2) vocational education

### **Introduction**

After the Second World War (1945), education plays a major role of national prosperity building and its aims also in the field of international understanding. As we have known already, education in every country has 3 types: formal education, informal education and non-formal education.

Truly, for the better life, general or uncertain education is strongly advised. This is a tough choice in many developing countries. In a general perspective of human capital, general education creates “general human capital” and vocational education (specific human capital) (Becker, 1964). The former is portable across one’s life and from job to job, while the later one is not and hence many advocate general education, as more suitable to the flexible labor force that can change tasks and even the type of work, but the later one has an advantage, imbibing specific job-relevant skills, that can make the worker more readily suitable for a given job and would make him/her thus more productive. Hence both are important, and education systems in many countries therefore include both general and vocational streams of education in varying proportions.

Countries in Asia like Japan and Thailand have placed varying emphases on general and vocational education, depending upon several aspects of consideration for example: historical, economic and political.

Vocational education, its meanings and aspects, which include technical education has been our important part of senior or upper secondary education. Thailand and Japan have both exclusive vocational schools and diversified secondary schools with general academic as well as vocational courses. The two countries, the emphases were not on formal vocational secondary school, but on training institutions and on-the-job training.

With rapid transformation of changing society in political, economic, technological and educational spheres, there has been a change in the new paradigms and perspective on the nation’s use for the nature of vocational education. This article, based on the research results, suggestions and discussions also shown as a few important emerging issues of serious vocational concerns.

#### Thailand’s Vocational Education in Brief

Currently 412 colleges are governed by the Vocational Education Commission (VEC), of the Ministry of Education with more than a million students following the programs in 2004. Additionally, approximately 380,000 students were studying in 401 private vocational schools and colleges.

Technical and vocational education (TVE) begins at the senior high school grade where students are divided into either general or vocational education. At present, around 60 percent of students follow the general education programs. However, the government is endeavoring to achieve an equal balance between general and vocational education.

Three levels of TVE are offered: the certificate in Vocational Education (Bor Wor Saw) which is taken during the upper secondary period; the Technical Diploma (Bor Wor Chor), taken after school-

leaving age, and the Higher Diploma on which admission to university for a Bachelor degree program may be granted. Vocational education is also provided by private institutions

Dual Vocational Training (DVT), essential to DVT, is the active participation of the private sector. In 1995, based primarily on the German model, the Department of Vocational Education launched the initiative to introduce dual vocational training programs which involve the students in hand-on training in suitably selected organizations in the private sector.

DVT is a regular element of the DoVE “Certificate” and “Diploma” program. The training is for a period of three years with more than half of the time devoted to practical training on-the-job, spread over two days a week, or for longer periods depending on the distance, throughout the semesters.

Two levels of DVT are offered: the three-year certificate level for skilled workers where students and trainees are admitted at the age of 15 after completing mathayom 3 (Grade 9); and the two-year diploma technician level for students who have graduated with the Certificate of Vocational Education after 12 years of formal education.

In the scheme, vocational, unlike regular internships, where students may be assigned to work on unpaid irrelevant jobs, the cooperative education program enables the students of the vocational schools to do field work while benefiting from an allowance to cover living expenses or free accommodation, and compensation for their contributions made towards the company’s income and profits as temporary employees.

Schools collaborate directly with the private sector in drafting action plans and setting goals for students to meet. Generally, the company will offer permanent employment to the trainees on graduation and successful completion of the program. Conversely, companies that recruit trainees from among young people who have completed a minimum of nine years at school may enroll their employees with a technical or vocational college where they are taught vocational subjects as the theoretical background to the occupational field in which they are being trained.

### **Japan’s vocational education in brief**

Since 1958, vocational education has been offered in both comprehensive high schools and in separate vocational secondary schools. Although the concept of the comprehensive high school was an objective of the American Occupation Education Reform, it never became the dominant pattern in Japan, about half of Japanese upper secondary schools (U.S. Department of Education, 1987). In other words,

most Japanese upper secondary schools offer academic programs that prepare students for higher education and do not offer vocational courses, Therefore, most of the Japanese students who participate in vocational courses do so in vocational schools. During the 1990 school year, about 26% of upper secondary school students were enrolled in vocational education classes.

To respond to changes in the workplace and society, the Ministry of Education initiated several changes in the late 1980's. One of the major changes was the inclusion of a new computer literacy course in technology education programs in lower secondary schools. The primary objective of the new course is to help students understand the roles and functions of computers and develop capability for the use of computers and information. Major content areas include computers and society, computer hardware, computer software, and application of computer software.

Although the new computer literacy course is not one of the four required courses (woodworking, electronics, home life, and food), it is one of the most popular elective courses. According to a Study by the Ministry of Education (1991), 76% of all students want to take the new computer literacy course.

In the upper secondary school level, the Ministry of Education revised technical courses to encourage the development of basic skills and flexibility. In general subjects, the Ministry of Education encouraged the use of computers in science and mathematics. All vocational students are required to take a new information technology subject related to their major course, such as agricultural information processing and home economics information processing. One of the most significant revisions in upper secondary technical courses is the introduction of integrated problem solving courses, such as "mechatronics," "applied mechatronics," and independent/assignment project study.

### **Research Methodologies**

This research was based on the qualitative research within the boundary of international education. Bereday's Method on a comparison "Theory was appreciated to use which has itself the stage as follows;"

- 1) select a topic, issue or problem
- 2) collect and collate educational data relevant to the topic in selected countries.
- 3) Interpret the data, applying such disciplines as are recusant to and understanding of it in social context.
- 4) Juxtapose the interpreted data in order to reveal possible bases for comparison

- 5) Develop hypothesis
- 6) Test hypothesis by comparative analysis for the interpreted
- 7) Draw conclusions ( Trethewey,A.R.,1976)

Research Results

The views expressed of research results are as follows in 4 perspectives namely; 1) policies and aims 2) administration and management 3) curriculums 4) present situation;

1) Policies and aims, the two countries, Thailand and Japan, play a major role in increasing the professional or skilled-labor or semi-skilled worker for national economic development.

2) Administration and management have the centralized system by the Ministry of Education engagement. Practically, the department of vocational/technical effectively also has a manifest function of response in the policies or aims setting with the community’s decision. This can be said that Thailand and Japan have themselves on semi-centralization administration.

3) Curriculum, Japan and Thailand contribute the curriculum for under grades into the choice scope and manageability of full-time, part-time and sandwich. The curriculum provided to student function in vocation education training (VET), dual-system and on-the-job-training. For sandwich programs students must learning theory to practicum within 3 months or 6 months for intensive course concerning professional or skilled outcomes. As mentioned, companies and industrials are the workplaces for apprenticeship.

4) Present situation: both counties focus on the processes of learning how the students can be one in labor-market after their graduate action. For the general education atmosphere of the two countries, it is fashionable that most of the secondary students pay their attention on vocational education widely.

Research Results in the tables as follows;

Tables 1: similarities and differences in the aspect of national policies and aims

Similarities	Differences
1. Both of Japan and Thailand, Ministry of Education set vocational/technical policies as the standard of core curriculum.  2. The aims of the two countries focus on the	1. Japan plays a major aims of graduates worker into modern industrial systems.

employment of graduation.	2. Japanese students are encouraged to use English in the lecture.
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Tables 2: The similarities and Differences in the aspect of administration and management.

Similarities	Differences
<p>1. Both of the two countries have education reform gazette emphasize on good citizen, intellect, and happiness.</p> <p>2. Japan and Thailand have the national strategies for fulfillment competency of learner/students in the global competition.</p> <p>3. Both of the two countries gear to the willingness of teacher who as a tap root of national economic growth.</p> <p>4. ICT is an important tool for vocational education in the both countries</p> <p>5. The two countries have collaboration between school and entrepreneur.</p>	<p>1. There are six offices and one organization for Thai Ministry of Education, on the contrary, Japan has 7 departments.</p> <p>2. Japan focus on thinking skill problem solving self-development and learning from real situations.</p> <p>3. Most of Thai student of vocation education want to the further studies in higher education more than enrollment in labor market.</p>

Tables 3: Similarities and Differences in the aspect of curriculum

Similarities	Differences
<p>1. Japan and Thailand have the curriculum for action in vocational and technical spheres.</p> <p>2. Curriculums provided in the two country, educational institutions can apply for the</p>	<p>1. Japan's curriculum emphasize on vocational education for market ability productivity and technology.</p> <p>2. The number of credit in each subject in Japan</p>

<p>apparitions of the local community/ local needs.</p> <p>3. <u>Core</u> curriculum setting by Ministry of Education is the frame of practicality</p> <p>4. Vocational Education from West is the basis of curriculum implementation.</p> <p>5. Curriculum in both countries <u>focus</u> on child center learning and taking care in moral education.</p> <p>6. Three types of curriculum provide in certificate, diploma and Bachelor's degree.</p> <p>7. Training in short course is appreciated by entrepreneur.</p>	<p>is higher than Thailand.</p> <p>3. Factories and widely industrial are supported to vocational/technical education in Japan.</p>
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**Tables 4: Similarities and Differences in the aspect of present situation**

Similarities	Differences
<p>1. The number of students in vocational/technical education is creasing most of the students play a great attention for work-based projects.</p> <p>2. Private sector and public sector have a collaboration and participation together with curriculum setting.</p> <p>3. Vocational/technical education is promoted strongly in every province.</p>	<p>1. Budget and lucidity for vocational/technical education in Japan is more provided than Thailand.</p> <p>2. Technologies and computer and information in Japan are modernize and fashionable.</p> <p>3. In Japan, student's parents encourage their son/daughter to have vocational technical education for the social life skill.</p>

## **Discussion and suggestion Japan and Thailand relation**

Throughout Thai history, Thailand has maintained an open door policy for international relations not only with European countries, but also with the neighboring countries in Asia such as Japan. The highlight of the diplomatic exchanges took place in the Ayutthaya period (1350-1767). Having seen in 1582, IYASU SHOGUN sent the letter and the tributes to Ayutthaya, which is the capital at that time, over the reason of the beginning contact.

Concerning to the letter and tributes, the relationship between Japan and Thailand was well-operated especially in the reign of King Songtham, in the Ayutthaya period, can be counted that it was the golden age of Japanese-Thai relations. Moreover, a Japanese named Yamada Nizayemon who worked as a government official got the decorations. It was so extensive privilege to have a role in politics, economics and transferring the Japanese knowledge to the Thai people in this period, running to the Rattanakosin period (1782- to the present), when the ministry of education proclaimed the first national education scheme in 1898, which was influenced by British education while the second scheme was influenced by Japanese education.

In accordance with the educational field, the Japanese government has played an important role in the assistance of increasing aid to Thailand plus the fact that Japanese government agencies are in a better position to offer more training, technical aid in the form of scholarship and training courses under the Japanese government. Many programs are offered to Thailand, as well as, other countries have gone with the reflection of Japan's sincere intention to give cooperation to Thailand.

## **Vocational Education Training in The Both Countries**

If we are serious throughout the long history of vocational education, it prepossesses students for jobs that are based on manual or practical activities, traditionally non-academic, occupation or vocation. It is sometimes referred to as technical education. Most of vocational education systems in the world can be at secondary or post-secondary level and can interact with the apprenticeship system.

After the Second World War 1945, vocational education and training in a national system was designed to give skills to workers to work in particular industries in the both countries. Education in this sphere, vocational/technical must be engaged by private sector and public sector alike the individual and the society.



The national development regarding the concept of education through work or learning by doing has been accepted by all countries in world. All educationists recognize that after finishing from vocational institutions/schools that it is a very important outcome for economic development.

### **Some problems:**

There is evidently a great deal of dissatisfactions about how the educational system performs the function of preparing learners for jumping employment. The dissatisfaction intensified due to a number of highly visible and widespread phenomena to many learners want of entering the higher stage of formal education instead of entering the world work.

### **Suggestions**

Vocational Education will be responded by Ministry of Education, Department of Vocational and Training to setting up the National policy. For the curriculum goals or aims, this will be run by locals and put the local vision into the curriculum. Curriculum should provide in 3 tracts: full time, part-time and sandwich programs and emphasize training or practicing on course demands.

The private sector should have a response of practicum on course provided, moving the public sector should contribute the assets, funds or subsidy to the local functionally.

Why have several countries made remarkable progress in vocational or techniques education and many others could not? This depends upon social, economic and politic factors, which also mutually interact with each other.

*Firstly*, the social factor, Social attitudes to vocational education are not encouraged in many countries. Negative attitudes to manual work severely dampen the demand for vocational education. Further, VET is conceived as a system of education for the poor, and for the educationally backward sections that are not eligible for admission into higher education. In several areas, it is mostly considered as the second-class education against the expectations of learners and parents. As a result, vocational/technical education in Thailand did not take off on a good footing.

*Secondly*, a number of learner enrollments in vocational/technical education and the economic development level are related. Demand for vocational/technical education seems to exist in industrial developing societies, with growth and diversification of industrial structure. Thus, vocational/technical education becomes more popular in the two countries where jobs can be guaranteed, while the important of VET in economic development in the two countries was recognized. For manpower analysis, the nature

of demand for vocational skill, employment potential, productivity and earnings mismatches between the skills of graduates and the requirement of work place. As a result, many programs were bound to fail.

*Thirdly*, politics factor can be seen easily in the political atmosphere especially in Thailand where the minister of Ministry of Education has been changed for his responsibility within the crisis of political change. It makes the vocational policy change. Besides the scarcity of public resources, governments also face confusion on the efficacy of VET programs, with the later than from making required investment in VET. Another aspect of confusion for the governments in both countries, Japan and Thailand, is changing policies of international organizations like the World Bank for this example.

## **Conclusion**

From the review of a comparison of vocational education between Japan and Thailand experience, a few important lessons can be draw for the development of VET.

1. VET is very important for economic growth, and it depends upon the level of development and demand for skills. Plan on policies making for VET should be preceded by detailed manpower analyses and forecasts.
2. Vocational/technical education should not promote in quality within the educational system. This is A required provision of good quality and training
3. Since both general and specific human capital contribute to economic growth, a balance has to be struck between size of general education and vocational education. Vocational/technical should also include general skills and attributes that are very useful across a wide variety of occupations and professions. This is particularly important for economic change.
4. Vocational/technical education should take place both in formal schooling and also in the industrial or firm-based institutions.
5. The government should make adequate allocation of resource for vocational education since it is necessarily expensive. Poor investment cannot yield attractive returns. So the government must pay for a high subsidy in vocational institution.

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